

t u f t i m e s

Published by the UH/CL Guild, Local 4033, Texas United Faculty
Vol. 5, No. 6, Spring, 1985

OPEN LETTER TO CHANCELLOR STAUFFER;

RECENT EVENTS RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND QUALITY EDUCATION

We are writing to you in regard to recent events which, in our view, raise serious questions about the progress of Affirmative Action at our institution. Since you have explained so pointedly to the university community that you support Affirmative Action both in spirit and in letter, we feel assured that you will share our concern. Because of the importance of the matters we will discuss, we wish to share our views with the entire university community; hence our open letter.

Recently the Program in Public Affairs recommended that two Visiting Assistant Professors be granted tenure track positions to replace former faculty members Al Hyde and Phil Whitbeck. The recommendations were made in a long Friday afternoon meeting marked by some disagreement as to the wisdom of the recommendation. As we understand the situation, it was only on December 5 that the Dean of Business agreed to a national search for permanent faculty for the positions. Dr. Gary Holtzclaw, Program Director of Public Affairs, maintained to his faculty that time did not permit a full scale national search involving notices in the relevant professional journals. Instead, he maintained, there had been time only to write to a large number of heads of departments. However, this procedure resulted in only a small number of applications from outside UH/CL; one of our sources mentioned a dozen applications. While Dr. Holtzclaw maintained that the figure was larger than a dozen, he admits that the figure was small, and all sources agree that the outside applications were weak. Only one outside person was interviewed. At the meeting of Public Affairs faculty, it was suggested that the two visiting faculty might be given one year appointments until a true national search could be conducted, but some faculty maintained that the visiting faculty, who had applied for the permanent positions, should be hired, that they were and are qualified, the best that the program could get. Dr. Holtzclaw feared that the positions would be lost were they not filled. He says he talked to Mr. Hugh Avery, who assured him that the legal requirement of a national search had been satisfied. Mr. Avery told us that he has no memory of such a conversation.

In any case, the procedure followed raises grave questions. We do not lightly disagree with what seems to have been a majority faculty decision; but we suggest that the decision may have been based on inadequate information. The two Visiting Professors now recommended for tenure-track positions are both white males. When we pointed this out to Dr. Holtzclaw, he said that he was never thinking about their sex and race, but only of their needed skills. And we are sure this is correct. Nor do we challenge their qualifications. But Dr. Holtzclaw misses the point, which has to do not with subjective bias but with institutional patterns of discrimination that are unintentional but all the more insidious. We are glad that you, Chancellor Stauffer, have supported Affirmative Action not only in letter but in spirit. The Public Affairs hirings may or may not have fulfilled the letter of Affirmative Action, but surely not the spirit. Writing to departments does not constitute a national search. A former Program Director in Public Affairs, who had misgivings about the procedure followed (but who voted for the recommendation) pointed out that a letter to department chairs misses 80 to 90% of the pool of applicants, as the letters do not circulate. This makeshift procedure not only violates the spirit of Affirmative Action, it is cronyism, however sincere the motives of those involved. The Public Affairs hirings threaten quality education as much as they do Affirmative Action goals, for a truly national, large pool of applicants is the best guarantee of quality faculty. In this way Affirmative Action is a merit policy.

Other recent events, too, suggest that our current Affirmative Action stance is defective. We understand that the Director of Personnel is about to be named our Affirmative Action officer, despite what would seem to be a conflict of interest, in that the personnel officer, who makes personnel decisions, would seem hardly the proper person to review these decisions. The university needs a full-time, independent Affirmative Action officer, as recommended by the Affirmative Action task force.

Other, even uglier allegations are about. A former Personnel employee apparently alleges not only that selected staff members have been given under-the-table raises but

that she was fired and her files seized for protesting this fact. Of course we do not wish to believe such stories, but in the absence of firmly established principles of Affirmative Action, an atmosphere exists in which the worst may seem possible.

We understand that you are reviewing Affirmative Action and hiring procedures, and we urge you to review the above events. We urge also that any new Affirmative Action guidelines stipulate a truly national search; we urge you to act on the recommendations of the Affirmative Action task force, which called for an affirmative action committee composed largely of faculty. We are, of course, available to discuss these matters with you.

Sincerely,
Curtis C. Smith, President,
Texas United Faculty-
Clear Lake.

Three weeks ago a copy of this letter was submitted to Dr. Gary Holtzclaw for his comment or response. We have received neither a or of printing, April 11, 1985.

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The following is an excerpt from an essay by Richard Kamber, acting vice president for academic affairs at Susquehanna University, that appeared in the Dec 12, 1984, issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education.

"Unlike shortages of money, good students, and professional mobility, the sharing of governance is an internal problem, and the burden of solving it rests primarily with the administration. Whether motivated by arrogance, a passion for efficiency or merely the desire to save precious working hours, administrators will always be tempted to simplify administration by arrogating more power to themselves.

"What they need to remember is that short-term gains achieved in this way are usually outweighed by long-term losses in collegiality, faculty morale and institutional consensus. Despite the proliferation of administrative chores and the increased importance of those chores to institutional advancement, the essential work of a college or university is still carried on by the faculty."

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COMING SOON TO TUF TIMES...NEW REVELATIONS OF STAFF DISCONTENT AT UH/CL.

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AND, FINALLY... Let us call your attention to the results of TUF's faculty questionnaire, which will be in your hands very soon. We have sent a copy of the survey results, and the cover letter we wrote to you, to President Bishop and Chancellor Stauffer. We will in the Fall be developing some programmatic suggestions for dealing with the most serious of the problems the survey reveals. Please let us have your comments and suggestions.

YES!!!! I want to join the Texas United Faculty, UH/CL Guild, Local 4033.

Name _____

How we can contact you _____

Send to Curt Smith or Bruce Palmer, box 309 or 281.

JOIN...YOU HAVE A LOT TO WIN AND LITTLE TO LOSE.