

External influences cited in E306 tabling

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Two national higher education organizations have raised questions in the past month about the University's handling of the English 306 controversy and cited the possibility that outside influences had been responsible for the decision to postpone the freshman writing course.

Both the American Association of University Professors and the Modern Language Association have expressed concern that faculty members are not being given academic freedom to shape their policies.

In a statement published in the

spring issue of the Modern Language Association newsletter, the committee on Academic Freedom, Professional Rights, and Responsibilities, wrote, "The character of the debate on the Austin campus and throughout the state suggests that the incomplete, inaccurate and distorted information may well have contributed to decisions affecting the course and the faculty members responsible for it."

Concerns over the administration's "indifference" and the local opposition's misrepresentation of the course's purpose led members of the Lower Division English Policy Committee, which had introduced the original plans for E306,

Please see E306, page 2

E306: UT professors debate procedure on curriculum changes

Continued from page 1

to resign Feb. 4, according to the letter sent to Joseph Kruppa, chairman of the Department of English.

On Friday, Kruppa announced the formation of a new ad hoc committee that will review the options available for the freshman writing course and present recommendations in the next two months.

James Kinneavy, professor of English, will head the committee, which includes professors Linda Ferreira-Buckley, Betty Sue Flowers, Sheila Kearns and Bill Worthen, as well as two graduate students, Louis Mendoza and Alison Regan. Kinneavy said he expects the group to meet later this week to plan its agenda.

Kruppa said he will give the committee very broad guidelines in formulating their recommendations because he doesn't "want to preclude any options."

"I want to give them as free a

hand as possible. We're hoping to have something approved and in place by May," he said.

Referring to the local and national media attention garnered by the debate over E306, Kruppa said, "Everyone has had their say in public. We need to let the committee do its job without excessive public exposure."

The American Association of University Professors also emphasizes that it is not judging the "rightness or wrongness" of the situation, but that instead, it is focusing on the question of whether outside groups had prevented faculty members from doing their job.

Benjamin Ernst, general secretary of the AAUP, pointed out that a required course is usually not scrutinized by other colleges and departments unless the purpose of the course had been altered.

"It's true they changed the syl-

labus, but they didn't change the purpose of the course. They made a decision to expose the students to multiculturalism. The question here is whether the differences between the two courses are greater than the similarities," he said.

Both organizations reiterated that their main concern was the improper disregard for the established procedures through which courses are adopted.

Joseph Horn, a UT professor of psychology and one of the more vocal opposers of the E306 course, pointed out that the original committee had not followed the proper procedures because they had not sent their proposal through the course and curriculum committee to be reviewed.

However, Stuart Moulthrop, assistant professor of English and a member of the former committee, said there has been no official ruling

on whether the change in the syllabus represented a "redefinition of the course."

Since the committee felt that the purpose had remained unchanged, they believed that going through the course and curriculum committee was unnecessary, Moulthrop said. Therefore, charges that the committee acted improperly "are only opinions," he added.

Answering charges that the matter had been inappropriately opened for public speculation, Horn also cited the fact that the proposal for E306 had been publicized by a press release, which "took it outside the college."

"When you issue a press release, you intend for everybody in the world to know about it. So they took this to the public arena before they ever moved through the first step in the procedure to get the course approved," he said.