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## Sledd faults 'sorry' TA program

By RON HUTCHESON  
Texan Staff Writer

State legislators examining the University's "sorry" teaching assistant program were told Monday that some graduate courses for which the University received state funds existed only on paper.

The course, 398T "Supervised Teaching for Graduate Students," was offered in several departments so TAs and professors could get credit without spending any time in class, English Prof. James Sledd told members of the House's higher education subcommittee for appropriate matters.

The class was initiated in 1972, shortly after TAs were required to take at least nine hours of courses in addition to the two courses they teach each semester.

"For at least two years, as I am fully prepared to prove, some of the nine hours for which TAs were required to register were phony hours — and known to be phony," Sledd said.

He gave the legislators 20 documents which he said prove his allegations. Although the course is

still offered, Sledd said attempts have been made to make it more meaningful.

"There has been an effort to make it a real course, but I don't know what effect it has had," he said.

Under state funding procedures, the University receives money according to enrollment. The amount of money granted for graduate enrollment is about five times the amount for freshman enrollment.

"The faculty thus got credit for more teaching and the University got more money by the ...funding formula," Sledd said. "The faculty didn't work more. The University didn't spend more. Graduate students didn't work more. But, by rebaptizing as coursework, work which had never before been so considered, both the University's budget and the faculty's reputation for teaching were improved.

"I don't know to what extent similar arrangements were made in departments other than English," he added.

A summary of the documents given to reporters told of a 1972 letter from the English graduate ad-

viser to teachers who were not even aware they were listed as teaching 398T.

"The third paragraph (of the letter) begins with a frank admission that ... teachers were being given credit for teaching, and TAs were being given credit for taking courses, even though neither the teachers nor the TAs were doing any work that they would not have been doing anyway," the summary said. "Thus, without any additional work for either fulltime faculty or TAs, it was made to appear that both groups had increased their loads; and the University got more money."

### No work any time

Subcommittee Chairman John Hoestenbach, D-Odessa, who called the TA program "an obviously sorry situation," asked Sledd to have a former English teaching assistant appear before the subcommittee Tuesday afternoon. University President Lorene Rogers will face the legislators Tuesday morning.

The former TA, Miles O'Loughlin, now a law student at the University, said he was told by English professors that 398T was "a course that

would not require any work, any time."

"It was a gentleman's agreement that the course wouldn't have any content, but would just be on the books," O'Loughlin said. "All I did was sign up for it. There were never any meetings."

### Cutting corners

O'Loughlin said he felt the arrangement was "morally reprehensible" but explained he was forced to go along with it because of the nine-hour course requirement for TAs.

Mike Rush, a member of the Graduate Student Workers, told the subcommittee the nine-hour requirement forces TAs to juggle their time between teaching and studying. "You can't do a good job on both," Rush said. "Some corners have to be cut, and it's usually the graduate work."

Sledd also gave the legislators a 22-page statement outlining the deficiencies in the University TA program. "The teaching-assistant system at UT Austin is grossly abused," he said. "After working within the system ... for six hard years, I finally concluded that neither faculty nor administration felt any real concern about the abuses."

Sledd criticized professors who are so involved in research or writing that they shun lower-division classes. "What is needed is a decision concerning priorities. At the moment, the basic priorities are research and publication," he said. "Are we interested in research and publication, or are we going to take those 5,000 entering freshmen seriously. That is not a decision which should be left to the faculty and administration."

### Equalize funding

"To them, the ideal academician is the man with the fewest classes, with the fewest students, with the narrowest course subject, with the highest salary and with the longest leaves."

Sledd urged the legislators to equalize the funding formula to decrease the emphasis on graduate enrollment, to limit the number of TAs and the number of hours they teach and to force ranked faculty to teach lower-division courses.

He said he also would favor limiting the number of PhD students. "That would have some appeal to me, but I think you would hear the screams on the Forty Acres (the main campus) as far as Round Rock," Sledd told the legislators.

## Meaquering senator