

Legislature strikes workload rider

University English Prof. James Sledd told legislators a few months ago they might as well admit that the University's academic bureaucracy has got them whipped if they back down on mandatory teaching loads this session.

While the academic bureaucracy evidently has whipped the 65th Legislature, the University has two years to reform its workload procedures before the 66th session rolls around. Without reform in the next two years, the University's victory this session may be negated.

The victory?

A House-Senate conference committee removed the Senate's version of the mandatory workload rider (nine hours of undergraduates) from the appropriations bill this month. Legislators approved a bill requiring the Board of Regents to establish workload guidelines and report compliance to the Coordinating Board, Texas College and University System.

A House committee already had removed a nine-hour undergraduate workload and had substituted a tepid rider stating that workloads should achieve "maximum effectiveness in teaching effort in relation to student enrollment." The conference committee accepted the substitute.

Fighting the original rider, University President Lorene Rogers said it would destroy the University overnight

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because the best professors would leave for a workload-less university. Regents Chairman Allan Shivers affirmed Rogers' analysis, adding that the rider would destroy the University's research.

Opponents charged that much of the University's research is "worthless piddling," conducted at the expense of money and time in teaching undergraduates and maintained for the benefit of rich corporations.

Although some professors teach more than others and some professors research more than others, a Texas Association of College Teachers survey has indicated that University professors worked an average of 59 hours per week.

Nevertheless, the Legislative Budget Board estimated that 72 per cent of the University's faculty did not teach nine hours of undergraduates, an estimate which would have cut \$6 million from the University's budget, under the board's method for determining salaries.

Roger's analysis that the rider might destroy the University apparently angered a lot of legislators. "We're go-

ing to get some honesty back into the University System," Odessa Rep. John Hoestenbach declared to the Texan about his teaching assistant workload bill, a bill aimed at correcting the University's failure to provide full professors to teach undergraduates.

Some legislators evidently were miffed at the University's evasion of the intent of a workload rider — teaching — in the 64th Legislature's appropriations bill.

Leading the fight for the teaching assistant workload bill and supporting the mandatory workload rider, Sledd said, "Freed from accountability, the University puts its money and supposedly best talents into research and advanced classes leaving the majority of students to learn by observation that in the academic eyes they don't really count much."

Sledd has a point — at least applicable in the English department. Teaching assistants teach most of the lower division English courses at the University...the average student never sees a full professor until he starts taking upper-division English courses and thousands of University students have no desire to take courses beyond the required lower division courses.

What about the less than gifted freshman who cannot write on the college level and who would profit from

a professor's help? What about the gifted freshman who is not challenged by teaching assistants and who might profit from being challenged by the demanding professor, but gets only teaching assistants?

Titles do mislead. Some of the best teachers at the University are teaching assistants and some of the worst teachers at the University are full professors.

But, many teaching assistants must teach a full load of courses and, in addition, study for their own courses. At times, teaching assistants may feel a conflict of painfully choosing between their own studies and the students they must teach.

Legislatively imposed faculty workloads are dead this session.

Unless the University starts real reforms in certain departments like English — requiring professors to teach more undergraduates and correcting abuses in the teaching assistant system — the University is, in the the words of Sledd, in a position to be crucified by the next Legislature.

And if the practice of letting the average student attend two years of classes without seeing a full professor does not stop, the 66th Legislature probably won't hesitate to show the University, the whipping boy down the street, the path to Golgotha.