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Intolerance in English Department claims Duban

The confirmation by University of North Texas officials that James Duban may become chairman of their English department this fall proves again the risk in dissenting from majority views in academia. Duban, a senior professor, was removed as head of the UT Honors English Program in September 1991 after eight years at the post.

Duban's ouster came the day after he commented that if the proposed mandatory multicultural courses were taught, they should be called "restricted cultural studies" in deference to the truth.

Having previously written on subjects such as the origins of racism in America and the ethnocentrism of the Puritans, Duban seemed an unlikely candidate for an untimely eviction.

While another staunch opponent of proposed University multicultural programs, Alan Gribben, left immediately after the E306

controversy, Duban's more recent resignation hints at the difficulty of living apart from the status quo in the UT English Department, even some time after the multiculturalism furor.

Liberal Arts Dean Robert King called it "perfectly obvious" that Duban's departure was related to the multicultural controversy and said the "tolerance level" for views such as Duban's would be more acceptable at a smaller university. Such comments bring into question the sincerity of the claims of champions of diversity.

While also constituting a loss to the English Department, the resignations of Gribben and now Duban depict a narrowing of the outlooks among the English faculty. Intentionally or not, those in power have made it difficult for those of opposing viewpoints to exist there.

Instead of welcoming these differences,

they have apparently ostracized those with divergent opinions. Of the four most outspoken combatants of the multiculturalism proposal, only one, John Ruskiewicz, will remain. Gribben left for the Auburn University System and Maxine Hairston took an early retirement; now Duban may leave.

Duban's assertions that the suggested curriculum would have been "counterproductive" to "enlarging the sphere of cross-cultural tolerance and learning" made people examine the proposed changes more closely.

Like the boy who had the courage to observe that the emperor's new clothes were something other than what was claimed, Duban's honesty forced people to examine the assertions of the English Department.

Thus, the popular perception became gradually quite different from the English Department's interpretation of the proposals, as evinced by the final vote of the general fac-

ulty against required multicultural courses

While the fate of the boy in the tale who had the courage to dissent is unknown, in Duban's case, it is apparent: His honesty elicited indignation rather than thoughtful consideration from his colleagues, despite the belief their proposals gave them a monopoly on sensitivity.

Department of English Chairman Joe Kruppa's inexcusable removal of Duban from the English honors program on political grounds did not succeed in forcing him to leave. But Duban's resignation now is, at the very least, strong evidence that the department needs something more than just the addition of a multiculturalism requirement.

Unless the English faculty can welcome diversity even when it includes opinions that disagree with their own beliefs, true appreciation of other cultures and viewpoints will never reside there.