

Bill proposed to limit TA hiring practices

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Rep. John Hoestenbach, D-Odessa, has filed a bill which would prohibit the University from hiring more teaching assistants (TAs) in a department than the number of fulltime faculty in that department.

If enacted into law, House Bill 833, filed last week, also would not allow the University to hire TAs to teach more than 25 per cent of student "contact hours" (courses) at any level taught by fulltime faculty.

This provision of the bill means that 75 per cent of all "contact hours" would be taught by fulltime faculty.

THE BILL ALSO WOULD bar employment of TAs to teach classes, unless they have served as coteachers with fulltime faculty in the same "discipline" for one semester.

"The purpose of the legislation is to see that freshmen and sophomores are exposed to fulltime faculty members and to see that a teaching assistant has had training before he's given a text and told 'go to it,'" Hoestenbach said Monday.

"This also should put an end to the phony courses that are being offered, where no one is going to class and getting an A, and faculty members are getting credit for teaching it. That isn't right," he said.

"WE'RE GOING to get some honesty back into the University System," he said.

If passed without modification and the University fails to hire 35 more fulltime faculty members for the English department, many English department TAs will be looking for jobs. The English

department has approximately 125 TAs and 90 fulltime faculty members.

"We will have to hire more faculty, and of course this will be accompanied by a reduction in the number of teaching assistants. This will cost the University and the state a great deal of money," said John Walter, acting chairman of the English department.

The bill also would create massive problems for foreign language departments where teaching assistants often teach a majority of the beginning classes.

RUDOLFLO CARDONA, chairman of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, said his department has approximately 69 teaching assistants and only 32 fulltime faculty members. He estimated 70 per cent of the lower division courses are taught by TAs.

The University would have to hire more fulltime faculty to teach the smaller classes taught by TAs or the department would have to enlarge the smaller classes, of which 75 per cent would be taught by fulltime faculty.

When asked about large classes, Cardona emphasized the difficulty of teaching large classes. "We couldn't do the job we're doing now; we'd have to have classes with more than 50 students," he said.

LAST SEPTEMBER, Hoestenbach chaired an appropriate matters subcommittee of the House Higher Education Committee and heard testimony from University faculty and administration concerning 398T, "Supervised Teaching of Graduate Students."

University English Prof. James Sledd had testified that 398T was used to cir-

cumvent a nine-hour course requirement for TAs.

After hearing testimony, he called the course "a phony and a sham."

DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES Dr. Irwin Lieb said he understands the intent of the Legislature, but thinks it has neglected "the responsibilities of the departments." Lieb maintained that the English department has a dual role: provide the University with remedial functions of reading and writing and satisfy degree requirements.

"If legislation of this sort is passed, we will not be able to use very well-qualified graduate students. We would have to hire large numbers of teaching assistants and assistant professors and the bill for that would be enormous," he said.

"There is no reason to believe that our teaching assistants are not competent," he said.

APPROXIMATELY 19 per cent of the University's faculty are teaching assistants.

University TAs have criticized the rule which requires that they must take nine semester hours in addition to their teaching duties. Third-year English TA Susan Wells told a House higher education subcommittee last week that the requirement often forces TAs to choose between teaching undergraduates and their own education.

The bill came from recommendations by Sledd, a vigorous advocate of mandatory teaching loads and fulltime faculty teaching undergraduates. "Lovely," Sledd said in reaction to the measure.

Hoestenbach said the proposal would come before the House Higher Education Committee "probably next week," but a date has not been set for hearing.