

their opinions of what is and

# LGBT

continued from Page 1

The "Speak Out" forum is another step that some of the faculty of UT have taken in what first started back in April, when the Faculty Senate unanimously passed a resolution to pursue benefits of some kind to the both heterosexual and homosexual domestic partners of faculty.

Then in September, Chancellor Cheek and Agriculture Chancellor Larry Arrington sent a three-paragraph letter to the Faculty Senate stating that they could not extend any benefits. The chancellors' reasoning was that the university is a state institute and that the benefits Faculty Senate suggested to be provided were "inconsistent with the public policy of our state outlined in constitutional and statutory provisions."

Since then, Faculty Senate and others have taken a variety of action to express their dissatisfaction with the chancellors' brief response.

On Sept. 28, Keith Kirkland, chair of the Commission for LGBT People, published an open letter on the Commission's website condemning the chancellors' response. An earlier forum was held on Oct. 16 in McClung Tower discussing ways that they could further push the resolution. Graduate Student Senate is currently looking into ways they could augment the insurance policy offered to graduate students so that it could provide to domestic partners the same way it does to married spouses.

Cheek has since apologized for the dismissiveness of his and Arrington's letter, and he has stated that a new, more detailed response from the two will be released in the coming weeks.

While Cheek has yet to release any sort of new official response, Braquet and everyone else at the forum are not giving up, and they plan to continue making their voices heard at events like the "Speak Out" forum.

"We're in for the long haul," Braquet said. "History shows that with other (universities) that currently have domestic partner benefits, if you look back at their timeline, it took years, (or in) some cases decades, from when they first started working on the issue."

She added, "There's not going to be a magic wand by the end of the year."

For more information about the Benefit Equality Campaign, visit their website at <http://benefitequalityutk.wordpress.com>.

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