

Letters *to the* Editor

Commissions strive to be inclusive, to promote equality

As chairs of the commissions for blacks, for women and for LGBT people, we would like to strongly disagree with what we believe are the perceptual and factual errors of columnist Anna Parker in her Monday column.

First, all three commissions include broadly-based memberships that include allies who may not themselves be black, women or LGBT. All three commissions strive to be models of inclusion rather than exclusion and advise the chancellor on campus programs, policies and services in order to promote a welcoming and affirming environment for all.

Second, the commissions do not exist to provide an "extra support" but rather to promote a level playing field in such area as benefits, salaries and the ability to attract quality faculty, staff and students to our campus.

Third, Parker would do well to review the annual Study of Faculty Salaries, available on the Web site of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. The study provides information on the continuing problem of pay inequity as it relates to gender.

Fourth, not only are people of color underrepresented in administrative, research and faculty positions at UT, but recent incidents on college campuses (nooses in trees, racial epithets in buildings and residence halls) confirm the continuing need for the commissions and their work.

Fifth, there is no indication that the commissions or student organizations make anyone feel less welcome on campus. We believe, to the contrary, that the commissions and student organizations have a positive, welcoming effect for UT students, faculty and staff who might not otherwise feel comfortable in the overall demographics of the campus.

Finally, we find the reference to bestiality a gratuitous and egregious example of the worst type of journalistic bombast. Such rhetoric, in itself, validates the need for and the mission of each of the commissions — to ensure an open, welcoming and level climate for each of us to achieve her or his best.

Jane Redmond
Chair, Commission for Blacks

Pam Hindle
Chair, Commission for Women

George H. Hoemann
Chair, Commission for LGBT People

Response emphasizes original reason for minority organizations

8002-5/10/1