

An Open Letter to the University Community

Larry R. Faulkner
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The University of Texas at Austin

The placement of objectionable, racially derogatory flyers on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin by an organization unaffiliated with the University has caused understandable concern within our community.

I want to reaffirm the University's position, as expressed by Vice President for Student Affairs James Vick earlier this month. We deplore the hateful and racially intolerant messages expressed in these flyers. In the two years that I have served as UT President, I have consistently emphasized the importance of equality and opportunity for all. It is vital to the success of our mission that we maintain a campus that is inviting and welcoming to all sectors of the diverse population of Texas and our nation.

Higher education is a door of opportunity that must remain wide open. The University is actively engaged in the recruitment of a student body that is representative of our state's population. Earlier this week, for instance, I visited high schools in Dallas that have been historically underserved by UT to present \$500,000 in scholarships. In addition, we opened a permanently staffed Dallas Admissions Center this week in order to reach a more diverse applicant pool. These are only two of many initiatives designed to build a representative student body.

Indeed, we are making progress. African American enrollment in this year's freshman class at UT increased by 44 percent. Our existing retention programs helped increase freshman success to 89 percent last year for first year students and our retention rate for African American freshman was 95 percent, highest among all groups. This month, hundreds of admitted and prospective minority high school students have visited UT as a part of our year-round recruitment efforts. However, we still have some distance to go to consistently serve all population groups in Texas. We need to improve our minority enrollment figures and we will.

As soon as we became aware of the offending flyers, we informed the organization that dissemination of such material was in violation of University regulations and told them to cease doing so immediately. We do not know the identity or the address of the organization's local representatives, so we responded to the out-of-state address printed on the flyers.

Hateful messages such as those expressed in the flyers should be rejected by all civilized people. This administration remains committed to fighting intolerance and bigotry on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin by all legal means.