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Special Edition

REGENTS CHANGE ADMISSIONS POLICY

The Texas Woman's University board of regents approved a change in the institution's admissions policy following a discussion and 6-to-1 vote during their regular quarterly meeting on Fri., Dec. 9. The policy, effective immediately, reads:

"Texas Woman's University is a comprehensive public university, primarily for women. It is the special mission of TWU to serve as a distinct and unique institution among institutions of higher education in Texas in order to provide undergraduate and graduate education of the highest quality in a learning environment that empowers and affirms the full development of women. Qualified applicants may enroll in all programs of the General Divisions, Institute of Health Sciences and Graduate School of Texas Woman's University."

Almost 200 people -- mostly students, as well as some faculty, staff and administrators -- packed ACT 16 for the afternoon public meeting of the board. Persons who wanted to address the board filled out cards with their names and affiliations (student, specific group, faculty or others). Speakers were then given two minutes each to talk about the potential change in the admissions policy at the undergraduate level.

All speakers who addressed the board supported the proposal that no change be made at all or that a period of time be granted to allow for discussion and input before a final vote would be taken. However, the regents chose to move forward with their task.

Lipe said, "Since 1972 -- more than 20 years -- TWU has admitted qualified males to the Graduate School and to the undergraduate and graduate programs in the Institute of Health Sciences. Today, almost 900 male students -- 9 percent of the total student body -- are enrolled at TWU.

"Of the 161 degree programs offered at TWU, more than 100 are open to men. At the undergraduate level, men are enrolled in some of the university's most prestigious programs: nursing, occupational therapy, nutrition and food sciences, kinesiology, human biology and communication sciences and disorders.

"What this means is, that for more than 20 years, TWU has maintained its status as a university primarily for women, while at the same time offering opportunities for all students to grow personally and professionally. That is an accomplishment of which we should be proud. It should also be a signal to us that any revision of the admissions policy need not alter the university's fundamental mission.

"Texas Woman's University has a distinct and unique mission: to offer education of the highest quality in an environment that empowers the full development of women. Our mission is at the core of this university, and we are sincere in preserving it," she added.

(more)

Regent Cheryl Wattley then moved to vote on the change in admissions policy within the Undergraduate General Divisions. Board members engaged in public discussion, each expressing her or his personal struggle with the decision they were about to make. Regent Jim McCurry described the process and choice as "agonizing." When the vote was taken, the change passed, 6-1. Regents Jayne Lipe, Cheryl Wattley, Darlene Medrano, Jim McCurry, Sheila Whitaker-Kellagher and Nan Bailey voted in favor; Don Reynolds voted against. Regents Diana Marshall and Kris Ann Vogelpohl were absent.

Medrano immediately followed the vote with a motion to charge Dr. Carol Surles (president's office) with forming a task force comprising faculty, staff and students to determine how to implement policy in a way that will not alter the university's mission -- its commitment to women.

Before the vote was taken, students and faculty who addressed the board voiced their beliefs that the university's mission would change, that the issue of a merger might surface, that athletics programs would be affected, and that the character of TWU would change as well. Kimberly Hampton, president-elect of the Student Government Association said, "We do not hate men. Texas Woman's University does not exist for the exclusion of men but for the inclusion of women."

During the process, Lipe stated that TWU "...is a university primarily for women which admits men, which it has been all along."

Wattley added, "No one is saying that this is going to flip and be a Texas A&M. How many men do you have who want to be the one man in a classroom of women -- really? There are not going to be that many men who are sensitive enough to appreciate the privilege of being here."

Kathleen Gigl, vice president for institutional advancement, said later, "The essence of Texas Woman's University and its mission to support, empower and educate women from all backgrounds and walks of life will remain unchanged. That continuity will be sustained through the new core curriculum, which makes women's studies an integral part of our liberal arts program, and through the opportunities and leadership roles afforded to the women who attend classes and pursue degrees on our campuses."

Because the application deadline for registration was Dec. 1, any students admitted under this policy change will begin during the summer semester or after that time.

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