

1 September 10, 2009
2 **S.R. 602**

3
4 **Title: In Support of the Implementation of Democratic Education at Texas**
5 **Courses**

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7 *DemTex strives to promote a democratic educational structure through the development of peer-*
8 *learning communities, allowing all students to manage and direct their own learning in an open*
9 *and intellectually honest environment.*

10
11 **WHEREAS,** The purpose of DemTex is to promote democratic, egalitarian pedagogical
12 theory and practice through the development of peer-learning
13 communities.

14
15 **WHEREAS,** The Task force on Curricular Reform has identified a need to enrich the
16 “learning experience of undergraduate students, especially in their first
17 and second years” through “smaller courses and courses that emphasize
18 that focus on writing and speaking and on other instruction intensive
19 skills”¹; and

20
21 **WHEREAS,** The Commission of 125 has identified the need to create a "first-class
22 educational experience" in which one "learns to think and read critically,
23 write cogently, speak persuasively, and work both independently and as
24 part of a team," "engage in open discussion, inquiry, discovery, research,
25 problem-solving, and learning to learn," as well as to "examine questions
26 of ethics and attributes of effective leadership;"² and,

27
28 **WHEREAS,** The 1998 report of the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates
29 in the Research University identified the need for education that creates
30 "opportunities to learn through inquiry rather than simple transmission of
31 knowledge" and "training in the skills necessary for oral and written
32 communication at a level that will serve the student both within the
33 university and in postgraduate professional and personal life;"³ now; and

34
35 **WHEREAS,** DemTex courses are intended to be socially engaging with a strong
36 emphasis on interpersonal communication, allowing learning
37 environments where students are encouraged to engage the pedagogical
38 process as well as the subject matter and not only provide intimate
39 communities for learning but also encourage critical thinking and public
40 speaking; and

¹ William Powers, et. al., Report of the Task Force on Curricular Reform, (Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin, 2005) 1.

² “Two Strategic Initiatives,” The Commission of 125, <<http://www.utexas.edu/com125/strategic.html>>.

³ Shirley Strum Kenny, et. al., The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University, Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities, 1998, <[http://naples.cc.sunysb.edu/Pres/boyer.nsf/673918d446fbf653e852565ec0056ff3e/d955b61ffddd590a852565ec005717ae/\\$FILE/boyer.pdf/](http://naples.cc.sunysb.edu/Pres/boyer.nsf/673918d446fbf653e852565ec0056ff3e/d955b61ffddd590a852565ec005717ae/$FILE/boyer.pdf/)>. 12.

41 **WHEREAS,** DemTex courses would circumvent the pressures of the high student-
42 faculty ratio, to provide small seminar-style courses to undergraduates
43 from all majors and backgrounds as well as to provide intimate
44 communities for learning but also encourage critical thinking and public
45 speaking; and
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47 **WHEREAS,** The experience of researching, designing, and facilitating a DemTex
48 course is perhaps the ultimate opportunity for undergraduate intellectual
49 and creative development at the University;
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51 **WHEREAS,** A number of peer institutions⁴ to The University of Texas at Austin have
52 implemented peer-led courses with great success; let it be
53

54 **RESOLVED,** That the Senate of College Councils support the mission of DemTex to
55 address these reports in creating courses led by students, where one would
56 be expected to think critically about a subject and convey his or her
57 thoughts through writing and discussion in an environment centered on
58 inquiry; and be it further
59

60 **RESOLVED,** That the proposal for Democratic Education at Texas be presented to the
61 Undergraduate Studies Advisory Committee via Dean of Undergraduate
62 Studies Paul Woodruff for review.
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64 **Authors:** Adam Hagerman, DemTex Agency Director
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66 **Sponsors:** DemTex
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⁴ Oberlin College, Stanford University, Tufts University, University of California, Berkeley; University of California, Davis; University of California, Los Angeles; University of California, Santa Cruz.