

Ethics panel tackles tough problems

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Ethical values are often considered to be among the most important parts of a college education.

Diversity in hiring was the focus of the panel and audience discussion presented by the College of Visual and Performing Arts as part of Ethics Week beginning Monday. The presentation, "The Ethics and Practice of Diversity in Hiring," brought together members of different areas within the college to present their individual views on the issue.

Discussions and points were made concerning diversity in the College of Visual and Performing Arts specifically, as well as on a broader basis, such as diversity on the Texas Tech campus as a whole and in the Lubbock community.

"Look at the world and look at Texas Tech," said Jonathan Marks, the director of the Ethics Initiative and interim dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts. "The world is what our students will be living in. The world is a more diverse place than Texas Tech, than in Lubbock."

Marks talked about diversity in terms of the way the Hub City is laid out, being split into the East and West sides of the city, and in individuals who are employed by the College of Visual and Performing Arts.

"The community was built along segregated lines and continues to live on segregated lines," he said of Lubbock. "We have to, in some sense, alter what Texas Tech looks like, what the complexion of Texas Tech looks like."

One issue of concern discussed about diversifying the faculty at Tech was attracting a pool of applicants to fulfill that goal.

Robert Henry, the associate dean of undergraduate and curricular issues at the College of Visual and Performing Arts, said advertising and the way it is handled is something that needs to be looked at to revise the diversity standards at Tech.

"Are our descriptions inviting to possible applicants?" he said. "How do we develop beyond that [which] is here and already given to us?"

A way to make advertising appealing to a more diverse crowd is through using connections Tech, specifically the College of Visual and Performing Arts, has made throughout the state and nation, he said.

"It isn't good enough to just send a flier out," said William Ballenger, the director of the School of Music. "It just doesn't work that way."

Once an individual comes to Tech as an employee, especially one who can be characterized as diverse, the issue becomes how to retain them.

Tina Fuentes, the interim director and a professor in the School of Art, said she wanted to leave when she first came to Tech because she did not have support or a community she could become a part of.

She said the reason she stayed is because something a friend from New York told her over the phone.

"You have to stay where you are at," Fuentes said her friend told her.

Reasons for staying included the fact Fuentes was, in a way, a pioneer at Tech and she would help attract other people who are diverse in the future.

"I think that support system is very, very important, and it can come on different levels and in different ways," she said.

One reason stated for the difficulty of retaining diversity in the faculty is some individuals who come are not able to adjust to the surroundings and the environment of Lubbock.

"One of the things we find we have working against us is geographic," said Frederick Christoffel, the chair of the Department of Theater and Dance. "We all know that this isn't the end of the world, but you can see it."

The staff workload and facilities were two other reasons he said retaining faculty can be difficult at times.

There are difficulties imposed from different places and people causing the goal to diversify to be hard to reach, Marks said.

"The state of the law now is that we absolutely must have diversity, but we can't do anything to achieve it," he said.

While he said this may be discouraging, Marks said it means people must want to create diversity themselves, rather than only being forced from the outside.

"If it's going to happen, the energy must come from within," he said.

Ballenger said he feels he is in a position to create change and that he is looking forward to making it happen.

"I look at it as here we are in a moment of time," he said. "In the time that we have we do need to make a difference in the way we look. We are working on that. Of course there are limitations on

what we can do and what we ought to do. I think we've got a serious problem that we can work on together."

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