June 21, 2020

Having been a professor at The University of Texas at Austin (UT) for 42 years, taught more student-athletes than I can count, served as a faculty member on the Men's Athletics Council for several years and been a proud Longhorn fan, I was pleased to learn that UT student-athletes wrote a thoughtful letter “demanding” what must be done to address race issues on campus.

The UT athletes’ statement was poignant, resonating with the highest ideals of academic institutions – to openly question ideas, debate and make informed choices. In short, the letter was far more than an unreasoned demand. As a communication scholar who spent his career helping students learn how to create cogent and effective arguments, I found the tone and content of the message impressive and rhetorically powerful.

Above all else, I am heartened to witness athletes standing up and voicing their concerns about an historic problem on campus made clearer and more compelling following George Floyd’s death and subsequent protests throughout the country. I look forward to how UT’s administration responds, and hope they will work with students to make major changes. After all, the UT motto is: “What Starts Here Changes the World.” Hook ’em Horns!

Rick Cherwitz
Emeritus Professor, UT-Austin