



To: Professors Jerry Junkin and Scott Hanna  
CC: Holly Williams, John Yancey, Mary Ellen Poole  
Date: Sept. 24, 2020

Professors Junkin and Hanna:

As you know, this summer the university began several new initiatives toward making our campus a more welcoming and inclusive place and toward “reconsidering how to best reflect our values, both in the symbols and names on our campus, and the openness with which we tell our history.” The Eyes of Texas is among those symbols.

Since [announcing these initiatives to campus](#), President Hartzell has set the expectation that our university community will revitalize the song’s meaning so that it may continue as our alma mater. He has asked us to reunite around the song even as we acknowledge its origins.

When the Longhorn Band performs, it will be expected to perform The Eyes of Texas.

Next week President Hartzell will be announcing continued efforts to document and acknowledge the song’s history. He has assured me that those efforts will include voices from throughout the community, including our students.

I’m aware that students in the band are divided about the meaning and significance of The Eyes. Some feel they cannot in good conscience continue to perform it. Others take pride in the song. And I know yet others are conflicted. This is threatening the unity and viability of the band as a band.

Regrettably, it’s not yet clear we can safely field the band in Royal Memorial Stadium during the COVID pandemic. However, even if we could, we clearly also need to have more reasoned and informed discussion about the Eyes of Texas before the band can continue with its public performances. While I hate to disappoint students eager to perform, you should not plan on the band appearing at the October 3 football game. Beyond that, we’ll have to see what progress we can make on this issue.

I encourage you to foster a dialogue among students in the band about moving forward together on this issue. I’m prepared to support this effort with whatever facilitation, resources or expertise may be needed. These conversations can be used to inform the university’s broader discussion as well.

When the Longhorn Band returns to public performances, we can hope that our students will be able to perform The Eyes in good conscience, with full awareness of its

history as well as trust that its meaning isn't fixed indelibly by the past, but defined by our values today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Dempster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Douglas Dempster, Dean