

Opinion

Academic weakness fault of students

I would like to respond to the Daily Nebraskan editorial of Friday, June 27, "Sports sabbatical: NU priorities wrong."

When I was an undergraduate at the University of Nebraska, I had no knowledge of how the "other half" — students at institutions with better academic reputations — lived or worked. At that time, I assumed that my academic experience at UNL was in some way inferior to that of students at those "better" institutions, and I rather bitterly supposed that UNL's emphasis on sports excellence was the reason for the intellectual malnourishment from which I believed myself to suffer.

Guest Opinion

I have learned a few things since that time. Acquaintances with students from that "other half" have taught me that those people are, on the average, no more intelligent than I am; on the whole, they have no better preparation for further educational endeavors than I have; in general, they possess no deeper understanding than I do.

The real difference between UNL and the "better" schools — aside from UNL's current potentially devastating

financial difficulty — is this: in order to get a good education at UNL, the student must be self-motivated. There are few enforced external standards of excellence at UNL. Mediocrity is not punished with suspension or social contempt. There is little here in the way of intellectual competition, even among the very exceptional students. In most subjects under Arts and Sciences, the student defines his or her own educational objectives, within very minimal parameters. There are loopholes and cracks everywhere. A lazy student of normal intelligence can obtain a given degree under very rigorous conditions, and thus emerge from UNL as well-educated as a Harvard graduate with a corresponding degree.

I have returned to UNL for graduate study, after a sojourn among the "other half," because I prefer my own motivations and my own reasons for excellence to the knee-jerk neurotic competitive instincts that I have observed among some students from the "better" schools. I would rather believe that my professors and my chosen mentors are on my side, that they want me to succeed, then suspect those people of regarding me as a statistical point that can be easily discarded and replaced if it doesn't quite fit.

I like the freedom inherent in a low-pressure academic environment, and I

have returned here by choice in order to work under the liberal conditions allowed by that freedom. I don't believe that my academic development will suffer because of that choice.

I suggest that the weakness that you (the author of the June 27 editorial) see in the UNL academic environment is in fact a weakness in yourselves. Unless things have changed since I was an undergraduate at UNL, there is no administrative rule stating that a student is forbidden to learn more than the minimal 'A' requires. There is no rule stating that a student is forbidden to read books that are not on a course syllabus. There is no requirement that the student study only those details necessary for passing examinations. There is no university policy that sets an upper bound on a student's personal excellence. If you feel that you are not getting a decent education here, if you feel that you are collapsing into abysmal mediocrity, then you are the ones to blame, not the university. Not your professors. Not the football team.

There are plenty of opportunities here. Challenging courses are offered at UNL, many of which — believe it, or not! — are taught from the same standard textbooks used in similar courses at Harvard, MIT, Berkeley, etc. There are many excellent researchers and educators here who are absolutely

thrilled when motivated, interested students want to know more about their specialty subjects. The UNL library system is more than adequate in most subject areas, and if one finds that one's own specialty is an exception, there is an interlibrary exchange service.

This being the case, I suspect that what the Daily Nebraskan editorial staff is really concerned with is the paper value of a degree from UNL, not the actual value of an education obtain-

ed here. In answer to individuals who harbor such a concern, let me offer a truth for further contemplation, and a piece of advice. The truth is: a genuine intellectual can get an education anywhere, but a lazy fool can get one nowhere. The advice is: never associate yourself academically or professionally with anyone who doesn't know this truth.

Rebecca S. de laMotte
alumnus
Arts and Sciences

Letters

Marcher says peace effort not a waste

As a peace marcher I would like to respond to your editorial dated July 1, 1986, titled "Peace efforts wasted." I mainly wonder how any peace effort could be termed a waste?

The Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament is not rhetoric and image or an act of suffering and martyrdom. We have chosen this walk for peace, which will take nine months of our lives, as a tool for demonstration, a tool of action, not rhetoric. Every day we act, we do suffer, not just physical obvious pain, but much psychological pain as well. True, we are 500 people who enjoy a rich closeness with one another, yet we are far from home and our loved ones. We suffer, yet we love what we are doing. We suffer, yet we are not martyrs, we are ordinary people of varied backgrounds who realize a tremendous effort is needed to effect a

change in the destructive waste of nuclear weapons. Many of us have never acted before; we act now because we see the peace march as a chance to awaken the millions in this country to the ultimate choice we must make: to continue on the nuclear weapons path or to find a path to peace. It is a choice the future generations cry out for us to make.

Our major goal is not to raise consciousness but to educate as many people along our path as possible on the nuclear threat. We have what is known as our Peace Academy which is inundated with facts and figures on the nuclear arms race. One such fact is the money required to provide adequate food, water, education, health and housing for everyone in the world has been estimated at \$17 billion a year. It is a

huge sum of money, about as much as the world spends on arms every two weeks. Another figure of interest is the Defense Department spends \$33 million an hour on defense. If we had just three minutes of their time we would have no financial woes to transport Peace City to Washington. I wonder what our education department could do with a few hours of the defense budget? I could quote for you here many of these facts and figures, perhaps they would motivate some to get involved to bring about change, perhaps not. Sometimes what is needed is to evoke some sort of an emotional involvement. The peace march incorporates both, the facts and figures are bound to get people emotional.

John G. Mento
Peace City

Humanists search fruitlessly for middle ground in pornography issue

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see caring, at least mutual consent, as the basic standard by which to judge sexual behavior. We are, for the most part, people trying to avoid both exploitation and repression. For the most part, we are successful in private life. But in public life we find ourselves pushed into uncomfortable affinity with both Puritans and X-rated Sexual Consumers.

When 4,500 7-Eleven stores removed Playboy and Penthouse, I for one could not work up any outrage at their disappearance. If I no longer passed a man idly scanning naked pictures of women on my way to the toothpaste shelf, I couldn't rue that as a loss of liberty. Yet I know that I do not share the same goals or values as the boycotters. I surely do not approve the tactics of the pornography commission, whose letter

intimidated these stores. As for the commission report itself, those of us who abhor pornography because it exploits any standard of caring are uncomfortable with the absolutist First Amendment defense of Sexual Consumers. But we are also uncomfortable in alliance with Puritans who find dangerous smut in "Ulysses."

Many of us had hoped the commission would draw an acceptable line between the erotic and the pornographic, between license and banning. We hoped they would blaze some path between free speech and violent smut. Instead, we are left standing uneasily

in a corner. The Playboy Clubs opened in an era when television still showed married couples in twin beds. Few of us want to return to the control of Puritans. Nor do we regard X-rated Sexual Consumers as progressives. From our beleaguered corner, we can still hope that pornography will end the way the Playboy Clubs ended: There just weren't enough customers anymore.

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