

Faculty Evaluation Questioned

Editor's Note: The following article, written by Gwen Drake, was prepared for an assignment in Depth Reporting at the NU School of Journalism under the direction of R. Neale Copple, director of the School of Journalism.

By Gwen Drake
Judgment.
A projected day in biblical literature?

No.
An accepted fact of professional life for a major segment of the United States' population—teachers.

Teachers are judged by the students they teach, the student's parents, grandparents, and a wide assortment of other individuals who pay taxes to support their salaries.

Recently, on the campus of the University of Nebraska, students attempted to publish in book form what they said had been handed from student to student by word of mouth in the past—evaluation of the faculty.

The evaluation attempt failed because of a lack of student participation in the project, but the question of faculty judgement, or evaluation, is still alive.

What is a good teacher? This question has plagued faculty and administration offices on campus since the beginning of academic time.

Necessary Ingredients
Is popularity a necessary ingredient for a good teacher? Adam Breckenridge, Dean of Faculties at NU, said he



A. C. Breckenridge

does not feel a popular professor, in the eyes of the students, is necessarily the best teacher.

"Students are not really able to judge a teacher at the time they are taking classes from him," Breckenridge said. "They tend to lean more toward a teacher who has a good presentation manner, one who can throw in a few witticisms."

Opinions Change
"The spellbinder would most certainly poll most popular with the students now, but in five or ten years, I'm sure the student's opinions on who were the best teachers would change," Breckenridge said.

Merk Hobson, Dean of the Graduate College, said a good

teacher is not just one thing, but a combination of many different things.

"A good teacher must be able to present material to students in the classroom. He should publish works in his field, and carry on research—this keeps him abreast of the times—he must also be able to carry out some civic duties," Hobson said.

Paragon of Virtue
"The ideal teacher would be good in all of these things—a paragon of virtue," Hobson said.

When students try to evaluate their professors they seem to forget they must take more than classroom presentation into account," Hobson said.

Research and Publication
A teacher may be well-received in the classroom, but if he does not keep up with his field by publishing, and doing research, he will not be able to present the newest most valuable material to his students.

"Research and publication are very important, especially in this day when information discoveries are being made every day," Hobson said. "Of course a teacher cannot possibly keep up with everything, but he owes it to himself and his students to make some contributions in his field."

Basic Qualifications
John R. Davis, Dean of the NU Engineering College, said a good teacher has three basic qualifications: an interest in research, good classroom



Walter K. Beggs

presentation, and publications.

"We feel a good teacher develops a rapport between himself and the student, he takes the time to know what the students need," Davis said.

He stays at the front of his field. The students know who the good or poor teachers are—through them we find out, Davis said.

Facets Considered
Research, publications, classroom know-how, civic responsibility—all facets considered in the evaluation of a teacher.

Educators and administrators know what the general qualifications of a good teacher are.

But, who is to judge a good teacher?

Self Evaluation
"Self evaluation is important in this profession," Dr. Walter K. Beggs, Dean of the NU Teachers College said. "Any good professor will evaluate himself, with the aid of his students, if necessary, and try to do the best job he can."

According to Beggs, NU faculty promotion standards are such that good teaching is not one of the two most important factors of a successful professor at the University.

"Teaching falls about a third down in the list of qualifications reviewed when faculty promotions are being considered," Beggs said.

Publications and research seem to come before teaching abilities, according to Beggs.

Tangible Areas
Perhaps this is because the other areas are more tangible, easier to judge, than teaching ability," Beggs said.

Dean Breckenridge, on the other hand, said when faculty promotions are brought before him, the first thing on the recommendation sheet is an evaluation of the man's teaching qualifications.

"To me, this is all-important," Breckenridge said. "Of course, the other factors count, too. After all, they help make the person a better teacher."

Extremely Difficult
Hobson, of the Graduate College, said evaluation of a

teacher is extremely difficult, even for the heads of departments.

"Evaluation is almost impossible, because there is no set course of study that is followed in every case to become a professor. Doctors, lawyers, engineers, all have to meet about the same study requirements in the same basic coursework," Hobson said.

Training Varies
"There is no actual specialized training in becoming a professor, it varies from individual to individual," Hobson said.

"When I was teaching," Hobson said, "I found self-evaluation was most valuable. I used student opinion to help improve my methods. This is a good idea, but after a time interest fades and the idea fades out."

Suggested Judgements
Judgment by peers, professors who face the same problems in teaching and can recognize weaknesses in their fields more readily, was suggested by Dean Beggs. This could create hard feelings among faculty members who would hesitate to say openly what they honestly think of each other's methods, Beggs said.

"The best way I can see of evaluating faculty members, besides self-evaluation, would be to import a corps of visiting professors from some other university to evaluate professor performances—this would eliminate inter-department hard feelings," Beggs said.

Students, professors' peers, self-evaluation—all are suggested means of evaluating a



John R. Davis

teachers' abilities. Each in itself is an incomplete method that would not give a true picture, according to NU faculty and administration.

Data Processing
"Faculty evaluation is the one thing on this campus that cannot be done by a data processing system," Breckenridge said.

"It (evaluation) deals with people. Impressions vary, they are colored by mannerisms, the likes and dislikes of the evaluator show through. Faculty evaluation is, and will continue to be—subjective, fragmented, and individual."

Plastic Uses Head Meeting

A Nebraska conference on the many uses of plastic for carrying gas, water and sewage began at the University of Nebraska Center today.

More than 50 persons including plumbers, architects, mechanical engineers, city inspectors, home builders, and building code officials are expected to attend the conference.

There will be a series of discussions on the use of plastic for acid draining and waste systems, water distribution and irrigation, gas distribution, and water service from the meter to the house. The program will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the Nebraska Center.

Summer Nebraskan

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Teachers Are 'Winging It' For Educational Heights

Reading and writing haven't been forgotten, but many Nebraska teachers are now winging it as well.

Nebraska has been teaching teachers to fly as a part of its broader program of aerospace education for teachers. The hope has been that these teachers will be better equipped to imbue children with knowledge and interest in air and space.

During the four summers of Project TOGA (Teacher Orientation to General Aviation), 60 teachers have learned to fly.

15 Flying Teachers
Each summer, 15 teachers learned to fly and were given instruction to help them pass the Federal Aviation Agency examination.

The teachers were trained through the solo stage. At the conclusion of the course, each teacher was given \$200 credit with his local operators so that he might continue his training and receive his private pilot's license.

The subsidy for this program, plus many of its leaders, comes from the Nebraska Department of Aeronautics.

Project TOGA has a second part, also. In addition to the 60 teachers who have been trained, 23 college instructors in the field of education have received pilot training.

This summer, however, Project TOGA is not in effect. The guiding force behind Nebraska's air and space program, Dr. Frank E. Sorenson, director of summer sessions, said that the program is currently being evaluated by those who were involved with it.

Miss Sharon Meyer was one of those who were involved in Project TOGA. A sixth grade teacher from Hastings, Miss Meyer took her pilot training in the summer of 1964.

Glowing Evaluation
Miss Meyer's evaluation of Project TOGA was glowing. She counted the benefits as everything from a general feeling—"I'm more enthusiastic about the things I do" to a specific instance—"It (flying) fits in with the science curriculum. I have a much better understanding of air and weather. I taught a unit on aviation and one on space, and it all tied in beautifully."

Pondering her feelings about Project TOGA, Miss Meyer continued, "I think it makes teachers become so involved... it was natural to bring it into class. Our world is becoming so much more aerospace minded. Children must learn that the whole world is their community. They can't be isolated."

Personal Experience
But flying, even for a teacher, is a very personal experience.

"My first lesson was also the first time I'd been up in an airplane." Then with a laugh, she added, "I just wanted to look out the window."

Miss Meyer will be working on her masters next year at the University. She will also be in charge of the instructional material department in elementary education.

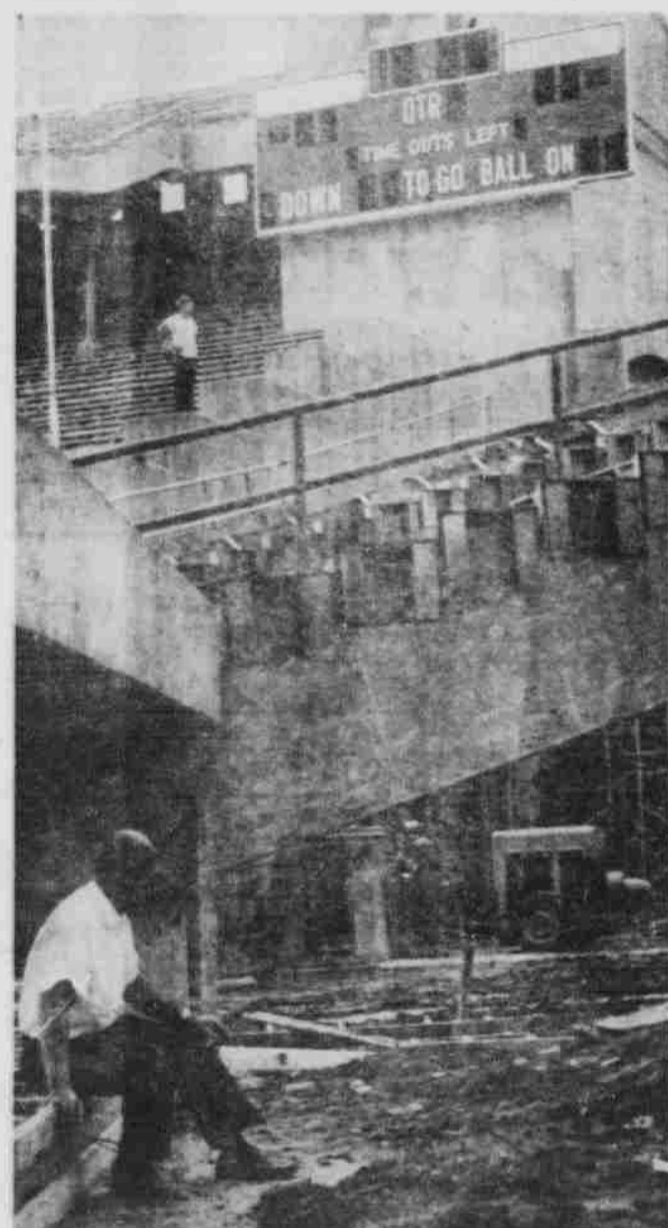
Flying Field Trip
And when Miss Meyer's sixth grade went on a field trip, they went high above the field.

Some of the students were scared, perhaps. Miss Meyer remembers that one boy covered his eyes and said "Oh, I'm scared." But when the

plane was up, he opened his eyes and looked around. "I'm not scared anymore," he said and then began busily to chatter about how small

everything looked way down there. Then maybe he felt like a lucky kid, one who could say, "My teacher is a pilot."

20% To Go



Head Trainer Paul Schneider watches a crane lift materials onto the North Stadium which is 80 per cent on its way to completion. (See Story on Page 6)

Study Limited By Facilities

Research capabilities at the University of Nebraska are limited now by physical facilities, libraries and personnel.

Dr. Merk Hobson, vice chancellor and dean of faculties, so testified before the Senate Committee on Government Research at a hearing last week in Washington, D.C. He said if matching federal funds were available to institutions like Nebraska on a long-range program, it might be possible to use local sources more effectively during a period of rapid expansion.

Federal Grants
The committee was told that the University of Nebraska received federal grants of \$7,746,375 for the fiscal year ending July 1, 1965. This amount was exclusive of special facilities grants and represented an increase of \$2,389,065 over the preceding year.

Additional federal support for institutions which have long traditions in graduate education, but which have not been able to develop full capabilities in research were advocated by Dr. Hobson. He said such support would benefit the nation's research capability.

Institutions Encouraged
"In addition, newer institutions of potential quality could and should be encouraged," said Dr. Hobson in his testimony. "Such a development would further the Ph.D. producing potential of the country."

In the past, institutions most heavily engaged in research activities have been the principal beneficiaries of federal support. Educational institutions have secured support on the basis of demonstrated competence of the in-

vestigator and the technical merits of the proposal.

No Quarrel
"In general, the academic community has no quarrel with this type of support," said Hobson. "These practices and procedures have had a profound effect upon higher education and have established some trends which may not be in the long-term interest of higher education in the United States. The larger graduate school has become larger to the point where the traditional concept of the doctorate is disappearing."

If the prediction of a need for 80,000 persons with Ph.D. degrees annually by 1980 is realistic, a far greater base for excellent graduate education must be established, the Nebraskan said. One means of effecting this would be to provide greater research and development support for smaller institutions with long and relatively substantial traditions in graduate education and research.

Other Means
Other means of providing a more equitable distribution of federal research funds would be through the use of regional consortia. Hobson said the Mid-America Association of State Universities provides a good example of a consortium of institutions not now receiving federal support to the extent of their capabilities. The University of Nebraska is a member of that association.

Hobson concluded that in achieving wider distribution of research and educational capability that efforts be made to achieve a high degree of institutional autonomy within recognizable needs for controls of quality.

Tax Expert Says Laws Slandered

Whatever its fate at the hands of the voters next November, Nebraska's income tax law has been slandered, a University of Nebraska tax expert said Saturday.

Dr. Edward B. Schmidt, professor of economics, told a state labor leaders conference at the Nebraska Center that the Nebraska tax has been unfairly labeled as "regressive" in several public discussions.

Large Bite

To label a tax regressive, he said, is to say that it takes a proportionately larger bite from the total income of a small-income man than from the total income of the big-income man.

The Nebraska income tax, now awaiting life or death at the polls as the result of a successful referendum petition campaign, does not deserve the regressive label, Dr. Schmidt said.

Tax Examples

He gave examples which showed that if the Nebraska tax took 2.6% of a \$5,000-a-year man's income, it would take 4.2% from the income of a \$15,000-a-year man, assuming that each headed families of four members.

His sample computations:

Taxpayer:	Jones	Smith	Adams	White	Green
Total Income	\$2,000	3,000	5,000	12,000	25,000
Four Exemptions	2,400	3,600	6,000	14,400	30,000
Netr. Taxable Income	0	2,400	5,000	6,600	12,000
*Tax Bill @ 5% Rate	0	120	250	330	600
*Tax Rate of Income	0	2.6%	3.3%	4.0%	4.2%

*The rate in Nebraska's law is adjustable; this rate assumed, but whatever the rate, the pattern would be the same.

Those who have charged Nebraska's income tax with regression, Dr. Schmidt said, may have assumed that the charge is true because the Nebraska law provides for a flat income tax rate.

When property or sales taxes are charged on a flat rate, he said, they are generally conceded to be regressive but this is not the case with the income tax because income taxes are based on the total earned. The property tax, he said, reaches only that part of the citizen's wealth which has been converted to property and the sales tax reaches only the amount of income spent for taxable purchases.

Flat-Rate "Progressiveness"
The flat-rate income tax, Dr. Schmidt said, has a modest, built-in "progressiveness," that is, a feature which is opposite of regressiveness, and therefore tends to claim a larger percentage of total income as the income rises.

Had Nebraska wanted more progressiveness in its income tax than the present pending law provides, this could have been accomplished by using a graduated rate structure, he said.

"Nebraska people," Dr. Schmidt said, "may decide to reject the income tax but they should not base their decision on the erroneous charge that it is a regressive tax."

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