

Making education relevant

A long standing complaint of students has been that their college education is not "relevant" to the world they live in. However, two recent developments show that University officials have been busy formulating education programs that promise to offer innovative alternatives to the typical lecture class.

One of the new programs, NOVA (Nebraska Opportunities for Volunteers in Action) is a social action program funded by ACTION, the new federal agency which coordinates the Peace Corps, Vista and other service programs. NOVA currently gives over 100 students from the three NU campuses 30 credit hours and subsistence wages for one year spent in volunteer community service.

NOVA volunteers will gain valuable experience in the field to supplement their formal education. Hopefully, students planning to be teachers, social workers or psychologists will develop a greater understanding and compassion as a result of their community work.

University officials should be complimented for securing the grant for NOVA, which promises to be one of the most exciting programs ever developed at Nebraska. Besides being an innovative program, it answers the demand of NU students to be granted credit for field work. University officials should make every effort to expand the program to accommodate as many students as possible.

In another new development, University administrators recently announced tentative plans for "University College," which would be an innovative degree-granting college at UNL.

The proposed curriculum of the college would include two years of general interdisciplinary studies followed by two years of specialized studies. The program would stress flexibility and offer both courses in the humanities and the sciences. The proposed college, still under intensive evaluation, is the result of a \$250,000 matching grant from the Ford Foundation.

Student demand for educational reform at UNL has ebbed since May, 1970 when an all-University townhall meeting called for the creation of a "New University" to provide more relevant education. However, "University College" and NOVA demonstrates that educational reform is still a high priority of University officials and that they are moving the school forward in the field of innovative education.

We gotta get out of this place

The tragedy of the Vietnam War has again been brought before the American people recently by the strong arm tactics used by South Vietnam President Thieu in that country's upcoming Presidential election.

However, there will be no free election since Thieu has forced all the other candidates off the ballot. Instead there will be a referendum, like those held in Communist countries. The Thieu dictatorship now sits on the throne of 45,000 American war dead.

National columnist Tom Braden recently pointed out that since Thieu has established a dictatorship, the last justification for U. S. military involvement has crumbled.

President Nixon has told the American people that we had two reasons for remaining in Vietnam. The first was to get the U. S. prisoners of war back and the second was to ensure a chance for the survival of a free government in South Vietnam.

North Vietnam eliminated the first reason when it offered to return American prisoners once the U. S. declares a specific withdrawal date. Now Thieu has crippled reason number two. A free government without free elections is a contradiction in terms.

The U. S., through its Vietnamization program, has ensured a chance for the survival of the current government in South Vietnam. But the question remains how long will Vietnamization continue?

The U. S. should quit worrying about Thieu's dictatorship and instead should concentrate on efforts to free the prisoners and withdraw from Vietnam. This means setting a definite withdrawal date.

Realpolitik calls for some U. S. aid to South Vietnam, but the current South Vietnam government is certainly not worth the continued sacrifice of American soldiers.

Gary Seacrest.



bill smitherman
Nostalgia and a few hard facts

The harvest moon bathed the campus in red light once again; the fifth autumn.

In the four years that had gone before its rising, many things had changed and others stayed the same.

Freshmen still begin the year wandering across the malls, looking lost. Lines seem to form everywhere and stretch off into the sunset. Bureaucratic confusion is practiced almost like a religion, world without end.

But other, more important, things have changed. In my first fall, 1967, the Vietnam war was still at its height and the Silent Majority was quiet and unnamed. Most of us thought there was some justification for the fighting.

ASUN met quietly each Wednesday and didn't bother anyone much. The student voice was low. The Vietnam Moratorium was more than two years away.

There were riots in the cities as ghetto dwellers became militant, but the university still taught strictly "liberal arts." Social problems were for the graduate level. But, there were powerful currents here that we scarcely felt beneath us. Little by little the carefully built facade was slipping from Vietnam and the poor. Lyndon Johnson looked haggard from trying to hold up the shield.

I remember hearing arguments outside an SDS booth in the union. Pictures of mutilated Vietnamese children were on display and the people in the booth talked about following the lead of Berkeley.

Some argued that the war was necessary to stop Communism and that students should only have the voice in their own affairs they were able to pay for. The

arguments sounded good in 1967. Now they sound hollow. The peace symbol appeared in a few places. Most of us didn't know what it meant. It was just a sign of the left.

But the red moon over the campus reflects less Vietnamese blood now. The war is winding down and almost no one supports it now. They have seen that the fight was false and hollow, a politician's war, like most.

Students now have the vote. They are no longer just a faceless glob of unrepresented humanity. They are a power to be reckoned with.

Though freshmen still wander vacantly, looking for Burnett Hall or Oldfather or CBA, they are caught up in powerful forces of change just by being here. They will be listened to when they decide to speak.

There are real hopes of enlightenment, real hopes of understanding and hopes of a really new generation. The times, if the reader will excuse the phrase, really are changing. Let's hope the change continues for the better.

In future writings I hope to cover many subjects. This hopefully to be my only column of nostalgia. As Lewis Carroll put it:

"The time has come," the Walrus said,
 "To talk of many things:
 Of shoes-and ships-and sealing wax-
 Of cabbages-and kings-
 And why the sea is boiling hot-
 And whether pigs have wings."

LETTERS to the NEBRASKIAN

Brevity in letters is requested and the Daily Nebraskan reserves the right to condense letters. All letters must be accompanied by writer's true name but may be submitted for publication under a pen name or initials. However, letters will be printed under a pen name or initials at the editor's discretion.

Dear Editor,
 Steve Tiwald's letter of September 8 riled me good. Partly because it wasn't true, and mostly because he called me irresponsible without provocation, justification or reason.

Steve said in effect, that even though I was correct in my comments concerning the search committee we just finished serving on, I had no business making those criticisms, because he had judged me to be irresponsible. That is approximately the same thing the white supremacist power structure in this country has been telling blacks and other underestimates like students, pinks and poor

people for years: "we don't consider your criticisms valid because you don't meet our standards."

First, I was not irresponsible. When I was interviewed by the ASUN nominating committee I said, in response to their question of how much time I could spend on the committee during the summer, that I worked for a living and farmed during the summer but would be able to attend most of the important meetings and I would do the best I could. And that is what I did.

Second, and more importantly, even if I were irresponsible, who is Steve Tiwald to decide who can and

cannot criticize what? Who elected him God? And what is more important—that we gather all the valid criticism we can concerning this search committee to prevent needless duplication of errors in future committees, or decide who ought to be able to offer valid criticism on the search committee?

I think that Steve ought to get his priorities straight. If he is going to resort to cheap name calling tactics, I will make him eat his words. Tiwald should be at Hyde Park this Thursday at 3:30 p.m. wearing a gun.

John K. Hansen, student member of the Chancellor Search Committee

d.b. varner
Revising NU by-laws

The following are excerpts from President D. B. Varners comments in June to the 36-member University of Nebraska Study Committee, which is now in the process of revising the University's by-laws.

There are three particular areas which have been a matter of some concern for some time, and I should like to identify them with the hope that you will devote some serious thought to each of them.

The first of these concerns has to do with the general concept of involvement in decision making. Yet I must confess to a degree of concern about how much involvement is appropriate and at what point we have moved to gross wastefulness of scarce human talent. All of us who have had experience in administration know the value of open lines of communication and of participating with appropriate persons in the making of decisions. Not only is it important that this be done from the standpoint of internal morale, but it also harnesses the far flung abilities of many competent contributors.

Yet as I have watched the proliferation of committee after committee within the University, I have been depressed by the growing cumbersome nature of the decision making process. As each group claims its "right" to participate and in turn creates its structure and sub-structure of committees, it is little wonder that the University moves with its characteristic awkwardness.

The increasing involvement of faculty and staff time on internal non-academic matters has been brought into sharp focus in the course of the past year as this University has grappled with a sequence of problems emerging from the events of May 1970. Mercifully I shall not recount them here, but let me suggest that no one in this University could be proud of the number of man hours which went into one or two or three of the controversial cases at this University in the past fifteen months.

In retrospect I have been persuaded that surely there must be a better way for a university to manage these kind of problems. I am increasingly persuaded that the extensive and expensive use of faculty and student time in dealing with the more serious internal disciplinary matters cannot be justified. It seems to me that there must be a more effective scheme—from every point of view—to accommodate these situations. For example, I have found attractive the argument advanced by one of the members of the law faculty of the University of Wisconsin in which he proposes that an external hearing officer or external hearing body be utilized.

Such an external mechanism could protect the rights of the accused, as well as the institution, accumulate the evidence, and submit this to the governing board, the appropriate administrative officer, or even to a designated faculty committee. In light of our own enormous expenditure of manpower in the course of these past months, I should

think that this approach would warrant serious consideration.

As an alternative to some of our existing patterns, I have wondered occasionally if we might not find it more expeditious to elect annually a small cabinet of respected and senior faculty members to work closely with the campus presidents with the recognition that their teaching responsibilities must be commensurately lessened. While I am not making this as a proposal, and I have not thought about its many ramifications, it would seem just possible that this kind of body, given broad powers by the faculty, could achieve a more desirable end result with far less outlay of human manpower. If it has merit at the faculty level, it may similarly have merit from the standpoint of student organizations.

A third alternative—and I suggest this with understandable timidity—is that the administration be entrusted with the mission of administration—that there might be some belief that the



administrators have been chosen because they are competent, because they are honest, and with the expectation that they can and will perform in the best interests of the University as a whole and of the individuals involved.

My purpose in flagging this area to your attention is not to deny the spirit of participation but rather to ask if we may not have gone too far already in this area in terms of the well-being of the institution. I have seen so many thoroughly competent teachers and scholars spend endless hours in committee activities with frequently questionable end products—and while all this has been occurring, I have been mindful of the great contributions which could have been made in their assigned areas of responsibility.

I hope you will give serious and extensive thought to the notion of making it possible to the maximum extent for teachers to teach, for scholars to be involved with their scholarship, for students to learn and to grow, and for administrators to accommodate their assigned responsibilities—all with a minimum expenditure of manpower.

The second major area to which I would invite your particular attention has to do with the concept of tenure. I am sure that I do not have to underscore for you here the fact that tenure is under attack nationally. You and I understand what tenure is and we also understand that the alleged abuses are rare in the academic community. Yet it is doubtful if any of us who have spent some time in a

university would deny that abuses have existed, that occasionally tenured faculty members go into early retirement at full pay.

It is my belief that substantial changes will occur in the system of tenure as we now know it to be, and it would be my hope that we might be creative enough to identify and to preserve the strengths of the tenure system and eliminate the potential for abuses. I do not suggest to you today that I have the answer to this sensitive problem.

A first approximation of this concept would go something like this. Tenure would be awarded through an appropriate procedure and at a specified time to a faculty member for a given term—perhaps a five-year term. At the end of this first tenure term, a panel of peers—possibly from other universities—would be assembled to review the continued growth and effectiveness of the tenured faculty member. If this group of peers concluded that he was indeed continuing to perform with effectiveness, if he was continuing to grow in his teaching and/or his scholarship, his tenure would be extended for an additional five years subject again to the same review process.

A plan of this kind would protect the tenured faculty member against political witch-hunts and would assure a continuation of tenure as long as the individual demonstrated his worth. On the other hand, it would protect the University's interests in assuring that tenured faculty members merited this continued institutional commitment.

The third and last suggestion which I would place before you for your consideration is one closely related to the concept of tenure. I am increasingly of the opinion that administrative appointments should be for a fixed term subject to the same kind of external scrutiny as I have suggested for tenured faculty members. The length of the term is open to a good deal of argument. At the maximum, in my judgment, such a term would be five years and it might be desirable for review periods to be fixed each three years.

Let me conclude as I began by reminding you that the work which you are beginning is of the utmost importance to the effective and proper functioning of the University of Nebraska. To do this job well requires from each of you an understanding of the nature of a university, its relationship to the people of the state and to the legislature. It calls for a particular sensitivity to the authority and responsibilities assigned to the Board of Regents. At the same time you can never lose sight of true purposes of a university and the particular purposes of the University of Nebraska.

Your assignment is a difficult one, but important work has a characteristic of being difficult and sometimes frustrating. Yet the task is important enough to warrant the best efforts of our best people, and I personally am delighted that you are willing to join in this enterprise.

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