

History of Right

By Peter Anderson

Student right is a right that has come to us in the last 100 years since the 18th to 19th century at UNL.

More than 100 years ago, people were the ones when UNL had fewer than 100 students. Since then, students have worked to increase student rights.

In those early years, things didn't always come up with stalks. Coed visitation and having alcohol in the dorms weren't issues in 1880. Students then seemed to think other facets of student life were higher on their list of priorities.

According to "Centennial History of the University of Nebraska" by former UNL history professor Robert Manley, the validity of entrance exams was being questioned by students. The students apparently did not object to the examinations so much as to the inconsistent and vague way in which they were given.

One of the ideas Manley describes involved professor Osmond C. Drake, who had the responsibility of conducting entrance exams during the 1870's.

"Drake had a deep voice and a stern demeanor and he took his job very hard. He was an iron fist and he was very strict. He had a habit of saying 'You must do this' and 'You must do that' and he would appear in the classroom. 'You must do this' and 'You must do that' and he would say 'Well, well'." The boy was in the process of being asked to leave the room. He asked finally, "Oh, anywhere, and Drake. The boy took up a book and read a few lines, 'That will do,' said Drake. 'You have passed'."

Since that time entrance exams have been standardized across the nation but students have easily forgotten the fight made to better their situation.

Student activism struck another blow in 1873 when students demanded to have access to the 2,000-book library for more than one hour each day. In response to the demands, the library remained open to students for two hours a day.

The proposal that students be taken out of all classes UNL had in 1874 kept the library open for students. The official reason was that the library was

not to be used by the students.

The administration probably had good reasons about the fees because in 1875 and 1876 two rows of trees that had been planted around the campus were cut off by wandering grasshopper hordes, Manley wrote.

Early in the twentieth century, students questioned the requirement to attend chapel every day. The University had taken upon themselves the full responsibility of spiritual and moral guidance of the students, but as the University grew and students explored the sciences, they began to raise questions about the truths of revealed scripture," Manley wrote.

In 1906, a local minister charged that the University was a "hotbed of infidelity and that its students and graduates were generally infidels of the worst type."

Despite the charges and the question of the validity of the scriptures, because of the University's reputation, the charges were not to be heard by the

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Through the debate which followed, the administration kept quiet because, as Manley explained, the military department had been a headache for a long time.

One headache occurred in 1905 when the commander ordered his cadets to fix bayonets and force the Nebraska-Cotner University baseball game off the combined drill athletic field so the cadets could practice. This came to be known as the "the battle of the diamond."

The push to end compulsory military training was aided because of the designation of the University as a "land grant" institution and a "land grant" institution.

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In the 40's and 50's students asked for 120 hours for staying out at night, while today they want more open hours in the dorms. Students also began to see their dorms as something they lived in, not out of.

The second consistency concerns the consumption of alcohol. In the University's early days, even students of drinking age were prohibited from drinking in bars and saloons. Now more students are able to drink and are asking to be able to have alcohol in their dormitory rooms.

The 1968 student handbook described the primary objective of the University as being to provide facilities, staff and equipment with the goal of "total education." "Total education," it explained, "includes acquisition of a potential knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will result in increasingly positive behavior."

A statement from the regents also

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By Nancy Stohs

The issues may not be too different, but the tone and methods used in achieving complete right for students seem to be.

The major issues facing UNL today are alcohol on campus and extending coed visitation hours.

Lowering of Nebraska's legal age from 21 to 19 has steered the argument toward legal adult rights and away from student rights.

Recurrent denials of student proposals by the Board of Regents have led student leaders to seek lawsuits, stage boycotts and introduce bills in the Nebraska Legislature instead.

Different too are the names and faces of the leaders who head the unending battle to achieve complete student rights.

The Daily Nebraskan talked with Carolyn Grice, Residence Hall Association (RHA) president, Ann Henry, ASUN president, and UNL Young Democrat Blane Osterman, about student rights, what they're doing to achieve them and the obstacles they face in their job.

RHA is seeking the right for students to determine their own residence hall policies, Grice said.

"We're just as capable as anyone to decide the type of rules to live under," she said. "After all, it's our money, and dorms are not supported by tax dollars."

Proposals for both coed visitation and alcohol in living units were defeated by the regents in June.

The defeated visitation proposal would have extended hours from a maximum of six hours daily to a maximum of eight hours on weekdays and 12 on Saturday and Sunday.

In August, regents extended visitation from six hours to 12 hours on Saturday only.

In response to what was called a "half victory", several dormitories boycotted weekend visitation, and Smith Hall contacted a lawyer about a possible lawsuit.

Currently an RHA visitation committee is trying to define legally the relationship between residence halls and housing, Grice said.

"We hope it will be a tenant-landlord relationship," she said. According to her, there may be enough loopholes in Nebraska's laws that alcohol and visitation would have to be allowed.

In the meantime, RHA is working to get 12 hours on Sunday and eight on weekdays, Grice said there are a number of students who want 24-hour visitation, but still more students that not.

Like coed visitation, the question of alcohol on campus is playing the backfield for awhile.

Ann Henry said an ASUN Differential Housing Committee just organized will prepare a proposal to submit to the regents next spring. It will cover a broad spectrum of campus living, including coed halls, visitation and probably alcohol, she said.

She said she thought waiting was the wisest step.

"The regents were so overly against the idea (alcohol and visitation) to start with, bringing it back over and over isn't going to help," she said.

The regents in June voted down 4-2 a proposal to allow alcohol in campus living units and the Nebraska Union, Nebraska Center, Sheldon Art Gallery and the Faculty Club on special occasions.

The 1974 Legislature may find itself faced with a similar bill next January if the UNL Young Democrats (YD) carry out their plans.

According to senior Blane Osterman, YD administrative assistant, Sen. Steve Fowler has offered to sponsor such a bill.

Leading the way



Osterman said YD's haven't drafted the bill yet because they are looking for cosponsors.

However, he said the chances of its passing are "shaky," one problem being that there are still minors on campus.

Speaking for residence hall students, Grice said, "We all feel we're capable enough to handle ourselves. Alcohol is one of the rights granted to us by the Legislature, and we should have it. We shouldn't have it pushed down to a bar."

As Osterman said, it's not a question of gaining "student rights", but recognizing legal adult rights.

Getting the regents to realize this is another story, the student leaders agree.

"The idea of *in loco parentis* has been around too long to just brush it aside," Henry said.

One YD goal, Osterman said, was to get enough students involved in the legal and political processes of the state to make regents and the public realize students are adults.

"It's very discouraging," said Henry. "More depressing than that they (regents) turned us down was the reasons they gave."

"We approached them as legal adults and were turned down by more regents on the grounds that alcohol is not good, so we shouldn't have it. But they can go home and have a drink. It's just not equitable."

Grice said the biggest obstacle facing RHA's efforts now is lack of communication and distrust on both sides.

"We haven't had anyone come out and say, 'We think you're right, what can we do?' Instead, they say, 'We hear your viewpoint, but there's nothing we can do or find a way to do it and then go through it.'"