

Zumberge stresses students' role as adults

By Nancy Stohs

UNL Chancellor James Zumberge, world-renowned glaciologist who has made scientific expeditions to Alaska, Antarctica and Greenland, gets orders to "break the ice" even in Nebraska.

So he was ordered this summer in the following message from a North Carolina UNL alumna:

"I simply cannot understand you. If you are stupid enough not to know that our country is fast approaching second-rate and that alcohol is one of the chief reasons, I'll tell you so...How did (you) ever get to be chancellor of Nebraska?"

This is one of several dozen letters alumni and parents sent Zumberge criticizing his support of the alcohol and visitation proposals defeated by the regents in June.

Zumberge, who said he hasn't changed his stand, answered every one.

"The Legislature declared students adults," the father of four college students said. "Adults are provided with the opportunity to make a choice. I don't want to have to make choices for students that they should be making themselves."

"The only way you grow up is to learn to decide between right and wrong, not to have someone telling you all the time," he said.

He said the same applied for extending visitation hours. He said 24-hour visitation is impractical "because it goes beyond the logic of students that their dormitory room is home. Nobody has 24-hour visitation in their home."

However, Residence Hall Association's (RHA) eight-hour-weekday and 12-hour-weekend requests were reasonable, he said.

"The regents tend to equate both requests by students (alcohol and visitation) in the same way," he said. The regents see liberalizing either one as a step toward greater student immorality according to Zumberge.

Answering letters and backing student's rights isn't Zumberge's only job. He said his main goal as chancellor is to "create an environment scholars can thrive in," so students are "as free as they want to pursue academic goals with the least administrative interference."

Practically, this means "getting enough money to make it all possible," he said.

The Minneapolis native came to UNL two years ago from the University of Arizona, where he was earth sciences college dean.

He was graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1946 with a B.A. in geology and received his Ph.D. there in 1950, also in geology.

Zumberge, 49, has spent 23 years as either a college administrator or instructor. However, he said he hasn't let his geological interests crumble with his administrative paperwork.

On the walls of the office, which contains his celebrated round table used during conferences, hang maps of Antarctica, Greenland and Great Britain, and on his bookshelves is *Elements of Geology*, one of 10 books he wrote.

"I don't go just to go," he said of his polar trips, one of which produced Cape Zumberge, Antarctica. "I go to Antarctica for the same reason the chemist goes to his laboratory or the astronomer to his telescope. It's part of the research problems I'm involved in."

His job at UNL is full-time, he said, but he still has a "spiritual interest" in expeditions and plans on making one next fall, "the regents and the Lord willing."

Meanwhile, he said there are several changes he would like to see at UNL.

"If I could somehow do away with the mess of registration, or give to students at first request the exact class they want, or figure out a way to get the library functioning..."

"Or insure that when you go to class you'll be met by a professor who's not a 'hack' but an outstanding, stimulating teacher... This is what has to be done," he said.

"What I'm describing is unattainable Utopia," he said, "but simply because it's perfection doesn't mean we shouldn't strive to get as close as possible. That's the name of the game all through life."

He said he wished faculty members would be less suspicious of the administration's intentions and actions. He said he disagreed with the staff's frequent assertion that they're "timid" in asking for state financial support.

His advice for students is to keep the "number one priority" in front of them all the time. "Many are spending increasing amounts of time in activities not uniquely related to the college experience," he said.

There are many things you can learn at a university," he said. "But there's no place else to go to earn a degree. Do what only UNL can offer you. Take advantage of its unique aspects."

He also urged students to adopt his current attitude toward alcohol on campus and coed visitation which he described as "firm, persistent, but patient."



UNL Chancellor
James Zumberge

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