

# U.S. professors upset with low pay, funding-survey

By Gail Stork

Professors all over America are doing it, according to a recent survey of 161 campuses. They are complaining about the lack of money, advancement opportunities and quality education. And UNL professors agree.

"Money, said Richard Boohar, life sciences associate professor, summing up the problem. "Inflation is eating up everybody, including us."

Jim Lake, Faculty Senate president, agreed and said teachers are concerned about the same thing as farmers—their paycheck.

According to Gene Harding, journalism professor, salaries that hang behind the cost of living are problems faced by many workers, not just professors. But there are complications that apply only to universities.

He said the public has stopped looking

at the university as the answer to their problems and have quit investing in them.

The bucket-sized donations he recalled during the last decade's "golden age" of university research, have dried up, he said.

The funds are gone and the chance for research and publication, vital to a teacher's promotion, have gone with them, he added.

"If you chop down money, you're going to get frustration," Boohar said.

He said the administrators' job of reducing the budget deficit this year pulled promotion standards even tighter.

"They have to be able to justify you as a drain on the budget," he said. "They are doing their best, but that doesn't help the frustration."

Harding said the large number of middle-aged professors in universities also prevents promotion for the younger teachers.

"They (young teachers) all want to be

full professors, but what are they supposed to do? Wait until someone dies?"

Plus, he said colleges have been turning out a surplus of PhDs and all of them cannot get the job for which they are trained.

He said with promotion standards emphasizing research and publication, there are not enough places for them to publish something, even if they could do the research.

"It's really a trap," he said.

Allan Dittmer, UNL ombudsman, said universities harbor some teachers who do not like to teach, but stay because it's a job. He said the increase in this type of faculty member, because of increasingly scarce teaching positions, may contribute to the survey's negative results.

The survey cites professor disapproval of grade inflation and students who are increasingly unprepared, overly grade-conscious and eventually overtrained for the available jobs.

Professors disagree on the charges of decreasing student quality, as one of their gripes but all realize a change in student attitude toward grades.

Dittmer said according to tentative results of his office's survey, students are much more job conscious than ever. "They (students) downgrade education for its own sake and use it as a commodity," Dittmer said.

"This upsets teachers who view education as an intangible commodity that may be valuable for its own sake, he said.

Harding said full professors have a different problem, but one that causes restlessness in any occupation—middle-age.

He said when people get around 50 years old they start to wonder if they could do anything else or if what they are doing is worthwhile.

He said since a large group of professors are in that age bracket, this attitude may have reflected what the survey called "a pervasive mood of pessimism."

Despite this campus mood, the survey found only 4 percent said they would be happier somewhere else.

Harding said this could be because of the security older professors feel in their positions or because the tight job market keeps teachers where they have work.

Boohar said anyone who really likes teaching, not just as a job, but as a way to reach people, would not quit unless things get a lot worse.

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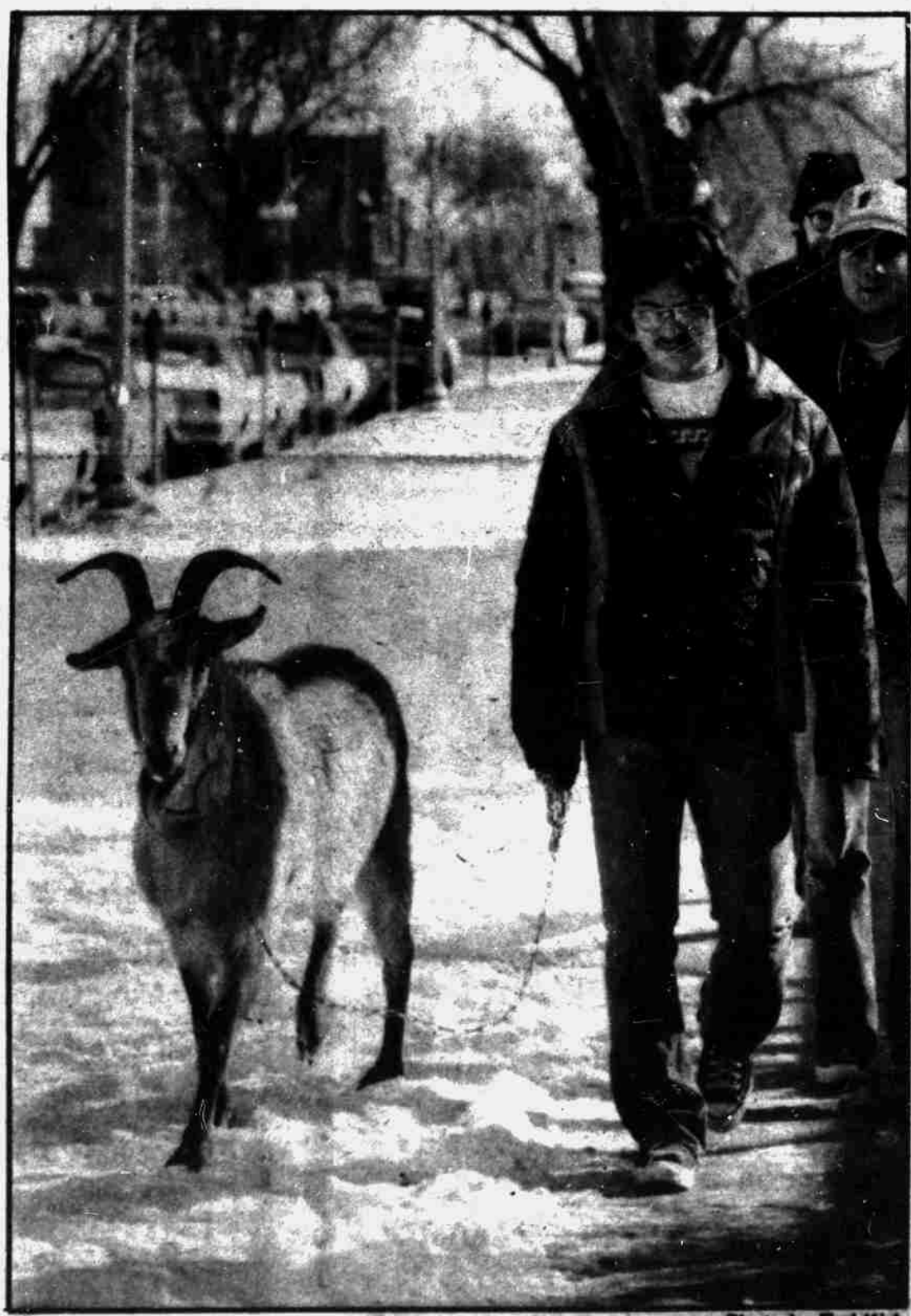


Photo by Ted Kirk  
Something grandma knitted for me? A cashmere sweater on-the-hoof is taken for a brisk stroll about campus by two pals, Mark Creglow and Bryan Wolfe.

## Professional cut-up considers woodchopping a sexy business

By Todd Hegert

"You might say I'm in the sex business," he says, but a glance at his clothing tells one the reference is obscure.

The connection between sex and selling wood probably is not obvious to anyone but a professional woodcutter like Steve Johnson.

"People buy wood as an ornament," he said. "They burn it on Christmas morning as the kids gather around. Or some guy burns it because he figures you are guaranteed sex with a romantic flame in the fireplace."

"You might say I'm in the sex business." Oddly enough, people do not buy wood to save money or fuel, Johnson said.

"The price of wood has increased more than 100 percent in the last two years, more than any other form of heating fuel," he said. "Wood just isn't competitive as a heating fuel."

Yet people have been buying more wood, Johnson said.

Standing in front of a dented and corroded 1965 GMC pickup filled with wood, smiling through a dirty-brown bristle of whiskers, Johnson looks the part of a woodcutter. He wears faded jeans and a work-worn jacket with his heavily insulated boots. His short, "redneck haircut" (by his own admission) is shaded by a brown hunting cap. His entire outfit is covered with a slight veneer of dirt and grease.

He does not always look like this, he said, explaining it is his business suit. And although the whiskers have a dirt-on-flesh look they are well trimmed.

Johnson graduated from UNL in 1976



Photo by Tim Ford

with a Bachelor of Arts in English. He laughs about the woodcutting business which he calls, among other things, ridiculous, depressing, uneconomical and corrupt.

He said he considers most of the people who buy wood from him foolish because they do not realize what they are buying.

The average price of a load of wood, called a cord, is \$55, Johnson said. For that price the wood is usually red elm or hackberry, he said.

Oak and ash are the best woods growing in this area because they burn the longest, he said. They sell for \$60 to \$70 a cord.

But Johnson said there is corruption in the business and most people are not getting what they think they are buying.

"Nobody knows what a cord is or what the different kinds of wood look like," Johnson said. "They are out of luck if someone sells them half a cord of red elm as a cord of ash."

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## NU Regents assess student fee dilemma

By Rod Murphy

Mandatory student fees for campus speakers, a topic to be discussed at the next NU Board of Regents meeting, remains an open issue with many board members.

Fees for speakers constitute a small percentage of total fee money, many regents have stressed. Most fee money presently is committed to pay various debts, including those for the University Health Center and Nebraska Union costs.

Board chairman Ed Schwartzkopf of Lincoln said there is no choice about how most of the money is allocated since it is committed to pay continuing costs.

The remaining fee money should be spent as the students see fit, Schwartzkopf said. Campus speakers fall into this category, he added.

Regents delayed a decision on the fees issue at their Jan. 7 meeting to determine a student opinion, he said.

Schwartzkopf said campus speakers "serve a great part of the educational process, as long as "all viewpoints are presented."

If the regents voted today, Schwartzkopf said, he would vote to continue funding speakers from student fees.

However, Regent Robert Koefoot of Grand Island said he opposes the measure.

Koefoot said he supports the idea that campus speakers should charge admission to pay for visits.

"I don't believe that every student should be obligated to pay for speakers," Koefoot said.

At the next regents meeting, Koefoot said, he plans to vote against using mandatory student fees for speakers.

Two other regents contacted said they would not comment until the February meeting.

Robert Simmons of Scottsbluff said he was "deliberately keeping an open mind" on the matter.

While he said he has read a lot on the subject, he said he has not formed an opinion.

"I still could be influenced by students," he said.

Regent Kermit Hansen of Omaha said he thought the projects funded by student fees were adequate.

However, Koefoot would not comment on student fee funding of speakers.

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