

Increasing GPAs make student assessment difficult

By Randy Essex

An increase in the average grade point average of UNL students "creates problems for employers, for staff and faculty," according to an associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Donald Burns said "grade inflation" exists at UNL, and makes it difficult to identify the best students or graduates.

The average GPA of UNL students last semester was 2.92.

"It (high average GPA) would be a good sign if the reason were that students were working harder . . . but it is unlikely that is the reason," Burns said.

To help solve the problem, a grade inflation committee was formed last year at the urging of faculty members, Burns said. Burns was the committee chairman.

The committee recommended that GPA data containing all-university GPA information, departmental averages and average GPAs for courses with enrollments of over 75, be circulated to faculty members annually.

Burns said the data gives faculty mem-

bers a means to compare their grading "scales to department and university averages.

"We don't really have equivalent GPA distribution," he said. The committee recommendations are a "subtle process" by which GPAs hopefully will be "deflated," without getting in the way of academic freedom, Burns stated.

"One can't really find reasons for grade inflation," Burns said.

He said liberalizing attitudes of faculty toward students in the late 1960's and early 70's may have been one cause of grade inflation.

According to the committee report, arts and sciences the music department average of 3.59 is the highest. The classics, english, actuarial science, theater, speech, pathology, speech communication and modern languages department have average GPAs over 3.00. The mathematics department has the lowest, 2.49.

Of courses in arts and sciences with enrollments over 75 last fall, Classics 100 had the highest average, 3.712. There were 17 courses with averages over 3.00, and 14 with averages under 2.5. Math 100C had the lowest average among the largest courses, 1.862.

Psychology 170, the course with the

second largest enrollment at UNL last semester had the second lowest GPA of courses in arts and sciences; 2.264. The largest course, Life Science 101, had an average of 2.41.

The university GPA was deflated .08 grade points last semester, from 3.00 during the fall semester of 1976. The cumulative GPA of UNL students is 3.00 up from 2.95 last year.

In Arts and sciences, the average GPA fell to 2.99, the first time in the past three fall semesters that the college did not have an average of over 3.00.

The average cumulative GPA for students in arts and sciences is 3.09.

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Physics professor gets his point across on bed of nails

By Todd Hegert

The laws of physics sometimes are hard to visualize, but UNL students in Physics 141 Monday saw one law brought into sharp focus.

They learned that the law of pressure as force per square unit area equals one hefty professor on a bed of very sharp nails.

Ralph Hight, associate professor of physics, said he promised his class a month ago that he would lie on a bed of nails because it was a dramatic way to demonstrate the laws of pressure.

So after explaining the equation for measuring pressure as force per unit area to the class, Hight delicately lowered his own force down onto an area composed of 1,080 six-penny nails.

"Since I'm considerably larger than you all this is going to hurt me more than it would hurt you," Hight, who weighs 240 pounds, explained as he lowered himself onto the skin-pricking perch.

The demonstration drew cheers and applause from most of the class. Some of the more skeptical students demanded to see if there was blood on his back. There was not.

Apparently lying on nails requires no religious medication or mystical deliverance.

"There is no secret to this," Hight said pointing to an equation on the blackboard. "You've never seen a fat East Indian on a bed of nails."

Hight said he got the idea for the bed of nails demonstration from another professor while teaching in Toledo, Ohio. It is not an uncommon demonstration because it is a very dramatic way to explain the law of pressure," he said. "But this is the first time it's been done at UNL."

The bed was made of a one and one half feet by six feet piece of plywood with nails pounded through at one-inch intervals. Hight said the demonstration was possible because his weight was distributed over such a large number of nails that the force at each point was not enough to puncture the skin.

"It hurts the most on the back of the head because it is a small area supported by few nails," Hight said.

Hight said Monday's class was the biggest and most attentive class he has ever had.

"The demonstration keeps the students' attention very well," Hight said. "Now they want me to walk on a bed of hot coals."

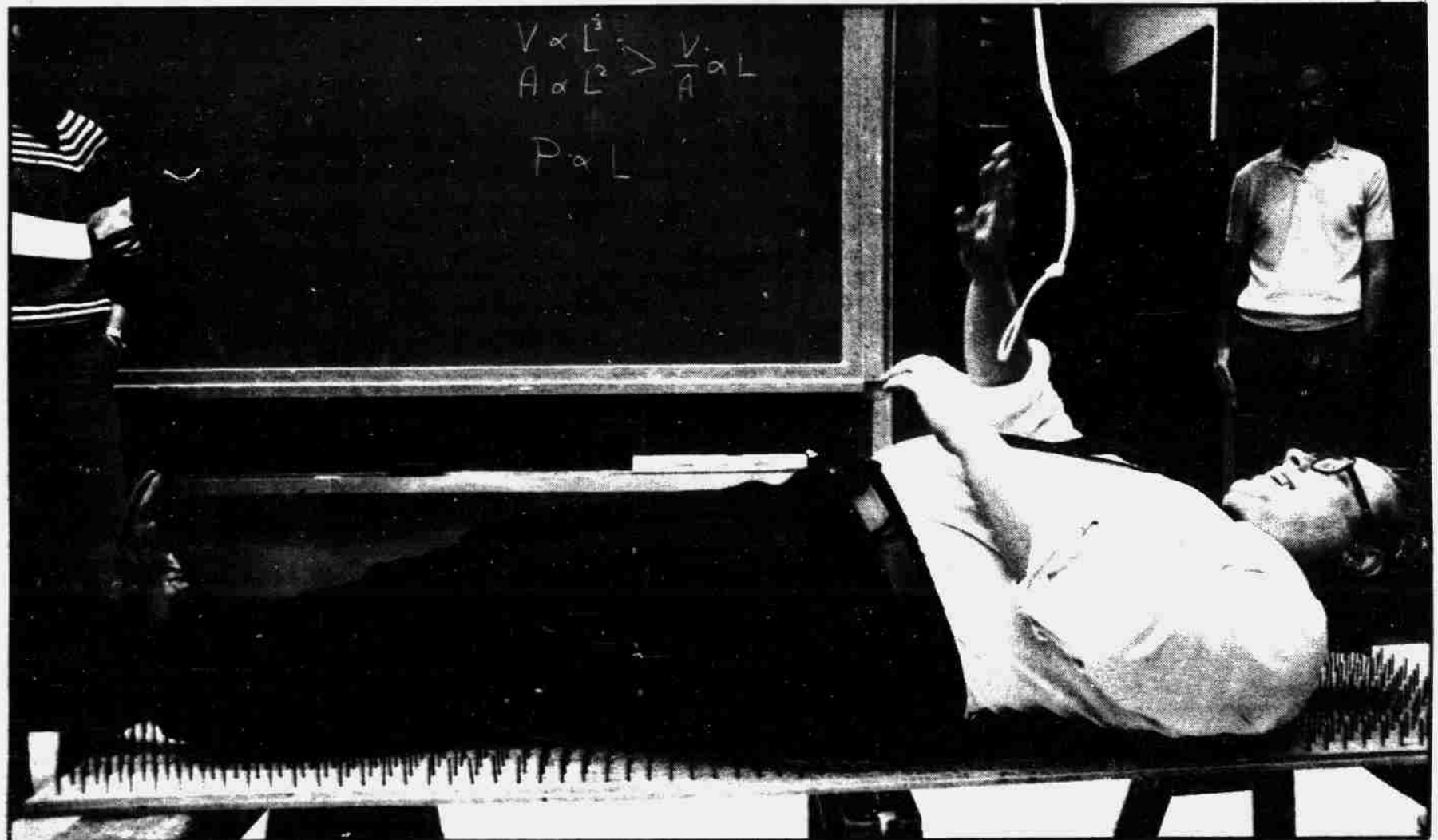


Photo by Ted Kirk

Physics professor Ralph Hight demonstrates the law of pressure as force per unit by lying on a bed of nails.

East Union adds surcharge to transfer meals

By Amy Lenzen

A 50 cent surcharge is assessed against city campus residence hall students who eat evening meals at the East Union.

The surcharge, which began Tuesday night, is to see if it will generate sufficient money, and have a limiting effect on the number of transfers, said UNL Housing Director Doug Zatechka.

Zatechka said the extra money will offset the labor costs of East Union due to the large number of transfers.

As many as 700 students have eaten at East Union for the evening meal, and the number often reaches 600, Zatechka explained. About 225 east campus residents eat at the Union nightly.

Zatechka said the surcharge will not be assessed at the noon meal because there has

not been an overcrowding problem.

Zatechka said Monday that every residence hall student would be notified of the surcharge by letter, and posters would be placed in residence halls.

Zatechka said he decided to implement a surcharge after he consulted East Union employees and Residence Hall Association members.

RHA recommended that a surcharge and/or a limit on the number of transfers be set. It was decided not to limit transfers because some sort of pre-registration procedure would be necessary and there is no time to set up a system, Zatechka explained.

Transfers to the East Union will be limited next fall, Zatechka said. The effectiveness of the surcharge will be considered this summer before a decision on how to limit transfers is made, he said.

Transfers must be limited, Zatechka said, because "the amount of money being transferred to East Campus for food service is excessive."

The Housing Office estimates that transfers cost the office about \$70,000 annually for food and labor.

East Campus students also have asked that transfers be limited because they cause long lines and other inconveniences.

"You see a lot of animosity developing between east and west campus," said Lyle George, president of the Burr-Fedde complex coordinating committee. "It would be nice if there was one meal that you could have essentially to yourself."

That is not possible when two or three people eating are from city campus, George said.

Special section

The NU Board of Regents has been the center of controversy and conversation this semester on issues ranging from tuition increases to the mandatory student fee funding of speakers.

The Daily Nebraskan, in a special five-page section beginning on page 7, compiles the views of and by the regents, student leaders, UNL administration and the Nebraska Legislature.

In addition, candidates for the 1st and 2nd District regent positions give their views.

Library sleuths recover files

'Twas a case which would have perplexed and taxed even the most famous sleuths and greatest of masterminds, Sherlock Holmes and Charlie Chan.

The facts in the case of "the-missing-cards" and the circumstances surrounding the discovery of the cards have proved to be baffling for investigating Love Library employees.

A library attendant last week discovered that the index cards for all books written, edited or compiled by John, Robert or Ted Kennedy were missing from the card files in Love Library.

Another attendant found the missing cards this week tucked between the pages

of a book in the library when he investigated what he called an "unusual bulge" in the book.

Dean Waddel, UNL assistant dean of libraries, speculated that the cards were taken by someone researching a project on the Kennedys.

"It would appear that rather than copying down the information, someone simply removed the cards," he said.

Waddel said he still is looking for clues to "who-dun-it" or leads to anyone working on projects involving Kennedy materials to solve the mystery of the missing cards.

inside wednesday

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