

opinion/editorial

Traditional values cloud perceptions

Values within any institution come and go as the years and tradition will allow.

When an institution becomes a closed system or fails to perceive itself in relation to the outside world, these values become especially defined and irreplaceable.

One example of institutionalizing is the special vocabulary used within an area of expertise. Use this jargon with anyone from another sector of society, and they are quickly confused to the meaning of the intended communication.

Individuals perceive their role and the role of their institutions differently. Often these perceptions can become traditional to a point that

society has lost track of these closed values or ethics and cannot understand the rationale behind them.

It is at this point that institutions should step back and attempt to perceive themselves in the way the rest of our fragmented society would. If society cannot understand the rationale for values which are deeply rooted, then perhaps it is time to re-evaluate those values—regardless of whether it violates tradition or the institutionalizing effect.

Values are important to the operation of any institution and the stability of any society is cemented firmly in this foundation. It is unfortunate, however, when this foundation has become so firmly settled

that new ideas (or old ideas for that matter) are totally rejected or condemned for the mere reason of tradition.

Within the realm of the journalism institution, values can have very serious implications. For example, could this country have been formed without a hostile and revolutionary colonial press? Did the methods behind which these journalists placed their beliefs violate promotional or ethical guidelines? And if they did, should traditional journalism have been sacrificed for such ideals?

As in any institution, it is hoped that values won't be placed so high that they are untouchable or unquestionable.

In journalism, we like to think that serving our readership comes first. Serving that readership includes not only providing the news, but ensuring efficiency from government, provoking thoughts and new ideas and generating interest from readership on important issues.

Perhaps one of the most important values in journalism is providing a forum for debate in a country where freedom of speech is so important.

Let's hope journalists don't forget that readers demand more than merely their personal interpretation of the news.

Harry Allen Strunk

Contest idea good, but not front page

By Liz Austin

Extra, extra, read all about it! Daily Nebraskan sponsors letter-writing contest.

The contest must be important news. After all, it got front page coverage last Wednesday while stories on an Afghanistan symposium and the proposed energy bill were moved to page three.

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In other words, "real news" was dubbed secondary to the Daily Nebraskan's promotion of a self-sponsored contest. This doesn't fit with the usual purpose of newspapers, which is to cover the news and not make it.

The theme of the contest is "How does the university contribute to the state?" According to the editor in chief the contest may offer readers an opportunity for input into the administration and the Legislature during the appropriation process.

Actually, the contest is a good idea. The contest could provide a forum for people who would not have an opportunity otherwise. Both the university and the public could benefit from ideas discussed in the contest letters.

The title of the contest should not have been "how does the university contribute to the state?" Perhaps not everyone would agree that it does contribute. Rather, it should be "does the university contribute to the state" and the editor in chief concedes this point.

However, I cannot agree that the promotion for the contest should have been on the front page.

According to the editor in chief, this is the most important issue with which the Daily Nebraskan will deal this semester, so it deserved front-page placement. Traditionally, the most important news or issues of the day are placed on the front page.

Placing the contest promotion on the front page isn't going to prompt any more readers to write letters. The person concerned enough to write a letter will be the same person concerned enough to read the entire paper and notice the contest no matter what page the promotion is on.

The people most bothered by Wednesday's front page are journalists. A traditional journalism ethic has been broken. Newspapers don't usually make a self-promoted contest more important than the "real news" of the day.

Still, I try to see the reasoning behind this. I realize that creativity is good, and I know of one journalism professor who stresses it in his classes. But I don't think he meant anything like an advertisement on the front page.



DN contest ad insulted journalists

The advertisement plastered on the front page of the Jan. 23 *Daily Nebraskan* was an affront to the integrity of journalists in general and student journalists in particular.

With just one issue, this semester's *Daily Nebraskan* has nullified the efforts of hundreds of journalists, past and present, struggling to make the newspaper credible to readers on campus and off.

It is one thing to jeopardize a newspaper's most cherished possessions—integrity and credibility—through an innocent error, but quite another through a deliberate act.

guest opinion

By its page-one play, the advertisement demonstrates that the *Daily Nebraskan* judged its own promotion the most important news of the day. This means stories buried on inside pages included:

- a political scientist's explanation of how the United States' passivity played a role in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan;
- a faculty member's comments on the effect of spending lids on the quality of American education;
- Gov. Charles Thone's reaction to a proposed energy conservation and independence bill;
- the Legislature's second-round defeat of a proposal to remove taxes from food sold in grocery stores.

The very phrasing of the contest question—"How does the University of Nebraska contribute to the state?"—asks for comments on only one facet of the issue and erroneously assumes that what is good for the university is good for all Nebraskans.

If the purpose of the contest is indeed to provide a forum and a means for communication between the students, general public, administrators and legislators,

then a better question might have been, "How important is the University of Nebraska to the state?"

Traditionally, it has been the role of the American press to function as the watchdog of the government and its activities. Similarly, it has been the role of the student press to keep vigil over the affairs of the administration.

By taking an advocate's role and aligning itself with the administration in its quest for a budget increase, the *Daily Nebraskan* has, in a system of checks and balances, compromised itself and its readers by tipping the scale to one side.

If the *Daily Nebraskan* truly is trying to serve its readers, as Editor Harry Strunk stated in his editorial that day, then why were readers forced to wade through disguised university propaganda in search of information?

The press and government make strange bedfellows. By that measure, this semester's *Daily Nebraskan* has prostituted itself and bastardized journalism.

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Opinions expressed on the editorial page are not necessarily those of the college, university, student body or *Daily Nebraskan* staff.

The *Daily Nebraskan* welcomes letters to the editor and guest opinions. Timeliness, clarity of writing and originality is considered when selecting material for publication.

All submissions are subject to editing and condensation and cannot be returned to the writer. Material should be typed if possible and submitted with the writer's name, class standing, academic major or occupation, address and phone number.

Mail or deliver letters and guest opinions to the *Daily Nebraskan*, Room 34, Nebraska Union, Lincoln, Neb. 68588.