

daily nebraskan



Photo by Mark Billingsley

Juggler Peter Nicolaus does his thing Tuesday morning behind the Nebraska Union. Nicolaus is shown juggling a bowling ball, chain saw and rubber ball; a feat he recommends only to the experienced juggler. He performed as part of UPC's Rainbow of Events kickoff program.

Writing skills of freshmen adequate

By Tom Mockler

Unlike some colleges, there appear to be no major complaints about the writing skills of incoming freshmen at UNL.

"At least by national measures, there are not a large number of students that are seriously disadvantaged as writers," said Gerry Brookes, vice chairman of the English department.

Brookes said that although there may be some problems, most are dealt with in ordinary composition classes.

"Certainly, you will hear plenty of people who think there is a severe problem," he said. "There are also a lot who will say that students write as well today as they ever have written."

Brookes said that UNL is at an advantage in that it doesn't have to deal with many of the problems that urban universities face, such as large numbers of people with urban dialects and members of families that don't speak English.

Brookes heads a writer's workshop for those with writing problems. He does it as "a small, personalized, nearly tutorial program for disadvantaged students."

Listed as English 159, it provides academic credit, but doesn't fill any college requirements. Brookes said, though, that only 25 to 30 students are in the workshop at one time. Currently, there are 3,400 students in freshman composition classes.

Brookes considers college writing skills adequate, adding that for most people, writing skill improves after they leave college.

"In a test that compared the writing skills of UNL Arts and Sciences College seniors with alumni, the alumni scored better. Some said this showed that writing skills declined among students presently in school.

"The fact is, one's writing will continue to improve as long as one has contact with the language," Brookes said. "The person who is entering the job market is naturally going to have a disadvantage compared to the person who has been out of college for 10 years."

Leslie Whipp, English department professor, said freshmen aren't to blame for writing deficiencies.

"If there's a problem, it's not in the freshmen," he said. "They aren't incompetent or deficient. Conditioning is the problem."

Whipp said the problem is that students tend to generate overly formal and "stiff" writing, which is a result of the influence of public schools and publishing. Whipp emphasized the need to do more personal writing, as opposed to the overemphasis on doing book reports and term papers.

"The methods used at Harvard in the 19th century and Oxford in the 17th have been lost," Whipp said.

David Stewart, an English instructor who teaches a freshman composition course, said he didn't see any major problems with freshman writing skills.

"There are small problems," he said. "There may be one person out of a couple classes who has any real problems."

Stewart, who is in his third year of instruction at UNL, said there might be problems with basic sentence structure and the structure of essays. But the major problem is "getting students to open up."

Proposed vet school criticized

By Jeff Goodwin

Twenty spaces for Nebraska residents went unfilled at veterinarian schools at Iowa State and Ohio State, according to a veterinarian who is opposed to the building of a veterinary college in Nebraska.

Dr. John J. McVaney of Omaha said that enough Nebraska students get into veterinarian schools in neighboring states.

"At this point it (the proposed veterinarian school) just isn't needed," McVaney said.

"The quality of instructors won't be as good as at other schools," McVaney said. "Faculty just don't want to come to a new school. The faculty already there is being underpaid."

McVaney also criticized the proposed use of "practicing professionals," that is veterinarians who would teach part-time at the college.

Dr. Earl O. Dickinson, in an interview with the Omaha World-Herald earlier this month, said there was a shortage of veterinarians.

"The shortage is real, but I don't believe it's justification for saying that another school should not be established," Dickinson said.

McVaney said there was no serious shortage of veterinarians in the state.

"The only town we've heard of that wants a veterinarian and hasn't been able to find one is Wakefield. And they have one within 10 or 20 miles," McVaney said.

Washington office records questions, gripes and praise

By Tricia Waters

The phone rings and a woman with a slightly southern-sounding voice answers. She identifies the caller's connection as the Presidential Enquiry Office at the White House.

The woman listens to the caller's comments on the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act and records them. In a few minutes, the exchange is over.

The office has 10 people working from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is located in the Executive Office Building next door to the White House. The 10 people record the comments of about 2,000 persons a day who call in to give President Ronald Reagan their 2 cents worth.

The office's number is 202-456-7639.

The office has been operating through several presidential administrations to give the public a way to respond to presidential actions, said Toni, a presidential aide who spoke to the Daily Nebraskan in a telephone interview. Security rules prevented her from giving her last name.

Toni said most callers are friendly and many tell where they are calling from. Tuesday, she received calls from Massachusetts, Wyoming, Texas, California and many other states.

People who ask questions get replies from the Presidential Correspondence Department, Toni said.

Lately, many callers have commented on budget cuts, elimination of the CETA program, sale of Airborne Warning and Control System planes to Saudi Arabia and the air traffic controllers strike.

"It just depends on what's in the news any particular day," she said.

The president gets many support calls, telling him that he's doing a good job, she said. Likewise, he gets calls critical of his actions.

The office was bombarded with calls during the days after the assassination attempt on Reagan, she said.

"Anytime the president goes public, we get a lot of response," she said. "Thursday will be a big day in this office." She said the president's Wednesday night speech would prompt many calls.

For many people, communication by phone requires less time and effort than sitting down and writing a letter.

Apparently, Americans are willing to spend more money than an 18 cent stamp to have their comments referred to the president. A phone call to the White House costs about \$2.50 for five minutes, according to Lincoln Telephone Co. rates.

inside wednesday

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Opinions from officials at other veterinary colleges differed on the matter.

Sue Hyland, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs for the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Wisconsin, supported the idea of a veterinary college at Nebraska.

"If they can combine things like research into it, it can be a broad state service," Hyland said.

"The history of other schools shows that it is a boon to the state economy."

Hyland also said the Wisconsin officials were looking into the possibility of offering a contract to Nebraska to provide for the education of Nebraska residents at Wisconsin.

She said it would be similar to arrangements Nebraska already has with such schools as Iowa State and Ohio State.

Hyland said the only thing keeping them from making an offer was uncertainty about when the school would open.

Dr. Kenneth H. Niemeyer, Assistant Dean for Student and Alumni Affairs for the Veterinary Medicine College at the University of Missouri, said that the number of applicants to veterinary colleges was going down.

"The number of applicants at our school is going down and I think this is true at most other schools," Niemeyer said.

Niemeyer said it was his "personal opinion" that a veterinary college was not needed at Nebraska.