

Editorial

Academics must be first, assistance second at UNL

There should be no question about it. UNL's primary responsibility is the education of its 24,764 students. Any other role the university is perceived to play should be secondary to that.

But, apparently, Gov. Kerrey and at least one state businessman think differently.

Wire service reports indicate Kerrey was angry last week when James George, plant manager for the Becton-Dickinson syringe plant in Columbus, said he had gone to UNL for research assistance and was told to see a professor who would do it for a fee.

No one can question that as a state educational institution, UNL has an obligation to be of assistance when possible. It does not, however, have an obligation to go out of its way to do research for a business at the time and expense of its own academic program.

The Lincoln Journal quoted John Strong, vice chancellor for academic affairs, as saying the university is neither financed or equipped well enough to answer all the requests it gets for assistance.

Kerrey was right when he said NU usually stresses its role of assistance to farmers and businesses when it requests funding from the Legislature. But he must remember that NU rarely gets all the money it asks for.

The university's fiscal plight is well known by now. Many of its classes are overcrowded, its faculty members are among the lowest paid in the country and some services have been reduced or eliminated.

In fact, it is ironic that this incident should happen at the same time UNL and the rest of the NU system is planning to eliminate or reduce some programs just to maintain the remainder of its programs at a reasonable level.

The list of evidence could go on, but it is clear that UNL is so underfunded it can barely offer an academic program, much less free research assistance.

The university's research and technology should be used for the betterment of the state's economy, but businesses that wish to take advantage of it should expect to pay a fair price.

Reagan let Soviets unmask

The world was thrown for two loops. First, when the Soviets shot down that passenger jet.

Second, when our president responded with something less than nuclear war.

After the shock wore off, the most



Paul Harvey

aggressive right-wingers were reassured and the left-wingers were respectful.

President Reagan's anti-communist credentials date way back.

So vigorous, so "militant" was he in the two decades preceding his election that some scribblers predicted we'd have a hip-shooting cowboy in the White House.

At least one of those same critics now protests that the president's response to the Soviet murder of 269 people aboard that Korean jetliner "was not tough enough."

President Reagan's response to the airliner thing, while firm, was measured, deliberate and responsible.

Given the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union are going to have to live side-by-side on this planet, our inescapable objective must be to induce the Soviets to modify their belligerent and deceitful behavior.

erent and deceitful behavior.

The liars of Moscow who overtly distorted the airliner atrocity are the same people with whom we are seeking to negotiate arms control.

We know we can't trust them.

The most naive Kremlin apologist in Congress has to know now that we cannot expect meaningful treaties with them.

Our president could never have convinced some of them but now the Soviets have done that job for him.

With minimal rhetoric our president let the Soviets unmask themselves.

Our commander-in-chief had two obvious options: Make war or say "I told you so."

He did neither.

He re-recited the facts in careful chronological sequence and allowed the atrocity to stand on its own atrociousness.

As I say, the president's intervention in Latin America where he says the Soviets might move in — and in the Middle East — where he says the Soviets might move in — was encountering much dissent in Congress.

Less now, thanks to the Soviets.

Indeed, the recent event demonstrates that they are the irresponsible hip-shooters, not he.

And however inadvertently, it may well have re-elected him.

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Singling out foreign teaching aides unfair

As a former graduate teaching assistant and a former assistant instructor as well as a foreign student from Sierra Leone, I am appalled by the rather one-sided assessment made on foreign graduate teaching assistants in UNL classrooms. The generalizations made are as ill-founded as the solutions proposed and they only reflect a myopic view of a serious problem at UNL. If students are to address the problem in its totality, we must endeavor to

experience with them) do not only demonstrate a significant perversion of the English language in effecting their responsibilities as assistants, but also succeed in bombarding students with factual inaccuracies.

In the first place, not all foreign graduate teaching assistants speak unintelligible English. Equally so, not all American students at UNL can understand all forms of intelligible English. For some students, adapting to the accent of a foreign speaker is as insurmountable a task as passing a course in spite of it. In such a case, the foreign instructor invariably becomes perceived as the barrier to the student's progress. The problem may not even be the variance in the instructor's accent, but rather, the students' unwillingness or inability to adapt. Can you imagine what it feels like, as a foreign student, to find out in the first week of the semester that all your instructors speak a foreign language with accents that greatly differ from what you are used to?

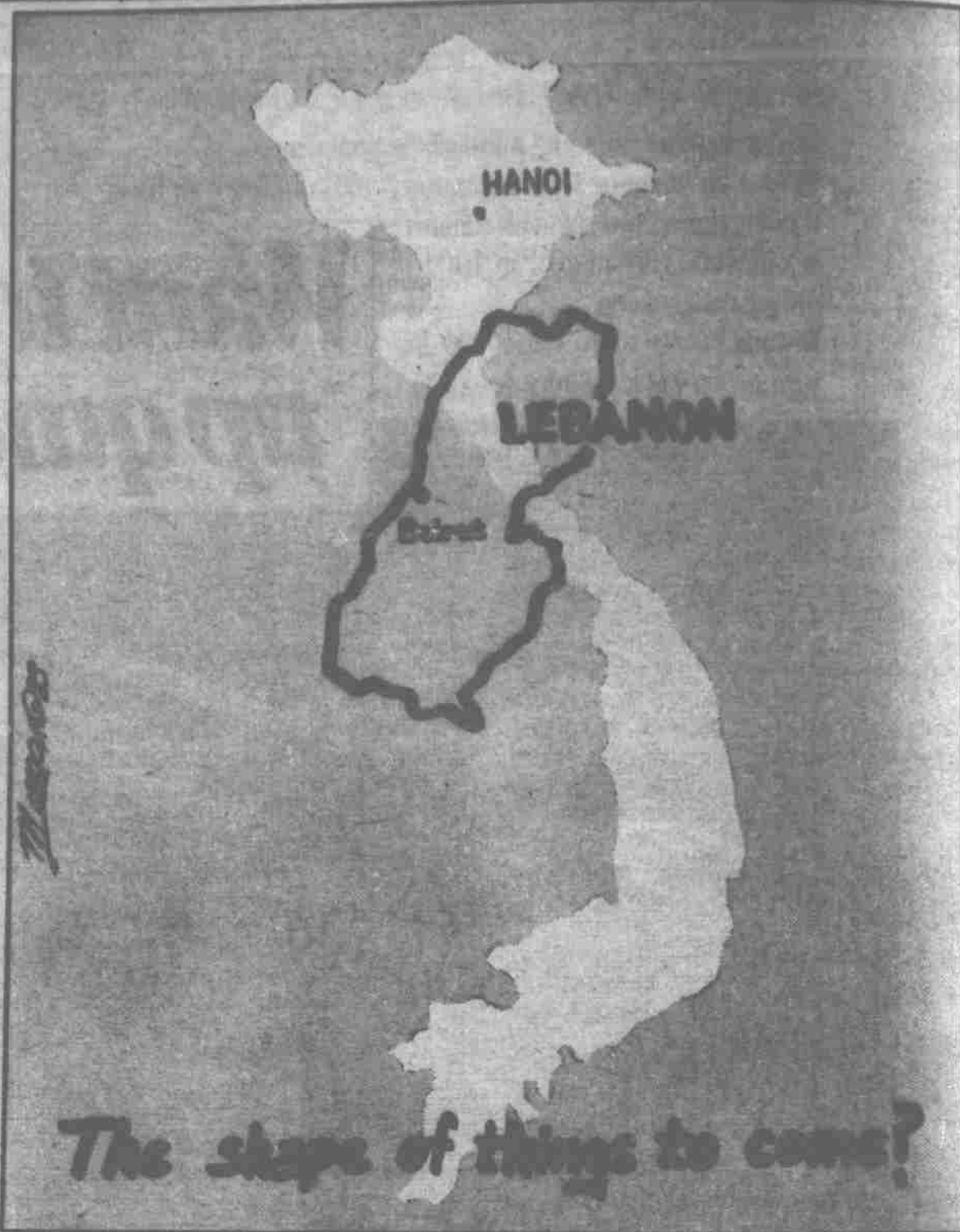
Although most foreign students adapt to the accent of at least 30 instructors (maybe because of a lack of alternatives or by sheer determination), before they can graduate, some Americans may have difficulty adapting to two or three foreign teaching assistants (maybe not for the same reason). Shopping around for accents that suit our needs cannot in itself offer a reasonable solution.

In the same way, subjecting all foreign teaching assistants to specific language competency tests is not only negatively discriminatory, and prejudicial, but also is suggestive of elements of ethnocentricity which pervades the interactive processes on campus.

Realizing there is always a simple answer to a difficult question (an answer which is usually wrong), I will refrain from proposing solutions. On the other hand, may I suggest that criteria for the selection of graduate teaching assistants be fully re-examined and analyzed, and if necessary be subjected to some modification. Equally, so I will advocate a more rigorous compliance with established requirements and standards. In addition, it is reasonable for the selection process to be left entirely to the departments concerned in conjunction with the requirements and stipulations made and monitored by the graduate college.

Finally, may I categorically state, that arbitrarily imposing requirements and standards that are uniquely applicable to foreign students is not only un-American, but it also rebels against my perception of equity and moral decency.

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Letters

Western states MX territory

I was pleased with Bill Allen's column titled "Western Nebraska heart of 'the simple life'" (Daily Nebraskan, Oct. 17). I think he is right about the "territorial ignorance," as he calls it, of out-of-state tourists. Like Allen, I am proud to be from Nebraska. Like him, I know very little about farming or agriculture, yet I recognize its extreme importance to Nebraska and to the United States. As he suggests, what such tourists have accepted is a national ideology which states that "what's happening" is only on the coasts, certainly not in Nebraska. Even some Nebraskans have accepted this ideology.

I would correct Allen on one point, however, where he suggests that "if there is a nuclear war" Chicago is more

likely to be "hit first" than Maxwell. Let us not fool ourselves. The impetus to place the MX system in the sparsely populated Western states went hand in hand with the notion of a "limited nuclear war" introduced under the Carter administration. The motivation behind putting a substantial land-based missile system throughout the Western states is to lure Russian missiles away from metropolitan areas: let the Russians bomb the heartland, not the densely populated coasts. The impetus to place the MX missiles in Western Nebraska and Wyoming is one manifestation of the provincial chauvinism Allen confronted this past summer.

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Guest Opinion

question the competence of graduate teaching assistants in general, as reflected in their performance within the classroom, without segregation or discrimination. Our solutions should seek to address what is taught and how it is taught rather than who is teaching it. I can safely claim at this point, that while foreign graduate teaching assistants may be part of the problem, they do not in themselves constitute the problem. Criticism of this nature should not be limited to foreign teaching assistants but should include all teaching assistants — American as well as foreign — some of whom (from my limited