

Editorial

Students don't get their money's worth from some TA's

Some teaching assistants pass the test of faculty and students when it comes to credibility. But when students put their education in the hands of assistants rather than certified instructors, they are not getting their money's worth.

When students sign tuition checks, they expect fully accredited professors to teach courses.

Last fall, UNL had about 262 graduate and undergraduate teaching assistants, compared to 1,202 full-time faculty members. And psychology department chairwoman Toni Santmire says teaching assistants often get better teacher evaluations than professors.

Granted, some TA's are exceptional — students can relate to them because they are younger and as students, they can empathize with the people they teach. Some also are more available to students and give more feedback on tests.

But others are less than adequate. Many students are skeptical of inexperienced TA's when they have problems in the classroom and seem unprepared for class discussion.

Language barriers also are a problem for many teaching assistants. Students have enough problems learning new material in English, but when instructors have difficulty expressing themselves, education is nearly impossible.

To help crush language barriers, the university implemented a Test of Spoken English in 1983-84. The exam tests foreign teaching students' oral skills.

Since the test was implemented, complaints about poor communication between assistants and students have declined, said James Ford, English professor and test administrator.

Ford said about 50 to 60 percent of the foreign students who take the test don't pass. To help students prepare for the test, training programs ranging from short orientation sessions to semester-long classes are being developed, according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Teaching assistants who overcome the barriers are an asset to the university. They ease teaching loads and help UNL cope with budget cuts. For example, the speech communication department handled about 1,000 students who would have been turned away if TA's weren't available.

Students who prefer teaching assistants should be allowed to take courses from them. But the costs of the course should be reduced because the instructor is not fully accredited.

For example, at the College of Hair Design, customers pay according to the experience of the barber. A haircut from an advanced junior will be less than one from a senior student.

UNL students pay for quality instruction, and the university must make sure students get the quality instructors.



Morally right rhetoric wins

Causes of political and social import have historically been most effectively promoted through impassioned rhetoric. It is a fact of human communication that the well-turned phrase carries more persuasive punch than the well-ordered argument.

Rhetorical propaganda has often been maligned by the intellectual community as illegitimate skirting of the mind in order to motivate emotionally.

Such criticism fails, however, to explain why the strategy works if it is so radically opposed to the process that makes us unique in creation — self-transcendence and the ability of critical analysis. I would like to offer a further explanation for this phenomenon and present an example from a pressing current issue.

There often seems to be a correlation between the political and social justification for a given cause and the level of rhetoric constructed to support it. Thus, those causes that history has shown to be progressive are remembered for their great watchwords and stirring slogans, while those that promised only entrenchment in oppressive behavior were hard-pressed to formulate a viable rhetoric.

So the simple, yet forceful "Hell no, we won't go" rang through the halls of human dignity and brought the largest military-industrial complex in the western world to its knees. Yet, in the same generation, the desperate cry, "Two, four, six, eight, we don't want to

integrate" communicated only the hol-lowest of attempts to rescue a dying ideology. The phrases were similarly constructed, but the persuasive power of the rhetoric was tied to the potential for good inherent in the dogma.

If the strength of the rhetoric is a yardstick for the validity of the cause, the current debate over abortion takes on an interesting new perspective. While both sides can spout facts and figures, the ultimate issues are most accurately reflected in the war of elocution. And the pro-lifers are beating the stuffing out of the pro-choicers.



James Sennett

By far, the two most eloquent words I have heard in the debate have come from the advocates of fetal rights. The first was by none other than the Great Communicator himself, who quipped, "I have noticed that all the people who are for abortion have already been born." The second comes from recording artist Randy Stonehill, who began a song with the satirical line, "Well, it's okay to murder babies, but we really ought to save the whales." Say what you will, there is power in those words. It is power that cuts through the cloud of

issues and asks the questions at the heart of the matter — are we being fair and if so, to whom?

Perhaps the revolution has not died, but has merely been perverted. Richard John Neuhaus, a '60s liberal par excellence, was quoted in a recent interview defending the pro-life position on fascinating grounds. Still maintaining his liberal bent, he observed, "It is the classic 'liberal' position to expand the definition of the human community for which one provides protection and care. It is the classic 'conservative' position to suggest that the way to deal with poverty is to get rid of poor people, and yet it is the Planned Parenthood organization who put out a booklet supporting abortion by showing how much money has been saved... by virtue of aborting the children of the poor."

The case for justice has always been fought on the battlefield of the definition of humanity. The position that has represented progress has been that which gave the widest possible interpretation to the category. It is no wonder that, in the abortion issue, the thunder of flaming verbiage has come from those who cry for others, who can only scream silently. It is that position, regardless of its political label, which has always produced the most convincing oratory.

Sennett is a UNL graduate student in philosophy and campus minister of the College-Career Christian Fellowship.

Letters

Brief letters are preferred, and longer letters may be edited. Writer's address and phone number are needed for verification.

Nursing editorial not accurate analysis

I am writing to you in response to the editorial (Daily Nebraskan, Sept. 9) concerning the College of Nursing. As a student of College of Nursing-Lincoln Division, I feel that your article was not an accurate presentation of its current status.

We (students and instructors) worked very hard this summer to prevent the phasing out proposed by Chancellor Charles Andrews to the Board of Regents. As a result of this endeavor the esprit de corps within our college is at a very high level. We enjoy and are very proud to be involved in the program. We also enjoy and are proud to be a part of the Lincoln campus. It offers us a "campus life" that we would not be able to have

at the Medical Center if we were moved to Omaha. It would take a lot more than tuition hikes to push us out. We would much rather pay a little extra as opposed to having our college closed.

I would like to inform you of the rate of our tuition as compared to other schools. The tuition we pay is comparable to that of universities in surrounding states. The rates we would have to pay at private schools in the surrounding area would be three to four times higher than what we presently pay.

Examples (tuition per year):
 Union College — \$5,990
 Creighton — \$5,234
 Midland College — \$5,000
 Lincoln Division — \$1,890

Finally, I would like to address your comment about using Whittier Junior High for clinical space. The purpose of our clinical experience is to practice the theory we learn in the classroom. A requirement for this is having people to care for, something we can only obtain from local health care agencies (Lincoln General Hospital, St. Elizabeth's Community Health Center, the Regional Center, Veterans Administration Medical Center and Madonna Professional Care Center.

Lori Fritz
 junior
 nursing

Students should work at harmony, understanding

While I was walking across campus with some friends from my home country of Pakistan, some occupants from a passing car shouted rude comments about our foreign status.

Incidents like this are not rare on this campus. This letter is not intended to complain about the discriminatory remarks, but instead, it is aimed to express my personal views of a nation, the United States, whose constitution bars any discrimination on the basis of race and skin color, at least on paper.

I cease to understand how racial discrimination is instilled in minds that seek higher education today.

Friends from Europe also studying at UNL have never encountered such problems. Thus, skin color seems to be the basis of discrimination. Having a different skin color other than white is no one's mistake.

There is a lot more to learn at UNL than just earning a degree. As students and good citizens of our countries, we

should try to understand each other and strive to live in harmony. The key thing to do is to respect each other as beings created by God. If this is not possible, then the least that can be done individually is to rethink your attitudes and think about how the media and other people may influence you.

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