

Editorial

Mentor program initiates interaction

A relatively unknown counseling program has the potential to do great things at UNL. Through the University Counseling Center's eight-year-old Student Development Mentoring-Transcript Project, students and faculty are encouraged to interact on a more personal level outside of the classroom. LuAnn Krager, coordinator of the program and former assistant dean of students, said the program is primarily aimed toward counseling, but students and their "mentors" also work on a "transcript," recording the students' personal and academic growth. Despite the program's low profile, it boasts a membership of 90 students and mentors. Yet, because of budget cuts the program has been shrinking and could be eliminated altogether, Krager said. A program with many benefits to students and faculty like the mentoring project should be retained and strengthened, if possible.

One on one meetings with faculty provides a variety of unique advantages that are unobtainable anywhere else. Professors are often the best sources on programs and can help reduce the "culture shock" for freshmen. Through the transcript portion of the program, students can set personal, academic and professional goals and seek the advice of mentors on how to attain them. These "mentoring transcripts" can be used to supplement academic records when applying for jobs or graduate schools, Krager said. The biggest benefit of the program involves both the student and the mentor. In the impersonal lecture hall situation, students and professors have limited contact because the large number of students creates a barrier. With the mentoring program, students and professors can overcome these barriers and better understand and explore each other's point of view, intentions and expectations.

Understandably, the Mentoring program will greatly benefit the university the more it is put into use. But more publicity about the program is the key to making it a popular counseling alternative. Unless more is done to inform students about the mentoring program, a unique learning opportunity will be unintentionally ignored and perhaps, needlessly abandoned.

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Being human in a world of contradictions is so confusing

Being human sure has its drawbacks at times. Oh, sure, it has definite advantages over being, say, reptilian, but that is hardly a comfort when I am sorrowing in the realization of my own finitude. Perhaps the most frustrating task I face in this regard is the inability to understand certain things that go on around me. This frustration is redoubled by the apparent fact that these things actually do make sense, and I am just not seeing what is intuitively obvious to others. For example, I don't understand the right to self-determination and home rule which Nicaragua apparently has, but South Africa doesn't have. Now, in no way, shape, or form do I condone the oppressive actions of the South African government. I am just curious as to why the same people who see it as a moral obligation to pile sanctions and dirty rhetoric on this government also see it as the height of arrogance and imperialistic domination for the United States to attempt the same tactics in retaliation to human rights violations south of the border. Another thing I don't understand is

the schizophrenia that will allow us to spend millions of dollars in research and thousands of dollars in each instance to go to every length to save the life of a premature infant, born without the strength to survive, while we would have granted the mother the right to destroy the same fetus just hours earlier. I don't understand the reasoning that makes right to life contingent on timing or location.



James Sennett

Of course, I don't understand the mentality which screams about the sanctity of life outside abortion clinics, then pickets governments for decreased social spending to help those already born and increased defense to make sure we can annihilate any lives we don't particularly like. It doesn't make sense to me that right to life should be denied six weeks before birth; it also

doesn't make sense to me that it should be denied fifteen or twenty or seventy years after birth, either. But then again, I'm only human. Finally, I don't understand, if the United States is so horrible and life behind the Iron Curtain is so desirable, why is it that people are always trying to get out of there and over here? The Yurchenko case notwithstanding, the machine guns on the Berlin Wall only face west. And I don't remember ever hearing Jane Pauley interview someone who has been trying for thirteen years to get out of the United States to rejoin his or her spouse in the Soviet Union, only to have every effort thwarted by the United States government. In this scientific age, I'm just naive enough to ask for successful experimentation before making claims and instituting changes which affect millions of lives. I don't understand the willingness to say, "It's failed every time in the past, but boy it's gonna work for us!" That doesn't make sense to me. But then again. . . . Sennett is a UNL graduate student in philosophy and a campus minister of the College Career Christian Fellowship.

Family is sharing 'me' with 'we'

Soon they will be together again, all the people who travel between their own lives and each other's. The package tour of the season will lure them this week to the family table. By Thursday — feast day, family day, Thanksgiving Day — Americans who value individualism like no other people will collect around a million tables in a ritual of belonging. They will assemble their families the way they assemble dinner: each one bearing a personality as different as cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie. For one dinner they will cook for each other, fuss for each other, feed each other and argue with each other. They will nod at their common heritage, the craziness and caring of other generations. They will measure their common legacy...the children. All these complex cells, these men and women, old and young, with different dreams and disappointments will give homage again to the group they are a part of and apart from: their family. Families and individuals. The "we" and the "I." As good Americans we all travel between these two ideals. We take value trips from the great American notion of individualism to the great American vision of family. We wear out our tires driving back and forth, using speed to shorten the distance between these two principles. There has always been some pavement between a person and a family. From the first moment we recognize that we are separate, we begin to wrestle with aloneness and togetherness. Here and now these conflicts are especially acute. We are, after all, raised in families...to be individuals.

This double message follows us through life. We are taught about the freedom of the "I" and the safety of the "we." The loneliness of the "I" and the intrusiveness of the "we." The selfishness of the "I" and the burdens of the "we." We are taught what Andrew Malraux said; "Without a family, man, alone in the world, trembles with the cold." And taught what he said another day: "The denial of the supreme importance of the mind's development accounts for many revolts against the family."



Ellen Goodman

In theory, the world rewards "the supreme importance" of the individual, the ego. We think alone, inside our heads. We write music and literature with an enlarged sense of self. We are graded and paid, hired and fired, on our own merit. The rank individualism is both excited and cruel. Here is where the fittest survive. The family, on the other hand, at its best, works very differently. We don't have to achieve to be accepted by our families. We just have to be. Our membership is not based on credentials but on birth. As Malraux put it, "A friend loves you for your intelligence, a mistress for your charm, but your family's love is unreasoning: You were born into it and

of its flesh and blood." The family is formed not for the survival of the fittest but for the weakest. It is not an economic unit but an emotional one. This is not the place where people ruthlessly compete with each other but where they work for each other. Its business is taking care, and when it works, it is not callous but kind. There are fewer heroes, fewer stars in family life. While the world may glorify the self, the family asks us, at one time or another, to submerge it. While the world may abandon us, the family promises, at one time or another, to protect us. So we commute daily, weekly, yearly between one world and another. Between a life as a family member that can be nurturing or smothering. Between life as an individual that can free us or flatten us. We vacillate between two separate sets of demands and possibilities. The people who will gather around this table Thursday live in both of these worlds, a part of and apart from each other. With any luck the territory they travel from one to another can be a fertile one, rich with care and space. It can be a place where the "I" and the "we" interact. On this day at least, they will bring to each other something both special and something to be shared: these separate selves. (This column was originally written for Thanksgiving 1980). ©1985, The Boston Globe Newspaper Co./Washington Post Writers Group Goodman is a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the Boston Globe.