

# Editorial

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## Money talks For NU, on one condition

Last week's protest against the Lied Center for Performing Arts was a noble effort, but students joined forces too late.

Demolition for the center began in early January, so chances of stopping construction are slim. Instead of fighting a losing battle, students should focus on the root of the problem — conditional grants.

The \$10 million Lied Center donation from the Lied Foundation Trust of Las Vegas was the largest in NU's 115-year history. But it required the university to:

- maintain the present design concept
- manage, own and operate the center by the university for the benefit of UNL students, faculty, staff and all Nebraskans
- find another \$10 million for the project
- assure adequate maintenance of the center

Conditional grants, such as this one, drain university resources.

NU could use a performing arts center. But it needs many other things first — better faculty salaries, money to maintain programs, new equipment and much more.

Lied supporters say the \$5 million given by the Legislature is not taking money from NU. They argue that legislators would not allow the university to keep the \$5 million if it was not used for the Lied Center.

The supporters are speculating. If NU officials could show that the \$5 million would be used to improve the quality of education and help the state, legislators would consider the proposal. With effective lobbying and solid proposals for the use of the money, NU officials should be able to keep the \$5 million.

The Lied Center is not the only problem NU has had with conditional grants.

Last year UNL athletic department officials accepted a \$500,000 donation from UNL alumnus William D. Hewitt for an athletes' training table. Hewitt, a 1950 UNL graduate from David City, donated the money on the condition that only men could use the training table.

To avoid problems like these, NU administrators and foundation officials should set guidelines for accepting donations.

Donors should be encouraged to let the university use money where it is needed most. Perhaps NU officials could compile a list of the university's top 10 needs, and donors could choose the one they want to contribute to.

If some donors wanted buildings bearing their names, they could build them — as long as the university did not have to match the grant.

Money from donors who promote sexual and racial discrimination simply should be declined. UNL needs donations, but not if donors require unneeded expenditures or discrimination.

## Notes for sale Skipping students cheat themselves

Students walking outside the Nebraska Union last week might have seen people passing out pamphlets for Jon's Notes, a small note-taking service based in Nebraska Bookstore.

While the service is a good example of how someone can capitalize on invention, it represents a problem in college education — students' apathy toward class attendance.

Note services work this way: People who work for them attend and take notes in some of the larger classes at the university. The notes are compiled and given to people who have subscriptions for a particular class. They usually are thorough and accurate.

But by using the service and skipping class, students are robbing themselves of a good education. Many UNL instructors agree, or they wouldn't place such a heavy emphasis on attendance.

A university is a place where students learn from one another — even in some larger classes. Students are the people who ask

the questions in class. They often provide extra insight. Absentees miss out on that insight.

Active classroom participation is most important in smaller classes. For example, several English instructors base their lessons around student participation. They expect students to reach conclusions by discussing ideas and theories. Interaction is essential, but impossible if half the class is missing.

Several of the notes available are for larger classes. It's easy to think your absence makes no difference in those larger classes. And that might be true in those classes where professors don't encourage students to question the lectures. It is those professors who need to pay more attention to the benefits of student input, and structure their classes accordingly.

True, students pay for their education, and it therefore is their right to skip class.

But doing so detracts from their overall education.

It's an expensive investment. Take advantage of it.



## Some of us look to the stars Challenger tragedy shouldn't halt quest for answers

"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."

—Oscar Wilde

The explosion stripped the shuttle Challenger to its essence: a frail bottle-rocket hurled at the sky with men and women, mere wisps of smoke, clinging to the combustible shaft.

It was pitiful. I saw the network show the first instant replay and the second and the third and the fourth... I sat on the couch and forgot anything else for a while. *My, how easy it is to die.*

I was sad about it all day. I wasn't even sad two minutes when the storm hit Bangladesh last spring or when the earthquake struck Mexico City. The destruction of this space ship and its seven passengers struck home with a lot of other people, too.

Seven passengers. More than that are murdered every day in New York. I sat on the couch, elbows on my knees, chin in my hands, watching Dan Rather struggle to be emotional and informative at the same time, and I thought about a class discussion of a week earlier.

It was a composition class, and we were arguing the merits and faults of a cliché-ridden essay about the space program. The writer defended the \$20 billion annual NASA budget. "We cannot turn away from the challenge of space! We must push the frontier of knowledge back farther!"

Hurumph, the professor said, this man did not think carefully about the

topic. What about the millions of starving people? How can we justify these forays into space when there are starving people? Perhaps NASA can only be justified as welfare for scientists, he said. He may have been playing devil's advocate. It's hard to say.

A lot of people do think the space program is a waste. After all, there are starving people.

Before the discussion, I said I liked the writer's words. I cringed then when the prose was attacked as wooden, threadbare and ill-thought out.



Chris Welsch

The writer may have been spewing dogma by rote, but still, I liked his sentiment.

Welfare feeds people and it is necessary. It satisfies the appetite. But it does little for the human spirit, except possibly to assuage social guilt. The space program, though, carries our hopes, our spirits skyward. Yes, it is a cliché. Yes, it is true.

Why did the networks preempt the soap operas, why did we all stop to watch again and again and again? Why did we naively hope someone would emerge from the fireball alive?

Because the shuttle was going to the place we know the least about. Hence the place we want to know the most

about.

We can't all go. The astronauts are our eyes and ears. They are the most vaunted of American heroes: Trailblazers, pioneers, adventurers. They are what we only dream about being while we punch the clock and spend the day looking down at our desks, our assembly lines, our cement-covered feet.

NASA has not given us a cure for cancer or a way to keep people from dying from starvation. It has given us some information about our solar system and the stars and galaxies beyond it. Had Challenger made it into space, it would have gathered data about Halley's Comet.

That information isn't very tangible. It is, however, a very small step toward answers about how our world was formed. It's a question men have spent their lives pondering since the beginning. It's one I like to think is worth trying to answer. Even if it comes at the cost of human life.

The nation shuddered collectively when Challenger went *thpt!* It was a microscopic pop in the scheme of things, but it hurt. Our smug dreams of routine space travel were rudely interrupted.

But you watch. When the next shuttle, or perhaps a new spacecraft, goes up successfully, we'll all breathe a sigh of relief and raise our eyes for a few minutes to watch the assault on the frontier of knowledge.

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## Letters

### Lied Center will attract attention, bolster Nebraska economy

It is interesting to view the Lied Center for Performing Arts controversy from a non-arts perspective.

My biggest contribution to the arts was quitting piano, which I skillfully avoided practicing for more than 10 years. It would seem that my friends and I (we're all cultural neuters) would have little to gain from this facility. We do not understand ballet. We have no knowledge of classical music (beyond the movie "Amadeus," of course). After viewing the protest staged Jan. 30, and the subsequent counterattack from the vicinity of the Westbrook Music Building, I think that I finally recognize the benefits this building will bring to UNL and the region.

Perhaps the most frequent argument levied against the Lied Center was that it is siphoning precious money from dying university programs. The Lied Center, some say, snatched \$5 million from the Legislature that rightfully belonged to starving professors.

"It is poor timing," they claimed, "our economy will suffer with this new financial burden." They continued to

say that money should not be wasted on such an "elitist" structure.

This is when I began to doubt the protesters' points. First of all, the Lied Center is no particular burden to our pocketbooks. No Lied money is taken from our tuition. Secondly, the \$5 million from the Legislature, which constitutes about a quarter of the funding, would not have gone to the university if it had been taken from the Lied Center. We all recognize the aversion the Legislature has to funding our struggling institution.

The Legislature recognized that the Lied Center eventually would contribute to the sagging Nebraska economy. It will attract attention (and dollars) not before given to this area. It is, in effect, an attempt to bolster our future monetary condition.

The interest in the Lied Center is already demonstrated in the incredible amount of private donations raised by Woody Varner, chairman of the NU Foundation. His financial wizardry, coupled with a new-found interest in the center, was brought in money that

will build and maintain the center.

Money eventually will come to needy university programs. The Lied Center is simply the first beneficiary. If we had not accepted the challenge, the Lied Center would have taken root in Kansas State.

The Lied Centers will contribute to the further development of the university. The Bob Devaney Sports Center has brought more people in to see the Huskers play ball. Someone noted that this has not contributed to the quality of our basketball program. Well, the potential is there. Fortunately, there is no such thing as a "fine arts" coach.

In sum, the Legislature may have accidentally helped the university. Perhaps all the protest is good. If we make our representatives believe that they have delivered a mortal blow to the university, they will contribute \$5 million more toward our demise. Let's start protesting the absurdity of a new computer center.

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