

# Law students fight stress

## Concern over suicide leads to support group

By Lise Olsen  
Senior Reporter

The recent suicide of a first-year law student has caused some law students to re-evaluate their environment.

The tragedy stimulated about a dozen friends to recall their own early feelings of isolation, failure and pressure.

They decided there was a void that needed to be filled in the law school support system.

"We missed reaching out to a fellow student. The loss was not that

we had lost a student lawyer — we had lost a member of our family," said second-year law student B.J. Aman.

In early February, about 20 students formed "SWAMP" — Students Working Against Mental Pressure — to combat what, for some, may be an unbearable level of stress.

Part of the stress is inherent in a traditional law school environment that uses the Socratic curriculum to create a "healthy intellectual tension."

But, Aman says, the "lawyer faculty doesn't have to be an unattainable

citadel of academia." SWAMP wants to first improve what has been a distant and an occasionally hostile student-faculty relationship. The group plans to hold supper clubs and informal receptions to do this.

By promoting friendships and de-emphasizing competition, Aman said, SWAMP hopes to "put the dignity of law school back into the students."

SWAMP also wants to reduce time-linked pressure, Aman said.

"There's so much to read, so much to do, so much to learn in so little time that we forget our most precious commodity is life itself."

SWAMP wants to promote relaxation by sponsoring study breaks and encouraging exercise.

SWAMP plans to focus on first-year students, but will sponsor activities for all 400 of UNL's law students. The group's plans range from providing simple exercise equipment such as footballs and Frisbees to planning non-alcoholic, all-school picnics.

The group, many of whom have backgrounds in psychology, also will work to educate fellow students on recognizing and reducing stress through informational posters, speakers and workshops.

Next year, SWAMP plans to work with the orientation program. Presently 10 to 15 students each year drop out after their freshman year, said law Dean Harvey Pelman.

Some students can't handle the intense competition and unfriendly environment. Others transfer or leave for job opportunities, he said.

But some are victims of stress. Aman, 37, already has a master's degree in educational counseling. "But I came to law school and it was a new kind of pressure."

The stress level in the school is bolstered by the school's physical isolation from the rest of the campus, Aman said. For example, gyms and TV's are at least a 20-minute walk away.

The law school houses a break-room, but the lounge, with its pop machines, only provides an area for

students to rehash, not relieve, their frustrations. After a few minutes of caffeine and conversations filled with classes, instructors, grades and homework, students return to the library feeling guilty, Aman said.

"They go back to studying more uptight than they were when they broke," Aman said.

Although SWAMP is still in its formative stages, the group has long-term plans to change the physical condition of the building. Members want to convert a basement storage area into a gym, repaint drab walls, add plants and turn a fallout shelter into a TV room.

SWAMP is hoping to find a used TV this year for the shelter, which will reduce travel time for those who now go home for "fixes" of "The Cosby Show" and soap operas. Having a gym or TV lounge "means you can take an hour to be a human being the way you were before you came to law school," Aman said.

Traditionally, Assistant Law Dean Janet Krause has offered stress management seminars and counseling and referral services for law students. Yet, Krause admits, some students are unaware of counseling programs and not all who suffer from stress seek help.

Law students are not the only victims — students in all fields can be affected, Krause said.

SWAMP will work to involve and educate more students about stress, Aman said. The group wants to encourage law students to trade traditional Friday afternoon drunks for healthier stress-reducing activities.

SWAMP, which meets at the law college, is open to any law student. The group isn't a line on a resume, Aman said. Nor are there any dues, fixed obligations or officers, he said.

"It would be nice if we had 23 leaders out of 23 members," Aman said.

Although SWAMP has existed for only a month, the group has widespread support, Aman said.

"We're filling a need that's been out there a long time."

## Budget committee seeks student input

Although ASUN sponsored its budget forum last night in the Nebraska Union, students still can give input about the reductions proposed for the upcoming year.

Some members of the Budget Reduction Review Committee will be in the ASUN office today through March 21 to discuss the budget with students, including Anita Nichols, Mark Otten, Jacque Matthews, Reshelle Moore and Eric Lane.

## Digest

### Tuition refunds

Refund checks from tuition statement credit balances will be available today through Friday at the student accounts, Administration 204 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays.

Checks will not be available until March 19th for credit balances resulting from:

- Late scholarships, grants and awards that were not printed on tuition statements.
  - Courses dropped after Jan. 20 but before the end of the refund period.
  - Overpayments.
- A valid student identification card is required to pick up the checks. Call the office of student accounts, 472-2887, for any questions.

### Senatorial reception

An open house, allowing students to get acquainted with state senators, will be Wednesday, 5 to 7 p.m., in the Nebraska Union.

Sponsored by ASUN, the Government Liaison Committee and the UNL chapter of the Nebraska State Student Association, the reception is in conjunction with the "Adopt a Senator" program.

## Setting it Straight

Jonathan Taylor's column (Daily Nebraskan, Feb. 28) should have said the ad hoc committee formed to infiltrate UNL's student organizations is not affiliated with ASUN. ASUN only approved a proposal to allow such a committee.



Kurt Eberhardt/Daily Nebraskan

## Opinion

### Keating questions intent of legislators

Last year the university was hit with budget cuts of damaging proportions, and now it is said to be targeted for yet another round of cuts.

What has disappointed me most is the lack of commitment toward the university from Gov. Bob Kerrey and

County senators and the regents, along with NU administrators. Last week's remark in the Daily Nebraskan by state Sen. David Landis exemplifies this relationship.

Landis said testimony made by NU President Ronald Roskens and other administrators at the NU budget appropriation hearing alienated some senators. Landis also said some senators doubt the word of NU administrators and view them as "self serving."

If senators think they cannot trust the word and vision of men such as Roskens and UNL Chancellor Martin Massengale, I would challenge them to find people of this high quality and standards they can trust.

Times must be bad when our state senators are not supporting our institution and its administrators.

In all fairness to the legislators from Lancaster County, I have heard very few

Lincoln business and government leaders express their concern for the deteriorating situation at the university. Maybe no one would care if 5,000 students and 500 faculty found a different university to attend and serve.

Coming from the economically depressed community of Atkinson, I think it is important to remember how fortunate Lincoln is to have UNL. I need not list the economic benefits this country receives — they are apparent in our day-to-day activities. As a 21-year-old citizen of this state, I am puzzled at what direction our Legislature is going in, let alone the state of Nebraska.

In closing, I have two questions: Where are our priorities and where are our leaders?

Gerard J. Keating  
ASUN president/student regent  
UNL

## Guest Opinion

most state senators. A commitment to education was evident in Kerrey's 1982 campaign and also five years ago when legislators chose to build and develop the university through a sizable budget increase.

As a member of the NU Board of Regents, I have been especially disappointed not to see any type of cohesive relationship between the Lancaster

## French would rather cook than fight

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I wind up doing something like a grown man shouldn't have to do: pointing at the menu, like a kid at a candy counter, and mumbling, "I'll have that."

"Ah, a good choice," he says, "the closh du bwahshwah."

"Yeah, the uh, mmm, yeah."

Why, you ask, do I bother to eat in French restaurants if the language is such a mystery and pain in the neck?

Because they know how to cook. They aren't much at fighting wars anymore. Despite their reputation for fashion, their women have spindly

legs. Their music is sappy. But they do know how to whip up a plate of grub.

My only complaint about it is that unless you read French, you don't know what you're getting, which ought to be illegal.

Just about every food item you pick up in a grocery store has got the ingredients listed on the package or can, so you can eat the additives of your choice. There is even a movement to label the ingredients of hootch.

But the French get away with refusing to print on a menu that a snail is a snail, a pancake is a pancake, and a bowl of cold potato soup is

exactly that.

I once suggested to a Chicago alderman that he sponsor an ordinance requiring French restaurants to print their menus in English.

He thought it was a good idea until he checked with his precinct captains and found that he had 12 known Frenchmen registered to vote in his ward.

"How about if we got after Eskimo restaurants," he said. "I don't have any of them on the poll sheets."

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Royko is a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the Chicago Tribune.

## Letters

### SCUM unfairly left out of debate

As the second vice presidential candidate for the SCUM Party, I attended the debate Thursday afternoon in the Nebraska Union between vice presidential candidates. I attended, however, only as an observer because my party and I weren't invited. Why was this? Are we merely a joke party? Are any of them serious? Does anyone really care?

Apparently not, because there were very few in attendance that weren't current ASUN senators or close affiliates of the Impact, Excel and Party parties. Was the SCUM party excluded for lack of essential Greeks? Perhaps there is another reason.

Granted, with a name like SCUM, and with a platform calling ASUN a useless, moronic student council, we don't expect to be welcomed with open arms. Maybe we are irrelevant. The point is, no one will ever know for sure because people in charge of events don't want us there. Are they afraid of us? Do they dismiss us as unimportant? We have criticized the ASUN system.

If our criticisms are valid, they should be exposed. If they're not, then those involved with ASUN should have a chance to disprove them, and ASUN itself would benefit.

But as legitimate candidates, we expect to be given the same treatment and opportunity as the other parties are given. If our legitimacy is in question, let us be exposed in public. If the legitimacy of ASUN is in question, let it be exposed in public.

An overwhelming majority of UNL students think ASUN is irrelevant and unimportant. This does not speak well of the morale of the student body. If ASUN is not irrelevant, then what better way is there to prove it than by letting its critics be answered?

In summation, the members of the SCUM Party feel we have been unfairly dismissed from contention by those in charge because we weren't allowed to participate in the recent debate.

Geoff McMurtry  
second vice president  
SCUM Party

### 4-H should be kept 'alive and well'

Thousands of Americans are living fuller and more successful lives because of their participation in the 4-H youth program of the Cooperative Extension Division.

The thought that this outstanding educational program for young people and volunteer adults may be endangered or eliminated because of budget-cutting legislation is frightening.

Organizations like 4-H and other extension educational programs enable people to grow and develop to their

greatest potential as citizens.

Those of us who have been touched by this outstanding educational program must write our senators and representatives as well as President Reagan to tell them how important this program is.

It is the obligation of those of us who have been positively influenced by these programs to keep them alive and well.

Olivia P. Collins  
Manhattan, Kan.