

Editorial

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Booze on campus

Alcohol policy needs scrutiny

Last year, UNL students Steve Henning, Tim Burke and Tim Brogan ran a semi-serious campaign in the ASUN elections with a very serious platform. They wanted to legalize alcohol on campus. Turn a "relatively" dry campus into a wet one.

At last week's ASUN meeting Teachers College Sen. Richard Burke again brought attention to the touchy issue of alcohol by introducing a bill to establish a committee to study and suggest changes in UNL's current alcohol policy.

Burke said the current policy is inadequate and promotes the use of alcohol. If one took a look at campus now, Sen. Burke is justified in his remarks. For a dry campus, the alcohol seems to be flowing freely among fraternities, sororities and residence halls.

UNL's current alcohol policy states that no alcoholic beverages are to be carried across UNL property, nor are they allowed in any fraternity, sorority or residence hall.

Burke presented six points to the senate including the present lack of enforcement and the

promotion of drunk driving because the current policy forces students to drive off campus and drink.

In light of what happened to Phi Kappa Psi fraternity, maybe it wouldn't be such a bad idea to look at the policy and make some changes. The fraternity, in an attempt to avoid members from driving drunk, used buses to transport members to a party off campus, only to get stopped and ticketed for minors in possession and procuring for minors.

Such problems could have been avoided if the party had been on campus.

The Daily Nebraskan is not advocating the use of alcohol on campus, we merely want the administration to strengthen its current policy or write a new one.

The bill was moved to the Campus Life Committee for further study. Let's hope that it's not swept aside in red tape. A problem exists and it's about time the administration recognizes it and tries to do something about it.

What's in a name?

KSC should keep name — not NSU

There's an Iowa State, a Kansas State, an Oklahoma State, even a South Dakota State. But Nebraskans don't need a "Nebraska State" — which is what some people at Kearney State college would like to give us.

It seems this matter of changing Kearney State's name has gained the propulsion of a tumbleweed since Kearney radio personality Paul Wick asked Helen Boosalis and Kay Orr about it at their first debate. Since then, the college's student and faculty senates have voted overwhelmingly in favor of calling KSC a "university," leaving it up to college president William Nester to decide whether to pass the proposal on to the State College Board of Trustees and the Legislature.

With all due respect to our fellow students at Kearney State, changing the name seems at best a waste of time and at worst a risky move. The actual name to be chosen — Nebraska State University, Kearney State University or the University of Nebraska at Kearney — isn't as much the issue as the irrelevancies and pitfalls of giving KSC a "promotion."

Kearney State's student body of about 8,000 makes it the third largest campus in the state after UNL and UNO. That, plus Kearney State's graduate program offering master's degrees in several fields, are the usual reasons cited for making KSC a "university."

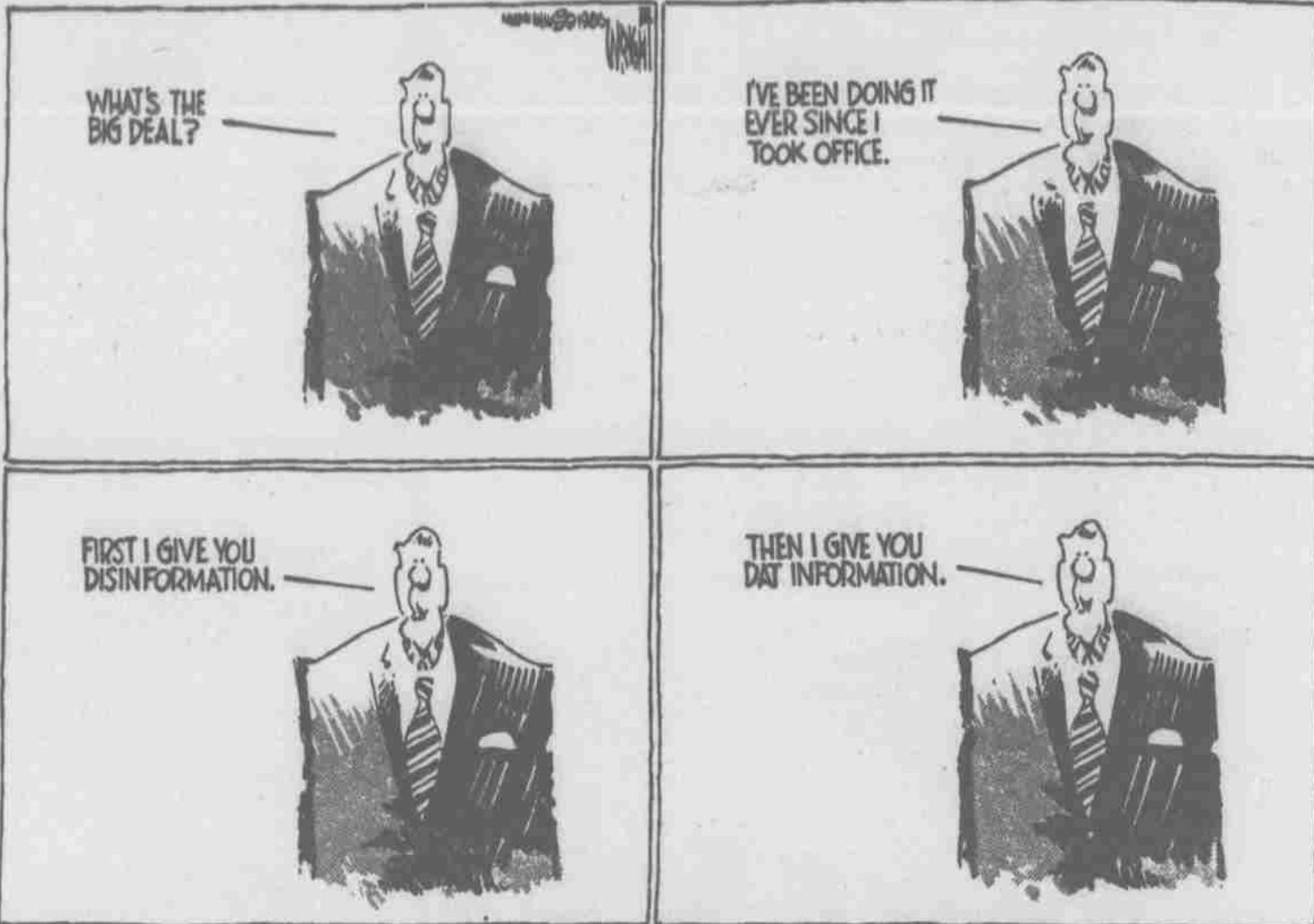
Such a relationship, however, is far from automatic. Nebraska

Wesleyan University, with a student body less than one-fifth that of KSC's, offers no graduate degrees at all. Wayne and Chadron State Colleges offer graduate degrees, but most would agree they shouldn't be called "universities" either. Large student bodies or master's degrees do not a "university" make.

Proponents of the name change are probably right that Kearney State would appear to be more important if they were called a "university." In that case, chances are that KSC would be equated with the three NU campuses at budget time — and each campus has been paying the price for that higher status. Given NU's resulting drift toward mediocrity, Kearney State might be better off as "first among equals" in the state college system.

But the reason for killing the name change was given by State College Board of Trustees Chairman Tom Morrissey in the Sunday World-Herald: "Higher education and the state colleges are faced with many more important decisions to make than this, and proposals like this deflect away from issues of greater importance." Maybe that's why Boosalis and Orr largely ignored the question at the first debate.

Regardless of what KSC President Nester and the Board of trustees say, such things have a way of reaching the Legislature anyway. But with hundreds of bills to consider in a short time, the name change might die from lack of interest. Frankly, that's the fate it deserves.



Playing with firewater

Joe Student joins alcohol-on-campus debate without thinking

It's an axiom of modern psychology that people worry about matters of everyday living and lifestyle before they think about more elevated issues. In short, as Abraham Maslow aptly termed it, they follow a "hierarchy of needs."

Consider the things that pass for student "issues" at UNL. A few student leaders get their danders up periodically about a student regent vote or the composition of student organizations, but their constituents do little more than yawn. Change the topic to tuition hikes or putting a fast-food restaurant in Union Square — things affecting students' pocketbooks and stomachs, respectively — and Joe Student wakes up, says "What?!" and joins the debate.

So now comes ASUN Sen. Richard Burke with a resolution suggesting repeal of the official-but-not-well-enforced ban on alcohol on campus. I'm not aware of an avalanche of letters on the subject, but I'll wager everyone instantly perked up their ears at the news — because few things are more basic to many students' social lives than the bottle or beer can. Chalk up another hot "issue."

But does that not mean those thinking on loftier planes are going to ignore the upcoming debate? Hardly. Alcohol is a peculiar issue that way; it has a way of affecting everyone. Honor students and more average types alike are equally likely to defend their right to a night at the bar or a beer-drinking session. And if you don't drink, you're painfully aware of the fact when you're around those who do — even if they don't consciously belittle you.

Interesting thoughts, those, but so what? They're important because often — too often, I fear — the alcohol

debate never reaches a very deep level. The discussion on drug abuse is already there, but drinking talk usually confines itself to simple issues of alcohol access: who's old enough to drink, where drinking should be allowed and where not, whether it's right to even try to stop anyone from drinking.

Up above the gut level, however, you reach the heart of the matter: what does alcohol do to you, your family, your friends, your fellow students or workers? Do you gain long-term, life-enhancing benefits from drinking, or does alcohol destroy health, relationships and even your life? Quibbling about drinking ages means little unless you bring those questions to bear.

To the "that won't happen if you drink in moderation" argument, I'll offer another example. I went to Europe three years ago with a number of people I knew. They drank "in moderation" before, but that certainly wasn't the case over there. Near the end of the trip, one of my companions told me he was at the point where he needed to drink. He was only 22 or 23 at the time.

Most of you probably don't have a physical addiction to alcohol like he did. But if you think alcohol and "a good time" are inseparable, you've got a psychological addiction that can lead easily to the other kind. And if you still can control your consumption? Given what has happened to so many people, you're playing with fire — or "firewater" — with every drink you take.

It's the same with drugs (remember alcohol was once used as medicine). But few scream about alcohol like they're screaming about drugs — because alcohol doesn't destroy you as quickly. Alcohol use is widely accepted today because it's viewed as "not that dangerous." The numerous cases of broken families and lives belie that statement.

Let's carry on this alcohol-on-campus debate with input from the brain as well as the gut. The ban isn't a student issue just because it supposedly interferes with one's right to a good time. It's an issue because alcohol, like drugs, has the potential to ruin students' health and well-beings eventually. Come to think of it, that's basic survival — which puts it at the first level of the "hierarchy of needs," doesn't it?

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Todd von Kampen

I don't drink, and I'm not afraid to admit it. It's not because my parents are absolute teetotalers; they touch the stuff only on the rarest of occasions, but they have done it. They've also made it clear to us that alcohol does long-term damage, not all of it physical. And I've seen enough already to convince me it's best never to start.

I think of families of two friends of mine. They were very close, very happy for many years. Then one parent lost control of alcohol. One marriage ended in divorce; the other didn't, but the family hasn't been the same since. You can't help but wonder if both families would be happy still if that parent had never taken the first drink.

Law takes morality into own hands: fetal rights overshadow woman's

These days the turf around the courthouse in El Cajon, Calif., looks a lot less like solid legal ground and a lot more like a slippery slope.

This is where Pamela Rae Stewart was arrested, charged and jailed for neglect of a fetus. The authorities claim that the 27-year-old mother didn't follow the doctor's orders.

Stewart was charged with using amphetamines during her pregnancy, but that is not the primary offense. According to Harry Elias, the deputy district attorney, the woman had a condition called placenta abruptio, a tendency for the placenta to separate from the uterine wall. "She was advised," says Elias, "that if she began to hemorrhage she should go to the hospital right away. Instead she waited 12 hours and by the time she got there, the baby was in fetal distress."

Last Nov. 23, Stewart's baby was born with massive brain damage, and on Jan. 1 the baby died. Someone in the hospital notified the child protective services and someone there notified the police, who in turn notified the D.A.'s office.



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The charge against her is a misdemeanor: withholding medical care. Under California law, no parent can "willfully omit to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical attendance or other remedial care" to a child, and the word "child" specifically includes the

fetus. The clause was written in 1925, largely to force fathers into paying support to pregnant women. But in El Cajon, it is being used in a way that fits these times all too well.

In recent years, science has fixed its focus on the fetus. We have learned fascinating details about the complex biology of pregnancy. We know a good deal about genetics and even more about the womb's environment. Today our society allows a woman to choose abortion, but at the same time we hold her more responsible for the fetus she chooses to carry. There is a shared belief that a pregnant woman has an obligation to do what she can to ensure a healthy baby. It is common now to disapprove of a pregnant chain smoker, common to feel outraged at the agony of a newborn addict.

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