

Editorial

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Jeff Korbelik, Editor, 472-1766
James Rogers, Editorial Page Editor
Lise Olsen, Associate News Editor
Mike Reilley, Night News Editor
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Meaningless mush Curriculum report disappoints

It was too good to be true: A university reviews its curriculum and decides that a massive and wide-reaching educational overhaul is necessary. Consequently, sweeping reforms requiring students to take a substantive core of liberal-arts classes in an effort to produce fundamentally educated persons rather than simply trained and appropriately credentialed producers.

It was too good to be true. But we should not have hoped so much. The rhetoric of the Chancellor's Commission on General Liberal Education was so promising throughout the process, but the final product is so disappointing.

Instead of daring to ask what students should know, recommending the imposition of such requirements and arguing that hiring practices should be tailored to accommodate the vision, the report simply requires that students take a certain number (typically very few) of liberal-arts classes and rests satisfied with the university's current department distribution. Blah!

Why shouldn't every student read Plato and Shakespeare while getting a university education? Why can't every student grapple with Descartes and Conrad before being given a piece of paper that tells most of the world, "this

person is ostensibly educated." The report belongs in a pile with all the other lukewarm, well-meaning, mushy, "reform"-minded, muddleheaded, mediocre and oh-so-safe "educational" reports. That is, in the "ignore" pile.

Just listen to the utter lack of strength represented in the report: "All courses, including introductory ones, ought to include material that is intrinsically important and interesting and be taught in a way that actively involves the student in learning." (You may take time out to vomit here.) Somebody should have informed the committee that the time is long past for platitudes to pass as vision.

University of Chicago philosophy professor Allan Bloom argues for an educational program with some backbone, a quality quite lacking in the chancellor's bowl of watery educational gruel. He argues that the cure for what ails the curriculum ills of the modern university (which scarcely deserves the title nowadays) is "the good old Great Books approach in which a liberal education means reading certain generally recognized classic texts."

Chancellor's report gets a D-: Too predictable, too safe and utterly pedestrian.



"SORRY, MR. SHULTZ, BUT OUR REQUEST FOR A SOUND-PROOF VAN, BECAUSE OF ALL THE BUGS IN THE EMBASSY, GOT A LITTLE FOULED UP!"

Mischievous minis return

They might have made a little sense then, but this is now

Just when we thought it was safe to wade back into high fashion, along comes this news from trend spotters on the shore: THE MINI IS BACK! Yes, yes, THE mini, the very same skirt that brought goosebumps to the arms of men and chilblains to the thighs of women in the late 1960s. The mini is back and it is after YOU.

There were, of course, scattered sightings of this menace over the past year or two. Teen-agers — a generation once carried in the wombs of women dressed misguidedly in maternity minis — were spied innocently baring their knees. But who among us ever imagined the mini would reappear in such a big wave, threatening to swamp our hopes for a graceful midlife?

Didn't designers promise us that this was the era of choice, that hemlines were a matter of personal preference? Hadn't they insisted that no modern women could ever again be driven into a fashion pool or forced to travel upstream to where the thigh meets the hip?

But while most women of a certain age spent this spring gaping at resurrected crinolines, giggling at the reappearance of hoops and wondering why anyone would want to return to the ghastly yesteryears of the 1950s, these same perfidious designers were sharing their 1960s scrapbooks and scissors.

The reports out of Paris and New York predict that next fall will be mini and skini. Skirts are going up — as is their price per inch — and the fashion writers are predicting with a breathlessness I haven't heard in years that anyone who doesn't want to look dumpy better dump a few inches. The only good news is that these are vertical inches.

According to Goodman's Rule, anything you wore the first time around, you are too old to wear the second time. This is applied, by and large, to Dr. Dentons, Mickey Mouse hats and pedal pushers. But it also works for miniskirts. I have therefore taken a personal exemption. Still, I cannot figure out why designers think the time for the mini has come back.

In the 1960s, this shortest skirt was regarded by some as an artifact of the youth cult. In "The Language of Clothes," Allison Lurie lumped it with babydoll pajamas, as evidence of the era when grown women wore their clothes at the same distance from the waist as 2-year-olds.

jobs and restaurants.

But the '80s are supposedly the sober era of AIDS and aerobics, entrepreneurship and values curriculum in the schools. A fashion that seemed liberating to women in the '60s can be utterly inhibiting in the '80s. Any veteran can remember the restrictions of real life in a miniskirt. You cannot bend over, sit down, get out of a car or run . . . for Congress.

The only thing that's truly "eighties" about the mini-surge is the attempted coup by a traditional junta to get the hierarchy back in order. They make, we buy.

The original mini was probably brought down, literally, by three things: December, January and February. Now the same designers want to see if women will once again prove their allegiance with a badge of frostbite.

What to do when you find yourself surrounded by racks of miniskirts? When you catch yourself hoisting your own skirts in the mirror just to see how they look? When you try to remember how to do the hemstitch? In the event of a miniskirt attack, remember my favorite relic from the 1960s:

In 1969 a bulletin from the federal government warned: "The legs of young women respond quite rapidly to exposure of cold temperatures. The bodily response is a quick buildup of successive layers of fatty molecules under the skin areas of the thighs, knees, calves and ankles of female legs." There you go. Fat knees or covered knees: It minimizes the issue.

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Goodman is a Pulitzer prize-winning columnist for the Boston Globe.

Ellen
Goodman



Others thought it was part and parcel of the '60s sex cult. Exactly 20 years ago, the Vatican weekly condemned the fashion, saying: "Some brainless women, professing a pseudo non-conformism, end up resembling monkeys in adopting the most capricious excess of fashion."

There was clearly a touch of rebellion in 1960s fashion: Baring your knees was thumbing your nose. In Greece, the minister of health ordered all female workers to keep their knees covered. In Morocco, school children were asked to pray for the salvation of women in miniskirts. In Zambia, miniskirted women were attacked on the street. In America, there were mini and non-mini

Letters

New computer deserves better fate

It was interesting to read in the Daily Nebraskan today that UNL finally has a computer system (IVIS) with a touch-sensitive screen. It was particularly so considering that I and a few other folks have been using PLATO, a system at UNL with this capability, for about three years. But the abilities of PLATO have been one of the great secrets at UNL during that time. So it seems safe to assume that the error was due to honest ignorance on the part of the source cited in the article, rather than to a misunderstanding by your reporter.

This is not to put down the new system. It has far greater graphics and sound capability than PLATO. I am sure it will be a real asset to UNL. But on the other hand, PLATO already has thousands of lessons available on a var-

ety of topics. And in PLATO, it is not hard to write programs that let 30 people at different terminals interact with one another. My understanding (from a friend who did a little programming on IVIS) is that the interaction there is only between you, the program and the videodisc.

If you look back about 3 1/2 years ago, the acquisition of PLATO by UNL was being widely touted as a great advance in educational computing for Nebraska. But due in part to various subsequent policy decisions, it never caught on with faculty and thus sees limited use now except from one political science course. I wish IVIS a better fate.

Leo G. Chouinard II
associate professor
mathematics and statistics

Student finds proof for inflated book prices

I have recently enrolled in a six-credit class through the Division of Continuing Studies. Because several books are required for the course, I attempted to obtain used or library copies. I was unable to locate the correct edition of one title, "Story and Structure" by L. Perrine. I was charged \$19.72 for the paperback edition.

This letter is to protest the inflated cost of this text. The most recent edition of "Books in Print" lists the retail cost of this book as \$13.95. In the last bulletin for College Independent Study the book was sold for \$14.35. There has been no corresponding increase in the retail price. I feel it is unjust to inflate the price more than 40 percent above retail.

I am aware of the financial difficulties being suffered by the university because I am a full-time employee in Love Library, but I must protest this

unfair practice. This book is not available anywhere else in Lincoln, so students are forced to purchase their texts from DCS. Taking advantage of this monopoly by inflating textbook prices creates a hardship for many who are struggling to obtain an education.

Judy Winkler
freshman
arts and sciences

Letter Policy

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others.

Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit all material submitted.

Kirkpatrick parroted tired cliches

After reading the Daily Nebraskan (April 6) news article on Jeane Kirkpatrick's visit to Nebraska, I nearly vomited. The article was a manifestation of a walking Reagan clone. She mouthed all of the standard cliches of this tired, tepid administration. I was not in the audience; nevertheless, I could picture the flock of fascists and flag-waving neophytes standing around enjoying the cadences of trash.

Kirkpatrick started her speech by making a definitive statement that "U.S. allies are less bothered by arms shipments to Iran than they are by the orgies of attacking the president." The former ambassador to the United Nations appears to have the intelligence of a pigeon. Only she would make such an asinine statement. During her tenure

nothing happened at the U.N. from an American perspective except the vetoes and overt support of South African apartheid and its fascist allies.

Guest Opinion

Ask most rednecks about Reagan's policy and these feeble-minded citizens would say it was largely developed on hot air. Therefore, when Kirkpatrick uttered trash and heaped flattery on Reagan's foreign policy, it was the Valium at work and not the cerebral cortex. Reagan was slapped in his dusty, painted face by Congress on South Africa. However, reliable reports show he had the laugh on covert support of the regime. Americans know

Reagan has a fetish for the Contras. His administration has climbed in bed with every Marcos, Pinochet and Botha-type murderous regime in the world. Under Ronald "Redneck" Reagan's administration we call countries such as El Salvador, Honduras, Chile and Argentina friends and allies. All of these thug nations are known for blatant human-rights abuses. Some analysts have come to label those countries the torture club of the '80s.

Reagan's administration has cemented its lips to Zaire. The president of that country is so corrupt he can't be corrupted any further. This government has a passion for breast-feeding international criminals. We can look at the

See OPINION on 5