

Editorial

Daily
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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Finding UNL's cure

Faculty benefits still below average

A \$590,000 appropriation from the Legislature has been a shot in the arm for ailing University of Nebraska faculty salaries, but it's still far from a cure.

And university officials need to find a remedy soon. College deans and professors worry that faculty turnover rates could become a serious problem if salaries aren't raised and benefits not improved.

Officials need to look past the dollar signs when dealing with faculty. Although faculty members are still grossly underpaid, the university could keep them from leaving and possibly attract new members by focusing on improving benefits.

First, the university could lessen its tenure requirements. Two instructors at UNL's Teachers College have left because they couldn't get tenure here but could at other universities.

Also, expanding UNL's internship and fellowship programs would attract new professors. With more faculty members, class loads would be lightened and more time would be left for research. By improving research programs, more professors would want to teach at UNL.

But money is still a hot issue. According to the UNL Faculty Salary Study Committee, UNL on the whole pays its teachers \$10 million less than other land-grant universities in the country.

So far, the money appropriated by the Legislature last summer has been used well. Raises have been confined to full-time faculty members who do not hold administrative positions and whose performance ranked in the upper half of their college. The merit system will motivate faculty to work harder, thus improving the quality of education.

Lines to shorten

Computers speed aid

A computer system soon will shorten lines in the Financial Aid and Scholarship Office, but not soon enough for those now waiting and office workers who are now using a manual file system.

Part of the system was installed this summer, but most of the work will still be done by hand until it is fully automated in the 1988-1989 school year.

A "tracking screen" being used this fall tells workers what financial aid forms a student has turned in and tells whether the student has completed all the forms necessary or if they have been returned to the student.

A "message screen" logs information about Guaranteed Student Loans. It keeps current records about when the applications was processed, the loan

amount and when the check came in. This information had been tracked by hand from thousands of student files. Now, when students go in the office with questions, they can be answered quickly and efficiently.

Other benefits of the fully automated system include earlier award notification of scholarships and faster location of qualifiers for specific scholarships.

When William E. McFarland, director of the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid, took the position Jan. 19, he said, "Automation is the key."

"We need to ask for all we can get," he said.

The new computer system is a good start for office efficiency. Now, if we can get all we ask for in financial aid funding,



Editorial Policy

Unsigned editorials represent official policy of the fall 1987 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Its members are Mike Reilley, editor; Jeanne Bourne, editorial page editor; Joan Rezac, copy desk chief; Jann Nyffeler, associate news editor; Charles Lieurance, assistant arts and entertainment editor; Scott Harrah, night news editor and Linda Hartmann, wire editor.

Editorials do not necessarily re-

fect the views of the university, its employees, the students or the NU Board of Regents.

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According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student editors.

The Fable of the Snowflake

Unenlightened teachers, Westerns and the truth about George

"Why were we created only to suffer and to die?"
—The Space Wanderer

It takes a serious person to dabble in the ludicrous. Brothers in torment who can't understand the rules of simple passivity lose the game early and spend a small eternity trying to catch up with bliss.

My fourth-grade teacher told me without a hint of a smile that no two snowflakes were exactly alike.

"Prove it," I said from the back of the room, reading a Western novel folded between covers of "Earth's Environment and You."

"What?" she asked. She was rude for a woman who had dedicated her life to enlightening 9-year-old innocents.

"I said prove it," I said, truly interested in this impossible field trip.

She ran to the cupboard, grabbed some construction paper and immediately started cutting out snowflake after snowflake. In her exuberance to prove the unprovable she held up paper snowflake after paper snowflake, all different shapes and sizes, saying "See, see, I told you." She threw them into the air, all those paper snowflakes, and they cascaded to the floor in a poor, mock blizzard of stagnant education.

"Not good enough," I said, warming to the hideousness of the whole situation. I closed my Western and stood up slowly. "Are you trying to tell me that out of all those zillions of tiny snowflakes that have fallen since time began that no two are exactly alike?"

"It's true," she said, "It's always been true."

"Prove it then," someone else said. I think it was Becky Ray. I've always hoped it was.

Then someone else joined in, then they all did, chanting "Prove it, prove it . . ."

Miss Taylor stood there, in a puddle of constructed truth, the movie star of a teachers college bloodbath from hell.

Well, then, there it is. It's been like that ever since.

"I love you."

"Prove it."

Bill
Allen



At the beginning of this I quoted the Space Wanderer, the literary creation of Kilgore Trout, who himself was a literary creation of Kurt Vonnegut Jr. Simon Wagstaff, the Space Wanderer, travels the universe in search of the answer to his primal question, "Why were we created only to suffer and to die?"

And in the end, he only gets laughed at, a man trapped in his own sensitivity, captured by the romanticism of worthwhile existence.

But perhaps that trap is better than being trapped inside a classroom of set constructs . . . a world where the only answers are the ones everybody accepts.

Look around in lecture halls today as professors stand up at the front of the room and recite fact after fact or explain concepts that are barely proven.

Do students challenge or even listen? No. They sit in their seats and read Westerns or talk to one another in whispered hushes that can be heard about twice as far as a normal conversation could be.

If I was a professor, I would have some fun.

First, I'd wait until I had to lecture about something that the little ingrates would find particularly boring, and then I'd say:

"Aside from the appalling fact that he owned slaves, George Washington was a noted homosexual. Not many people know that."

I would pause, waiting for my statement to sink through the swishing sound of a hundred tiny conversations. One student looks up, perhaps closing a Western. He looks at me quizzically for a second, then shrugs and writes the statement down. Another conquest for modern education.

I remember back in the fourth grade, sitting in the hall without my Western. I was bored again. Elementary school halls are pretty dull. It's almost better being inside learning statements you can't accept. I listened in at the door.

"OK," Miss Taylor said, "I can't prove it. But don't worry. It's not on the test anyway."

The class sighed, immediate relief from the problems of the universe. I felt used.

"Oh well," Becky Ray said, walking past after class, "You can't live forever."

"I have so far," I said.

And I have.

Allen is a graduate student and Daily Nebraskan arts and entertainment editor.

Waking up is hard to do

Windshield washing helps writers see through trivialities

There are some mornings so lousy that we know the rest of the day is going to stink.

This one began with nature as the enemy in the form of a flooded basement. Nature is a frustrating enemy because no matter how much you rant and swear, it doesn't listen.

Then came the writing of a check to the Internal Revenue Service. The IRS is a dangerous enemy because if you rant and swear you might be audited and have even more to rant and swear about.

And before the morning was half over, there was technology, an old and hated foe. It took the form of a bridge going up, then getting stuck and not coming down for 30 minutes, trapping thousands of us in our cars with nowhere to go.

By the time the bridge lowered and the traffic crept forward, I was hopelessly late for an interview with a source, my teeth were grinding and I was sure the entire world was plotting against me.

At the first opportunity, I caught a red light. That got me even angrier.

Suddenly, water was being sloshed across my windshield. At first, I didn't know where it was coming from.

Then I saw that a teen-ager had stepped from the curb with one of those gas station tools, a combination sponge and squeegee, for cleaning windshields.

And he got me mad, too. My windshield was already spotless, so why was he cleaning it? Who asked him to? The light might change and I could lose a few more precious seconds.

Before he could use the squeegee, I gave him an angry glare, waved him off and turned on my wipers.

He stepped back on the sidewalk, shrugged, shook his head slightly and turned away.

About 16 and very skinny. His T-shirt was a grimy gray, and his trousers looked like the kind that might have sold for \$8 new a long time ago.

The light turned green and I drove

ahead. By the time I got to the next corner, I realized what I had just done.

That wasn't one of my sons on a corner, washing the windshields of strangers' cars, hoping some of them would be generous enough to hand him two bits. My sons never had to do anything that demeaning to put a few dollars in their pockets. They were fortunate enough to have been born Caucasian Americans, with an overpaid father.

Mike
Royko



And there I sat, in my big, black, fat-cat car, with air-conditioning blasting, stereo playing and enough electronic doodads to do everything but blow my nose.

I had enough money in my pocket to buy that skinny kid a suit, pay his family's rent for a month and maybe fill up their refrigerator and pantry.

But I hadn't had the decency to let him squeegee the windshield, then touch the button that lowers a window and give him a buck and a smile. I had given him a scowl and a wave-off, gestures that said he was a nothing.

And all the while, do you know what was playing on my stereo cassette? Peter, Paul and Mary, singing that if they had a hammer, they'd hammer out love between their brothers and their

sisters, all over the world — that's what was playing.

While I'm telling some ghetto kid to get lost.

Statistics ran through my mind. What's the teen-age black unemployment rate — 40 or 50 percent? And we wonder why so many are into crime!

But here was a kid who wasn't grabbing my hubcaps, smashing and grabbing, mugging or heisting. All he was doing was cleaning windshields and hoping people like me might appreciate it.

Sure, it was a form of panhandling. But with that sponge and squeegee, he gave dignity to it. He was saying: "Look, I'm trying to work, I'm doing something."

And I tell him to bug off.

So I made a right turn at the next corner, then another one. I figured I'd double back and catch him a second time, and this time I'd give him a five-spot.

By the time I got back to the corner, he was gone. Maybe he moved to another corner. So I went around again, tried a couple more streets. But I couldn't find him.

So I drove to the office and parked. When I walked past my assistant, she said, "Good morning."

I told her it was a lousy, stinking morning.

Then I went into the men's room, looked in the mirror and saw the biggest reason for it being a lousy, stinking morning.

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Royko is a columnist for the Chicago Tribune

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

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication.

Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality,

timeliness and space available.

Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned.

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