

Daily **Nebraskan**  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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## \$1,500 too much

### But state senators deserve a raise

Nebraska state senators will have to either compromise with the state's voters or remove legislative salary limits from the state Constitution if they hope to increase their wages.

Legislators gave first-round approval Friday to two constitutional amendments that would increase their pay. One amendment, LR7CA, would increase senators' salaries from the current \$400 a month to \$1,500 a month. The amendment, which will require voter approval, was originally introduced as a \$1,000-a-month raise but was amended to \$1,500 during Friday's discussion.

A proposal to quadruple senators' salaries won't go over well with Nebraska voters. Senators should stick with the increase to \$1,000 a month instead of banking on tight-fisted voters to give them \$1,500.

A second proposed amendment, LR258CA, would be the best route for the senators to take. The resolution, sponsored by Sen. Bill Barrett of Lexington, would remove the amount of senators' salaries from the Constitution. It also would create a citizens' commission appointed by the governor that would suggest salary changes every four years. This proposal would give the constituency a voice in the senators' salary but wouldn't prevent senators from

receiving a reasonable salary. The \$400 a month the senators currently earn isn't enough. If passed, the salary increase would be the first for the Legislature in 20 years. Four hundred dollars a month is barely enough for a college student to survive on, let alone a state senator.

During discussion Friday, Sen. Emie Chambers of Omaha put legislative salaries in the best perspective. He said that during his 18 years as a senator, he has earned only \$86,000. He added that private firms have offered him jobs that pay that much in a year.

Another senator, Tim Hall of Omaha, said he is considering leaving the Legislature if salaries aren't increased.

"It's very difficult for me to serve in this body with three kids and a mortgage and a wife who likes me home for dinner," Hall said.

Under the current pay structure, the Legislature risks losing good senators because they can no longer afford to serve their state. It also discourages middle- and lower-class people from running for public office.

At a time when University of Nebraska-Lincoln faculty salaries have stolen most of the spotlight, voters need to remember what their senators are doing for them — and how much they get for it.

## UNL vs. Harvard: no contest?

*Difference is at the bottom of the student roster, not at the top*

I have been to the mountaintop — and I've seen the educational promised land. Surprisingly, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln isn't that far from the top as an institution of higher learning.

For years I've heard students berate their UNL education as second-rate. They argue that if only UNL were a "big-name" school, then they would have a real education. To those who have said this, I've been on your side. I've lamented about the greenness of the grass on the other side of UNL. How well educated I'd be if only I were at Stanford, Princeton or Harvard.

Recently I spent some time in Boston at the Harvard National Model United Nations. Having been there, I must admit the ivy has been ruffled just a bit. And the vines wrapped around UNL have been strengthened.

I sat in on a political-science class at Harvard. As it turned out, it was the same course I had taken here. They even used the same book. Unlike Nebraska, the Harvard class had only eight students. UNL's was three times that number. Every Harvard student was articulate, defending his or her position pretty well. The same could not be said of each individual in my UNL class. All members of this Ivy League class spoke. Not true back here in the Big Eight, where the verbally articulate numbers roughly equaled Harvard.

Before walking into class, I figured the weight of the Harvard intellect would be too much for my mere Nebraska legs to carry. But this didn't happen. No awesome persuasive rhetoric or sharp wit was shown. Had any upper-echelon UNL classmates been there, they could have held their own.

The Harvard professor actively led his class, prodding and prying for inconsistencies. His UNL counterpart played a more passive role, facilitating student-to-student debate. Though treated to one class and markedly different teaching styles, I cannot say this very good Harvard

professor was head and shoulders above the competition as I had expected. In other words, the professor from UNL gets similar high marks in my grading book.

After class, I spoke with the Harvard professor, who previously taught at the University of Washington. He echoed those commonly held conceptions, or misconceptions, about Harvard students — exceedingly bright, uncommonly sharp, outside the intellectual realm of us mere mortals at "inferior" institutions. Or at least those were his views before coming to Harvard. After two years, the Angels had landed.

The creme de la creme at Harvard are no brighter, he said, than those at,

Americans for Freedom.

And yet these two didn't strike me as young John F. Kennedys or Barry Goldwaters, any more than we think a young George Norris or Willa Cather could possibly be sitting next to us in our UNL classrooms.

My Harvard-to-Nebraska saga could stop at the words of one professor, in one classroom, on one day at Harvard. But I saw the fruits of his message come to term.

While participating in the Harvard National Model United Nations, I witnessed a student unite the world powers, including the United States and Soviet Union (practically unheard of in the real U.N.). This delegate, leading Eastern kids around like a matador dragging a bull by the nose, was from UNL.

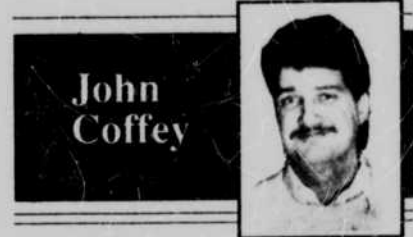
Taking a break from the conference, I slipped out to see the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library. The slain president, one of our country's most admired, was a graduate of Harvard. The library contained a room full of Kennedy quotes. Unlike my previous Harvard experience, the weight of this Harvardites' words was staggering.

Practical politics teaches us that politicians' speeches aren't always written by those public officials who bestow them upon the world. It wasn't until I returned home that I realized Kennedy's speechwriter was Ted Sorenson — a graduate of UNL.

As educational institutions go, UNL isn't the Harvard of the Plains. Each year, the university must find better ways to allocate shrinking funds. Each year, professors leave for greener monetary pastures at other schools. Years and money will be needed to reverse this trend.

But one weekend taught me something that more than four years of college could not. The quality of one's education doesn't depend on the institution as much as it does on the individual.

Coffey is a senior political science major and a Daily Nebraskan arts and entertainment reporter.



John Coffey

say, a Washington or Nebraska. "The best student I ever had — probably ever will have — was at Wash U," he said.

The big difference, he went on to say, lies not with those top students, but those at the bottom. A prestigious private institution like Harvard can afford a higher quality cut-off line than a state-supported school like Nebraska.

Any cattle-fed country kid can become a Cornhusker. Hardly so for those harboring hopes for Harvard. While a big Ivy League school with a rich tradition like Harvard can afford to skim off the cream, Nebraska gets a lot of milk.

That's inevitable at a state-run school established to provide its residents a quality education at an "affordable" price — not a word in the Harvard vocabulary.

The professor's other main point: Most students are very active outside the classroom. Among the students in his class are the Harvard heads of Young Democrats and Young

### Letters

#### Reader: Apathy problem must be solved

Terry Dondlinger's letter (Daily Nebraskan, Feb. 24) is noteworthy in its implications. She ignores the fact that apathy exists among independent students primarily because of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska.

Think about it. If you saw an organization that advocates blanket tuition increases and surcharges, consistently rejects qualified independent students in the appointments process, and then has the audacity to call you "apathetic," would you want to become involved?

Her assertion that all residence hall students who are experienced leaders have been and will be active in ASUN is untrue. What constitutes

"experienced" leadership in the real world does not necessarily meet the criteria set by a Greek-dominated appointments board. Residence hall students who apply for positions sadly learn this.

The idea that additional information and support to the halls will compensate for Greek dominance is similarly absurd.

Apathy can only be solved when student government seeks to more closely identify itself with the interests of all students.

Brian Svoboda  
junior  
political science

#### Reader says 'Action X' title is 'immature'

This is in response to Dave Reiter (Letters, Feb. 17).

I have watched many letters come and go in the past few weeks about condom week, safe sex, Cather Residence Hall's efforts and putting condom machines in bathrooms. I have quietly agreed and disagreed with opinions on the various issues.

However, I feel Reiter's letter comes from someone who is choosing to run and hide from the situation and subject at hand.

First of all, anyone who has to call sex "Action X" is a bit immature. If you can't talk about it right, don't talk at all.

Second, I think it's a major mistake to infer that some University of Nebraska-Lincoln students can't survive without sex by saying it is physically, psychologically and socially impossible for them. I don't think it's any person's right to judge

the rest of the campus on sexual issues or any other. I would hope that having respect for others' values is more important.

And who is so bold to say that UNL students deserve to have the state spend tax money to install condom machines in the residence halls? Well, I can't answer who in particular, because I don't know. But what I do know is that the United States' government and many state governments are doing what they can right now to help stop AIDS. Having condoms around could also prevent an unwanted pregnancy.

Reiter, I would seriously reconsider what you wrote about the rest of the population here.

Mary Pat Dolata  
senior  
interior design

## Imprecise use of word 'Hispanic' causes confusion, counselor says

There is a growing controversy and fuss over the current use of the word Hispanic. There are personal campaigns across the United States beginning to protest the use of the imprecise word Hispanic as the term used to describe all U.S. residents of Latin-American extraction. The reality is that no ethnic group fits the Hispanic label.

Each individual within a culture has been affected by unique experiences as well as by common cultural experiences. One of the central issues

we as a people did not come up with a term that was satisfactory. Instead, Chicanos/Mexicans, Cubans and Puerto Ricans have been caught up in the frenzy of politics and psychological warfare that paints a picture of a people on the move. Slogans such as "The 1980s will be the decade of the Hispanics" swept us into using the term Hispanic.

Understanding the psychology of the Chicano/Mexican-American has not been easy. In the past, it seemed that many were ashamed to be Chicanos/Mexicanos. They claimed to be Americans — they even denied having any Mexican blood. But how could they explain their last name? Easily: They were Spanish; they were Americans of Spanish descent. In 1988, they are now Spanish rather than Chicano/Mexican American still for the same denial reasons. Every time we use the word Hispanic, are we not consciously or unconsciously denying our rightful ethnic identity?

For our young Chicano/Mexican children, it's important that they have a good self-concept and identity. It's important for positive self-esteem that they tie their ethnic identity to their cultural background. America, long known as a "melting pot" of diverse racial and cultural groups, has forced the concept of assimilation upon many of its immigrants. Yet we have learned that we can be good American citizens under the concept of acculturation. Many of

us have made positive contributions to the United States, but not at the expense of denying our ethnicity.

In spite of the confusion and in the public mind of us as a single group, Chicanos/Mexicans, Cubans and Puerto Ricans embrace cultures almost as rich and varied as America itself. If our names are varied, so too are the ways we feel, see and think about our ethnic pride.

Is it really hot air over nothing — over an insignificant word like Hispanic? To promote things Hispanic is not to understand history correctly. Has anyone bothered to find out what Hispanic means or represents? In the World Book Encyclopedia, the word Hispanic is defined as Spanish, meaning that when we hear people talk about Hispanic culture, they are referring to Spanish culture. Spanish culture historically in the Americas was one of conquest; it was imposed on our populations. In the dictionary, Hispanic is defined as an adjective referring to Spanish and Portuguese. I'm not quite sure that Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Chicano/Mexicans are proclaiming that through this Hispanicizing, they want to claim their European roots. Yet it's a fact that Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and people from Central America and the Caribbean are lumped together for convenience.

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