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Executives earn B- Officers can be proud of achievements

As the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska close another term, outgoing executives can be proud of many accomplishments.

While remembering those accomplishments, they must look at what they did not achieve and explain those drawbacks to new executive officers.

ASUN President Jeff Petersen, First Vice President Nate Geisert and Second Vice President Kim Beavers have, more often than not, proven that they are willing to work for the betterment of the university's student government.

As the UNL student regent, Petersen gained the ex-officio student regent vote and refused to remain silent on issues that were brought before the NU Board of Regents.

He has not been politically "smart," but has challenged regents on issues he disagreed with. He wrote resolutions asking regents to improve communication with students, and to hold the line on tuition increases and surcharges. He got those resolutions passed.

Beavers partly fulfilled the campaign promise she was most vocal on last spring, bridging the gap between non-greek university students and the ASUN Senate. Although few people attended residence liaison committee meetings, she never gave up the idea of having a more representative student government.

But Beavers' work with the residence liaison committee did not spill over to the ASUN Senate in other ways. The senate remained, throughout most of the year, highly greek-dominated. Due to senate resignations in recent months, more non-greek and minority senators were appointed. The effort may have come a little too late.

A different perspective earlier in the term might have helped the senate get through some non-majority issues faster and more successfully.

Last semester minority students were rightfully outraged when ASUN drafted bills dealing with minorities on campus without getting input from those students.

ASUN also made a mistake when it removed strong language from the original bills that clearly showed the student body recognized racism on campus and wanted to change it.

Eventually ASUN passed the bills, after returning some of the passages that made a strong statement against racism. Had the senate been more diverse, the bills would have passed without such trouble.

Looking back at legislation, ASUN did pass some bills that, indeed, could improve life for students.

- The senate approved Government Bill 6, which expressed disapproval of LB160, a bill in the Nebraska Legislature that would include Kearney State College in the university system. ASUN senators asked that a study of university expansion be performed before state senators voted on the bill.

- ASUN senators also expressed their approval of LB340, the Indian Burial Rights Act.

- ASUN took a stand against tuition surcharges.

- Senate Bill 66 asked for the creation of a parking advisory group that would report parking problems and solutions by Dec. 1, 1989.

- Senate Bill 69 instructed the dean of the graduate college to create graduate assistantships in order to retain more minorities.

- The senate worked out early plans for an escort service for drunk students and a new dead week policy.

- The Government Liaison Committee lobbied the Nebraska Legislature on the Kearney State College issue, the State Student Incentive Grant issue and various campus enhancement issues.

Although these were important and needed actions, many campus problems weren't addressed because the senate spent too much time wading through petty arguments and unorganized meetings.

Second Vice President Nate Geisert can take part of the heat for this. While running senate meetings, Geisert displayed his inadequacy as a speaker and leader. Although senators should have been more active in creating legislation, Geisert's inability to grasp his role oftentimes slowed down the senate.

Geisert also mishandled the polling site question. The Residence Hall Association, even the ASUN Senate, requested a polling site in at least one residence hall. But Geisert spoke against it at a senate meeting and to the Electoral Commission. The request should have been granted, considering that residence hall votes increased dramatically to 32.26 percent of those voting.

The executive slate of the ACTION party brought out some important issues on the UNL campus and did a good job of promoting student awareness.

One glaring problem with this year's ASUN was the inability to improve campus-wide awareness of senate issues -- as is evident by this year's low voter turnout. But ASUN cannot be completely faulted for student apathy. It takes an active electorate as well as an active government to get things done.

Overall grade: B -

-- Curt Wagner
for the Daily Nebraskan



Minority issues a touchy topic Older generations not willing to take down fences of racism

Minority issues make me nervous.

Every time I'm called to attend a session on minorities, discrimination or racism in America, I'm filled with an itchy, annoying feeling that makes me squirm in my seat... a feeling that I've been aware of since childhood.

It happened again last Friday at a reporting techniques seminar on minorities in the media led by editor-in-residence Dick Smyser.

Before a room of about 20 white, middle-class journalism students sat three minority individuals who are involved in the media on almost a daily basis. They were Theresa Ballard, a news-editorial major from Omaha; Stevie Wilson, a broadcast/meteorology major from Mississippi; and Rudy Smith, an Omaha World-Herald photographer.

The session was designed to discuss how journalists can better cover minority issues, what each panel member thought of the media's coverage of minorities and what we, as young journalists, should do about it.

The seminar was instructive, interesting and hopefully educational for all those who attended. It was an opportunity to discuss an issue that sometimes is only talked about behind closed doors.

Yet Ballard, Wilson and Smith sat on the opposite side of the room behind a table. The discussions were calm and enlightening, but I couldn't help think how many people would like to keep those of another color and race on the other side of the fence.

And my father's voice kept blowing in my ear.

"Nigger lover."

The bellowing, heavy sound came as Dad watched his plump, pre-adolescent daughter absorbed in the "The Jeffersons." The television screen flickered as George and Louise talked about the neighbors or their dry-cleaning company or some other ordinary everyday subject.

"Yeah, she likes those nigger

shows."

My older brother, my father's prodigy, chimed in, proudly regurgitating the sounds of bigotry.

I laid frozen to the couch. I felt bad, just plain bad. I didn't understand what I had done wrong.

But I now know what the problem was. My father, the 6-foot-3, muscular man whose strength toiled with Iowa farmland every day to feed his family, was wrong. Deeply wrong.

He hated black people. Maybe he didn't want them dead, but he certainly didn't want his blonde, blue-eyed daughter near them. Not even if her only connection with minorities was through a TV set.



Diana Johnson

"Them."

My family drove through predominantly black north Omaha one day. I was very young. We locked the car doors.

"Look at them," the deep voice said, pointing to the people sitting quietly on porch steps enjoying a Sunday afternoon.

I didn't understand. Who were they? How were they so different from me? What was my father talking about? Something was wrong here. My stomach hurt.

In adolescence, my ears closed to my father. His words slipped over my head and into the wind, where hopefully no one could hear them. My saint-like mother, who bends over backward to keep peace in the home, explained to me that she and my father were raised in a different era, with different notions about minori-

ties. Keep them on their side of the fence and peace will be maintained.

But what difference should that make? Why must attitudes be ingrained forever? Is change so impossible?

I'm 22 now. It's been at least a decade since Dad first called me "a nigger lover."

I still turn on the TV set to watch "The Cosby Show" or to catch the evening news.

But racial remarks still get my attention. "Black" may be one of the descriptions of a burglary suspect in print and broadcast news. Black events, such as a black leadership conference, may only be reported when a fight breaks out. The media may overlook the national speakers on hand to discuss minority issues. These were a few examples of unfair media coverage that came out in the Friday session.

Panel members exposed to us many subtle prejudices that exist in our profession. They showed us that we can change that, we can be more fair.

College, too, has shown me that attitudes, no matter how deep they run, don't have to be maintained. We can see the color still, but the person inside is who we must see and hear.

Even now, though, when film of the murder of a black man appears on the evening news, that bigoted voice comes alive.

"Another dead coon," he says, his hands clapping.

Many times in the past I felt ashamed... ashamed of the way my family thinks. But now I feel bad for my father. He'll never know what it's like to have the fences taken down.

If it's up to him and people like him, the fences will never come down.

And we should all feel ashamed about that.

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by Brian Shellito

