

Daily Nebraskan
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Plan imposes limits

Committee needs student representation

The NU Board of Regents' plan for selecting members of a presidential search committee raised some eyebrows Friday and led to discussion of misrepresentation.

As well it should.

The plan, proposed by Regent Don Blank, includes selecting 12 voting and six non-voting members.

But of those 12, the committee will include only three faculty members and one student.

Bryan Hill, UNL's student regent, offered an amendment to add three more students, one from each campus, as ex-officio members of the committee.

The regents rejected it unanimously.

That's too bad, because the students are the most poorly represented area of the committee, and one of the regents' biggest constituent groups.

Blank's first proposal included three students, but he knocked that number down to two -- then to one -- when he decided to have only 12 members on the committee -- as bylaws require.

Instead of knocking the numbers down, the regents should have changed the bylaws to allow more committee members. It might have taken more time, but the committee won't be formed until October anyway, so another week would not have hurt.

What does hurt is that student input from the three campuses, which Hill called "distinctly different from each other," won't be heard. One student will have to represent each campus' needs -- a nearly impossible task.

Regent Rosemary Skrupa of Omaha said students at each of the campuses have the same concerns, such as tuition prices and parking, and are representative of each others' interests.

That's not entirely true. Students' concerns vary on each campus, and tuition and parking are poor examples.

But if that's the way the regents feel, why shouldn't faculty members from each campus have the same concerns? They all worry about salaries and parking, so aren't they representative of each others' interests?

No, they aren't. And neither are the students.

Regent Don Fricke of Lincoln said adding more student and faculty representatives to the committee would be "tipping the scales to the east end of the state."

But students come from all over the state. At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, three of the last five student-body presidents were from western Nebraska. And they were a lot more informed about the university than the "general public."

If nothing else, the regents should promise that all three student regents will sit on the subcommittee to review the search committee nominees.

Without the 40,000 students who make up the University of Nebraska, there would be no need for a new president.

The regents should respect their concerns.

— Amy Edwards
for the Daily Nebraskan

Meyer clarifies his stand on money-spending decision

Dear Aaron Eckelbecker (DN, Sept. 7):

Pay close attention now, because you obviously did not do so last time.

Not once did I advocate "putting chains on free thought." I fully agree with an artist being able to draw or paint whatever he wants. What I do not like is being forced to spend my money to support something I personally can't stand. If you want to keep a painting, such as the one mentioned, in your house or go see it at a museum, fine. I can't stop you, nor would I even want to. Just pay for it yourself. You want to discuss freedom? Shouldn't I have the freedom to decide for myself where my money goes?

The other point you obviously

missed was my "comparing the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) to Def Leppard." I did not do that. Had you paid attention, you would have seen that I compared idiots like Def Leppard to the idiot that did that disgusting painting. Now, don't get me wrong. I'm fully in favor of idiots doing disgusting paintings in this country, they have that right. I just don't want to pay for it. If people want to see a movie, they pay for it themselves. I don't spend my money so anyone else can see the latest Freddy Krueger movie for free. The same practice should apply to this situation as well.

Andrew Meyer
"The Silly Sophomore"
pre-med



Let bygones be bygones, UNL

Regents have a chance to review priorities, change positively

It's now been more than a month since the NU Board of Regents decided to fire system President Ronald Roskens. This has been one of the most widely reported topics in some time.

As the old saying goes, "I hate to kick a dead horse," but why not; everyone else has.

The Roskens firing has led to many strong questions and accusations about the operation, motives and competence of the regents. It also has caused political tension which could hurt the university substantially. Things have grown so tense that Thursday's Lincoln Journal ran a story about a NU faculty coalition which anonymously is calling for the resignation of board Chairman Nancy Hoch. This column is beginning to sound like another bash-the-Regents editorial.

Guess again.

It is ridiculous, bordering on stupid, for a so-called "coalition of NU faculty," or anyone else, to call for the resignation of Nancy Hoch. Last year, while serving as UNL student-body president and a member of the NU Board of Regents, I had the opportunity to closely examine the board during a period of great transition. Early in the year, I was amazed at how differently members of the board saw their role. I learned that Regent Hoch and a few others felt the board should be an active, concerned and involved body.

They believed they were elected to do all they could to give the people of this state the best university possible.

Other members believed in taking a more passive role. One regent actually told me that the board was "here simply to hire the president and then let him do the rest."

That's outrageous. Do we elect public officials to just sit back and passively enjoy the perks of their positions? In my opinion, the only reason this regent, and perhaps others, even hold their positions is to enjoy the numerous dinners at the Lincoln Country Club, the season football tickets, the free trips to sunny spots like Miami and Phoenix (for Bowl Games) and the other benefits of being major Nebraska political figures.

Consequently, the board was divided and there were many political battles between the two coalitions.

Often, it seemed that whether an item

passed or failed came down to petty politics rather than the merits of the issue. The "passive" coalition would go to great lengths to keep Hoch and others from accomplishing anything. I once sat through 10 minutes of debate on a two-word amendment proposed by Hoch to clarify the language of a motion.

The amendment was defeated, in my opinion, to put Hoch down.

Following the November elections, a majority of the board seemed to favor a more active role. In January, with the election of Hoch as chairman, and the emergence of other regents in strong support of an active board, changes began. For the first time, I saw cohesion and direction on the board with less political friction and bickering.



Jeff Petersen

Consequently, I firmly believe the NU Board of Regents is a much better governing body than it was a year ago. For years I heard critics complain that the regents had no idea what they were doing and no control over university operations.

So it's quite ironic that now, when we finally have a board with the commitment to fill its duties and govern the university -- not to mention the guts to take a tough stand -- people are calling for resignations. Of course, we have to consider the source. People (or coalitions) who make strong accusations and grand suggestions anonymously are those who are not concerned enough about their ideas to take a strong stance.

So to the board I say, keep working. As a former member I applaud your progress and direction. As a citizen I thank you for finally being active representatives of the people and at last putting control of the University back where it belongs, in the hands of the people of this state.

But a major concern still exists. Many people say the Roskens' firing has led to bad relations between the regents and the Nebraska Legislature. I wholeheartedly agree that there is a problem. But I don't think the Roskens situation is the cause. It

only is a convenient excuse to air a persistent and ongoing power struggle. For some time, relations between the regents and state senators have been tense. Each body seems intent on proving that it cannot be pushed around.

It is a relationship of animosity that has existed since the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled, in *Exon vs. NU Board of Regents*, that the regents had considerable control over the university's budget. Now every time the budget comes up, senators suggest and recommend what the board should do with its money, while the regents maintain they can allocate their funds as they see fit.

Each body has a trump card; the board has the Nebraska Constitution backing it up, but the Legislature holds a large ax above the board... the power to give the regents as much or as little money as senators see fit. When the regents don't use funds as "suggested," senators can simply cut funding the next year. Both bodies fight to prove their power and, in the process, the university and the state both lose.

This struggle is being played out again. The veil is concern over the handling of the Roskens situation, the truth (friendships and loyalties aside) is simply one more opportunity to exert power and engage in a political dogfight. And unless all these elected representatives are willing to put their overgrown egos in check, or the state constitution is amended, these power plays will continue and the university -- the entire state for that matter -- will suffer.

Times are changing, folks, the regents are coming to Lincoln to do more than watch Cornhusker football games. Ron is a great guy, but it was time he left. Although the regents may have mishandled the firing, he is gone, and it's time to move the university forward.

Opportunity awaits on the horizon, and the regents have a chance to do make some positive changes. Someone told me that "you never grow when you're comfortable," and the regents may not be very comfortable right now, but they are growing. Let's hope they keep it up. Maybe if we quit writing about the past, they will.

Enough said.

Petersen is a senior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

letter

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