

Daily
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Students disgruntled

ASUN voices constituents' concern to board

With a 22-0-2 vote Wednesday, the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska showed students they are concerned about their constituents.

ASUN passed Senate Resolution 5, telling the NU Board of Regents that students are displeased with the board's decision to withhold information on the ousting of President Ronald Roskens.

Their vote, however, did not go unopposed.

UNL Faculty Senate President James McShane told the ASUN Senate he was concerned about the resolution, because it demanded the regents disclose information for which they could be legally liable.

McShane said Nebraskans should drop the subject, and look toward the future proceedings of the board.

"I'm rather proud that our board has the sense to keep their collective mouth shut despite all the grief it has brought them again and again . . .," McShane said.

But the issue is not dead, nor should it be.

Sen. Steve Thomlison, sponsor of the resolution, added amendments to the legislation -- at McShane's suggestion -- requesting that the regents disclose information if and when it is legally viable.

That makes sense. ASUN is not trying to prod the regents into a lawsuit with their request. Senators are merely letting the regents know that students are disgruntled with their secrecy.

ASUN President Bryan Hill added strength to that complaint with a bill urging the regents to uphold "the academic principles of open debate and public accountability."

Sen. Marc Shkolnick also made a good point. He said rumors surrounding Roskens' ousting could be more damaging than the reasons for the board's action.

The NU Board of Regents may never disclose those reasons. Even with pressure from the Nebraska Legislature, they may keep their silence on personnel relations.

But regents still should be aware of how students feel. Thomlison's resolution on the matter -- coupled with Hill's legislation -- tells the regents that students won't forget the problem.

The NU Board of Regents may pay no mind to students' concerns. So far, their lawyers say regents are legally bound to keep their mouths shut.

Regardless of the board's concern, ASUN senators have taken a good step. They have shown that -- at least on this issue -- they are concerned about and capable of listening to their constituents.

Hopefully, the NU Board of Regents will follow suit.

-- Amy Edwards
for the Daily Nebraskan

Student gives his solutions for UNL's parking problem

I want a place to park my car! Ever since the bureaucrats gave part of my parking lot (I am in Area 1) to the rich kids who can afford to pay \$150 for a preferred parking spot, I and many others in Area 1 have not had nearly enough room to park. While I will be racking up hundreds of dollars in parking tickets, the new preferred parking lot (Area G) remains only 10 percent full! Here's a list of possible answers:

1. I can live with a few guys having their own personal parking spaces, but why not let the rest of us peons use the remaining spaces in Area G?
2. Give us a new lot, even if it is

farther away than the other Area 1 lots.

3. Abolish parking by area. We should be able to park in any area we want, other than the faculty and preferred lots.

4. Loosen parking restrictions. Let us park along the sides of the road, etc.

5. Invest a bit of the school's vast cash reserves in a multi-floor parking garage.

Mike Gleason
freshman
computer science

P.S. Keep Jim's Journal!

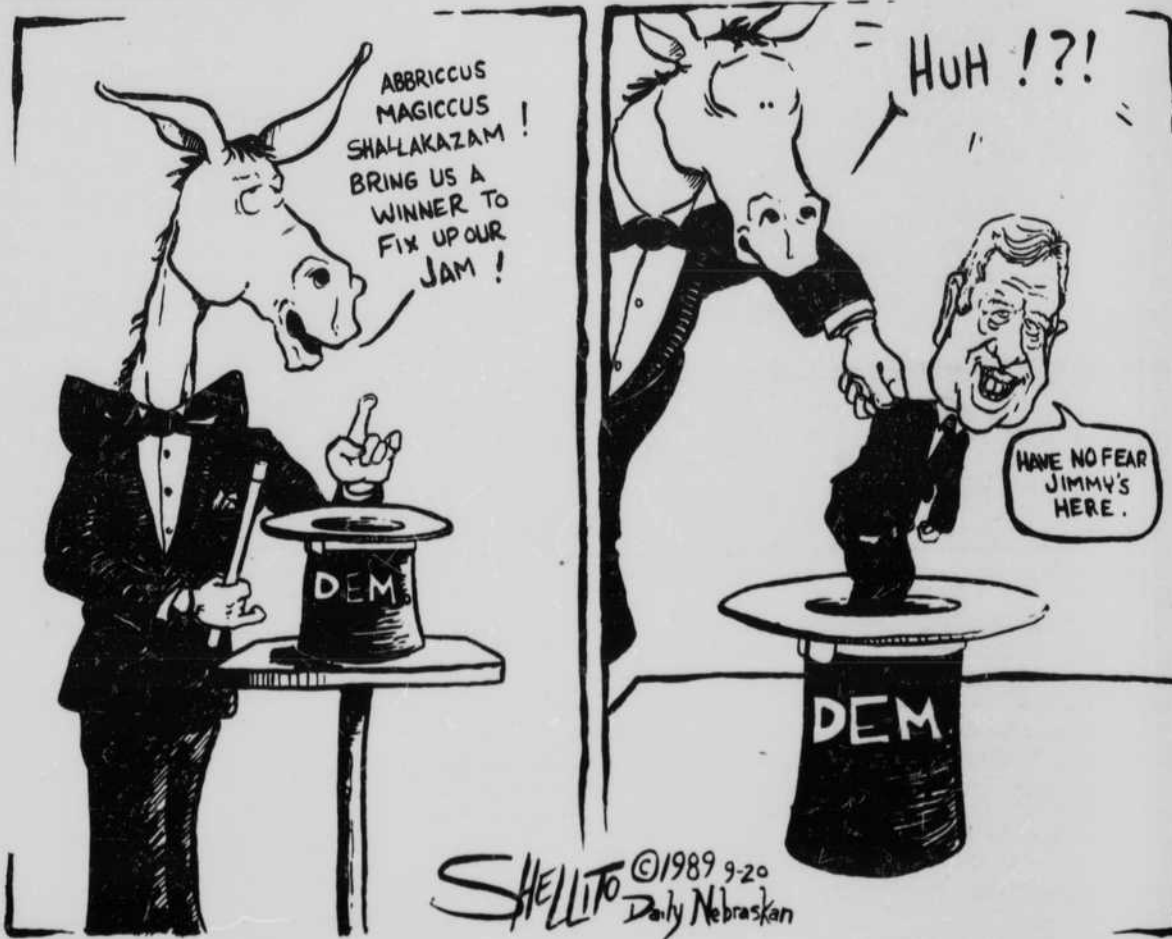
letter

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Apathy won't resolve anything

Needed ASUN restructuring is impossible without student help

Like Pinocchio, the puppet who desperately wanted to be a real boy, the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska is a group that desperately wants to be a real student government.

For years, though, the problem has been the same. An overwhelming majority of students simply don't care about student government. Not even 12 percent of eligible voters turned out last year for ASUN's elections. The year before it was 13 percent.

And most of those who do care about student government don't like what they see. A survey conducted last year by ASUN itself revealed that 53 percent of the UNL students surveyed rated student government as "poor/fair."

So it's fair to ask some questions: Why, on an apathetic campus, are students especially apathetic about ASUN? And why do a vast majority of students have little or no confidence in their student government?

The problem has nothing to do with the people who serve in ASUN now. No, ASUN's problem lies in itself. The threat it faces is what Robert Kennedy described as "the violence of institutions: indifference, inaction and slow decay."

Institutions such as our governments, our churches and our bridge clubs represent our values as a culture and reflect our diversity as a society. When an institution fails to do either of these things, it begins to break down. And when this happens, people become alienated. They stop respecting the institution, and the institution becomes meaningless.

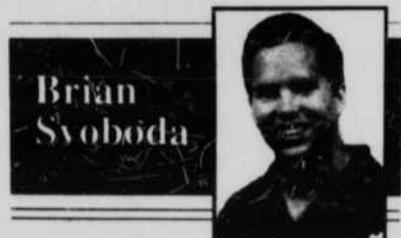
This is precisely what is happening to ASUN. The role and function of ASUN as it has evolved over the past several years is inconsistent with the values, attitudes and beliefs of students.

Students see themselves at odds with the university's administration and the NU Board of Regents. Whether they're looking for a parking space, waiting in line for their financial aid check, or watching their

residence hall student assistant kick their date out of their room at 2 a.m., students see the university as their enemy.

It's not fair, but it's a fact.

Student government, on the other hand, is seen as an ally of the administration and the regents. ASUN executives, senators and subcommittees such as the Parking Advisory Board and the Committee for Fees Allocation work conscientiously with administrators and, in the end, usually accept the decisions they make.



Brian Svoboda

This isn't totally fair, either. There indeed are times when the student government openly takes on the administration and the regents. But for the average student, these times seem to be too few and far between. While students see their relationship with the university as basically adversarial, ASUN's relationship with the university is seen as basically cooperative.

And just as ASUN fails to represent student beliefs and attitudes, it also fails to reflect the diversity of the student population. The argument has been made many times in many ways, but here it is again: on a campus where the overwhelming majority of students have never joined the greek system, a similar majority of ASUN's leaders are members of fraternities and sororities. Those who doubt this, ask yourselves the following question: when was the last time an ASUN president was a non-greek?

At least current ASUN leaders realize this is a problem. The executives have spoken fervently and often about the need to create a more diverse student government through use of the appointments system.

But their ideas are short-term, cosmetic solutions to what is a long-term, structural problem. The reason fraternity and sorority members make up such an excessively large portion of ASUN's leadership is that their houses encourage and sometimes even require them to seek leadership positions.

Off-campus and residence hall students have no such advantage. It's not that they lack the talent or the ability to serve. They lack an organization which makes them serve.

So what can be done?

Like the Soviets, what ASUN needs is perestroika, a psychological and physical restructuring. Regents and administrators should not be appeased now for the sake of larger gains later. Instead, student leaders should champion student interests openly and forthrightly, case-by-case. ASUN's priority now should be to restore student confidence in student government. If this can be done, even the administrators and regents will share in the benefits.

And ASUN should make structural changes requiring a more diverse student government. Divide the ASUN Senate into two houses, one elected by college and one by living unit. Change the method for selecting executives and making appointments. You can recruit all the off-campus and residence hall students you want for appointments this year. But unless there is structural change, the fraternity and sorority dominance of ASUN will be back again next year.

ASUN's problem isn't anybody's fault. It was here before the current ASUN executives were elected, and odds are it'll be here when they leave.

But ASUN must begin to reflect the values and diversity of the student body. If not, then year after year the election turnout will be a little lower, the students will be a little angrier and the ASUN president will like his or her job a lot less.

Svoboda is a political science and Russian major, and a Daily Nebraskan editorial columnist.

editorial

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