

Errors of Keller Plan directors surprising

As a Keller Plan psychology student, I, along with more than 600 other students, have been made well aware of the impact of the recent theft of student records. However, I feel some very important issues have been neglected, and they are addressed below.

First, Keller Plan psychology records and retains grades for each student on separate file folders. These folders are the extent of the students' records. The sole means of protection for all 600-plus records is placement in a locked room. When asked why these records were not kept under lock and key, university officials responded that such records were far too numerous to be locked up. (All 600-plus records are contained in two 1-by-3-foot boxes.) No regard is given to the possibility of fire or water damage destroying the records.

A number of precautions could have been taken to protect the records. For example, Political Science 100 Keller Plan retains all of their

records, which are kept on essentially identical file folders, in a locked file cabinet. In addition, all student records are computerized. Also, the computer system is backed up several ways. Perhaps the 181 Psychology department could spare one of its video cameras used to deter cheating to monitor the defenseless records.

Secondly, Berman and Heppner are quick to cite the theft of their backup system. This backup system consists of a shelf full of tests from previous days. They are kept in the same location as the records and are equally vulnerable. The mere idea that Berman and Heppner would label such a system a backup is ludicrous.

Again, several options are open for protection. The placement in a separate location should be the first step. Officials might consider providing students with a record of their own progress to retain themselves. Old tests and progress reports have proven themselves useful in correct-

ing occasional mistakes in grading.

In a letter sent to all 600 Keller students, Berman and Heppner state that "as many precautions as possible" have been taken to protect the records.

Third, Berman and Heppner have responded to the situation by repeatedly emphasizing the psychological pathology of the thieves. Berman and Heppner need to accept a certain degree of responsibility for the results of the robbery and respond properly. What is a proper response? There are two points: One, admitting the records were not adequately protected, and two, an apology is due to the students. These individuals who serve as role models to their students, have taught us that whenever a mistake is made, never admit it and always cover your --.

Finally, there is the issue of grades. Students are now given the options of taking a test that covers the entire year, which completely undermines the fundamentals of a Keller

Plan program, or taking the course again next year. Berman and Heppner claim such options are "fair to the greatest number."

In my opinion, the options serve to minimize the inconvenience to the professors and consequently lay the burden on the students. If nothing else, they could have admitted their mistakes and relied on the students' honesty in reporting their own progress. Such a response may have resulted in some grade inflation. However, most students are reasonably honest and a certain degree of grade inflation would be harmless overall.

I realize the surprise of such events as the break-in, but equally surprising are the gross errors in judgment made by those responsible for the management of the Psychology 181 Keller program.

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CRC guidelines should be clearly defined

In the Nov. 29 issue of the Journalist, there was an article on the misuse of computer facilities at UNL. Though we do not support the actions of the students involved, we feel that a few inaccuracies should be cleared up.

The game in question, as reported, was running on an off-campus computer. The Journalist article implied that the only way to access the game was through an account on a UNL mainframe. This is simply not true.

The game was running on a machine in Finland. Getting access to the game is as simple as dialing a phone number and then using an account on that machine. The account was posted publicly as an invitation to play.

Anyone who can get to a computer terminal on the campus network, or a home computer and a modem, can play this game regardless of whether they have a UNL computer account. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that the two students with accounts "broke another rule by giving out their (account) numbers," as Gerald Kutish, associate director of the Computing Resource Center, stated.

Kutish also claims that "the center's policy clearly states that games are off limits," and states that the computer rooms have signs that say "For coursework only."

The only relevant signs we found state: "ATTENTION: Misuse of computer resources may subject the student to disciplinary action under the UNL Student Code of Conduct." These signs appeared after -- not before -- the reported incident.

Most students have never been shown a copy of the document that Kutish cites, "Ethical Principles for the Use of UNL Computing Resources." In fact, when we went into the CRC office to request a copy, it took 15 minutes for the staff to find one.

In essence, there are four rules in the policy statement we obtained. The first rule states that computer accounts are to be used only for the purpose for which they were issued.

The second rule states that an account will not be used to violate other users' rights (rights to privacy, rights of ownership, right to access.) Both rules three and four seem to be special cases of rule two dealing with what is essentially vandalism and theft.

The second rule is essential to the successful sharing of computer resources and we fully support it. The first rule, however, is so vague that nearly any activity can be condemned (including the writing of this letter, which was done on a university mainframe). For instance, using an account issued for a computer class to write an English paper would be a violation. No one should object to using the machine for any educational purpose.

Furthermore, it is ludicrous to expect students to obey a policy which has never been shown to them, and which CRC seems to be only marginally aware of. If CRC is really serious about holding students responsible for their actions, they must

start by giving them a tangible and accessible set of guidelines. Even the brightest computer user isn't telepathic.

Frankly, we feel that this is a large fuss over very little. The students were wrong, were told they were wrong, they quit playing, and that should have been the end of it. CRC, however, seems intent on bringing

serious punishment against these students, demonstrated by the fact that their academic records have been frozen. Given the seriousness of this action, we feel another side of the situation should be presented.

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