

# Students, architect blast regent

## Capitol could have been square box

Regent Robert Allen is falling farther and farther off base. In the first article (DN, Dec. 11) about his idea of using "value engineering," he called for the deletion of artwork and open space and "more normal design" in the buildings constructed on our campus. In the article on Dec. 13, he continued that he doesn't want "the elimination of all aesthetics of design quality" (just most because it would be cheaper). By using a "value engineer" once the architect was finished, they -- the regents -- would have a final say on what to include and what to cut.

I didn't realize the regents had architectural education. Well, they must have gone to a different university because these ideas go completely against everything that the College of Architecture is teaching.

Allen states that "unnecessary architectural frills" are fine in the private sector (i.e. his house) but not for the public sector (i.e. society's house). He feels that if a building is for education you should get the most education out of it. He doesn't realize that education is not just going to school and school does not equal row upon row of square block classrooms.

The Nebraska State Capitol is a government building. Did we get all the government we could have out of it? The effects of a "value engineer" on it would have produced a square box, not one of the seven wonders of the modern architectural world.

I guess going to architectural school in hopes of creating a meaningful environment for society is a mute cause in the mind of this regent. I could have saved myself six years of tuition by just building Butler buildings (farm sheds). I did see one with skylights the other day, but the value engineers will take care of those.

Kevin Clark  
senior  
architecture

## Reader says Allen wants mediocrity

Regent Robert Allen of Hastings, you are dead wrong. You should have said you were misquoted, or you should have said you meant something else. But to defend the comments you made (DN, Dec. 11) two days later is just plain ignorant.

A building is much more than shelter. It creates environmental and behavioral qualities that dictate how people perceive buildings and how they use them. The goal of architecture is to create a meaningful environment. As a public entity, you have

a responsibility to create quality buildings, and design excellence should be a given.

Passing money on to the College of Arts & Sciences is an honorable goal and it is good to know that the regents do think about the students. However, next year the arts and sciences college again will have to fight for funds, as will all colleges on campus. The aesthetic qualities you strip from buildings cannot be added later.

What you are suggesting is a series of university buildings dedicated to mediocrity. Perhaps you would like to tell students, parents, potential freshmen or alumni that they can be a part of that mediocrity. If you are working to give funds to academics, I think we all know where the regents could have saved \$250,000 that any of the colleges could have used. You talking of "unnecessary frills" carries no weight with me, Mr. Allen.

And just who are these value engineers? Is there a major on campus that gives a degree to this discipline, or is it a title a professional simply starts using? As far as I can tell, the only thing a value engineer does is make cost estimates and then recommendations as to how the budget can be cut. If a standard contract is being used, the architect has a responsibility to keep the budget in line. Why then, in the name of budget, do you hire -- and pay -- another party to complete duties that the architect is contractually obligated to do?

Mr. Allen, it appears you are uneducated in most phases of the building design/construction process, and it may be wise not to express your opinion in public again, or at least until you have a better understanding.

I believe the architectural students have a right, if not a responsibility, to be angry. I also think the art students should be upset, in light of the fact that you have deemed the result of their labor as "unnecessary aesthetic qualities" and "unnecessary frills." Most of all, I think the students in the College of Business Administration should be angry. Imagine a building addition with even fewer aesthetic qualities than the one you have now. No stone columns, no stone arched entry, no stone cornice, no grand staircase. Only more drab, cheap, depressing corridors and classrooms.

I invite all the business students to walk through Architectural Hall and see what an open space does for a building.

We have already seen what budget cuts can do to a university building. The Lied Center for Performing Arts is the ugliest, most depressing building in the city. This is not the image a public facility should give to the city, but it is the image that will remain, since it cannot be changed now. If any good is to come from this whole

situation, let us hope it is that the public and students realize how ignorant the regents are and how inane it is for these people to be making decisions on important issues they know nothing about. Let us all try to remember Robert Allen and his colleagues so that we may remove them from office in the next election.

William Stott  
associate director  
Omaha chapter  
American Institute of Architects

## UNL's architecture makes it stand out

Nebraskans are known nationwide for their "bland normalcy." Often we hear of the mediocrity of our university.

However, in most instances, we are anything but mediocre. It is precisely due to the attitudes of people like Regent Robert Allen that this thinking surfaces.

In reality, Allen, Nebraska is anything but "normal" and the University of Nebraska can only be proud of the things you call "unnecessary frills." The architecture on the campus -- the aesthetic spaces and use of art -- make UNL stand out.

Take a walk around campus, Allen. Go into the few "normal" buildings here. Then walk through the front doors of Bessey Hall or the atrium in Manter Hall. Feel the difference? Take a stroll through Architectural Hall. Can you feel the change in atmosphere and attitude? Can you be anything but motivated by these spaces? Visit the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and the new Lied Center for Performing Arts. Can you appreciate the significance of these structures and find the opportunities they hold inside? Take a look at the learning atmospheres in these places. Have you any idea what aesthetics and open spaces can provide?

As a regent, Allen, I would like to think you would want the university to strive for excellence, not "normalcy." The university has a beautiful campus; a campus that encourages and motivates students in their pursuit of a higher education. Reevaluate your priorities. Realize the importance of what you call "unnecessary frills." Move into the 21st century and its understanding of the need for stress-free environments and aesthetic advantages. Quit concentrating on being "just normal." If you cannot do that, then I suggest putting your mediocre insights and efforts to work in an area other than that of an institute of higher learning.

Leslie Kuhnel  
junior  
architecture

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