

Daily Nebraskan

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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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UNL's peers?

Accurate self-image needed for change

For more than a year, the structure of Nebraska higher education has been under a microscope. Now it's time to turn that lens inward, at changes in the individual institutions.

After a successful constitutional amendment, the governing system will be strengthened. A permanent president finally was hired for the major post-secondary institution. And a consulting firm's report to the Nebraska Legislature last month sounded what it referred to as a "call to action."

The report uses predictable imagery to portray the coming transition in Nebraska higher education:

"The winds . . . move relentlessly from Chadron to Alliance and Kimball, Valentine and Broken Bow, and cross Highway 80 before icing the waters of the Missouri and the sidewalks of Lincoln and Omaha."

And then, if readers haven't grasped the theme yet:

"The winds of change are incessant — they serve as a metaphor for the winds of change that also sweep across this great state."

Until recently, gauging the pace of change in Nebraska's higher education system would have been easier using a different metaphor from western Nebraska — the Sand Hills. Get it? Sand in an hourglass, moving slowly as time runs out.

But now, it seems inevitable that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will see changes over the next few years. First, however, it needs an accurate self-image.

That's where its circle of friends, or peer institutions, moves into the picture.

In the past, UNL has used the peer group — composed primarily the Big Ten universities, along with a pair from the East Coast and two from the Big Eight for good measure — primarily to compare faculty salaries, said James Griesen, vice chancellor for student affairs.

But as the Legislature draws up implementing legislation for the restructuring amendment and the university responds to the Widmayer and Associates study, the peer institutions could take on even more importance.

The numbers indicate that UNL belongs in a different league.

UNL ranks second to last among the 11 schools in enrollment and library holdings. Minnesota, the largest member of the peer group with an enrollment of more than 60,000, also is the largest university in the country. Ohio State, also on the list, is second-largest in the nation. Michigan State is fourth, Wisconsin seventh, Illinois ninth, Penn State 10th, Maryland 11th and Purdue 12th.

UNL is No. 73 on the list, with less than two-fifths of Minnesota's enrollment.

Of the 11, only UNL and Iowa State are not ranked as leading research universities by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

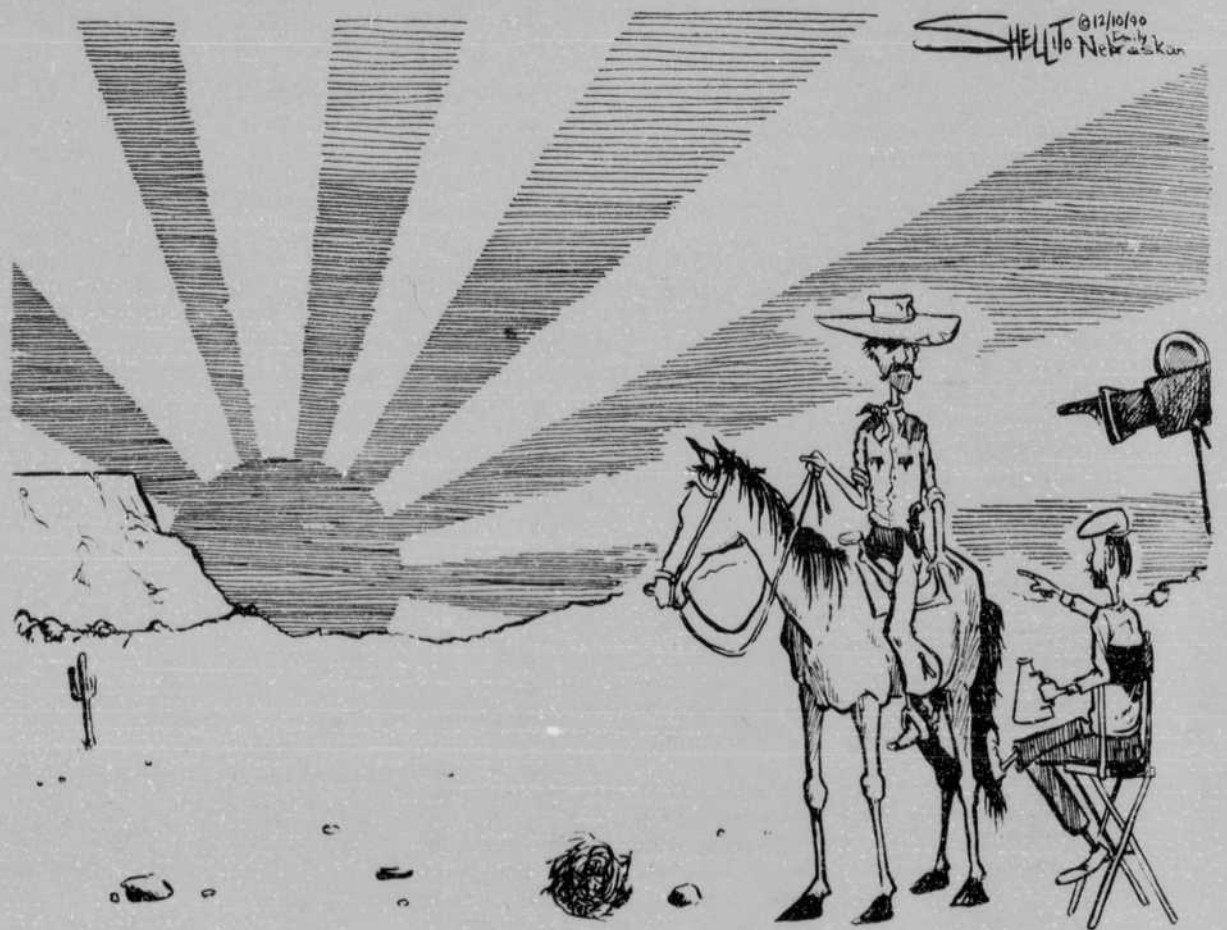
Instead, UNL based the peer group choice on its membership in the Association of American Universities. The 11 schools are the land-grant members of the AAU.

Even by a loose definition of "peer," however, one of these things is not like the others.

All week, the Daily Nebraskan will examine UNL's vital statistics in greater detail in a series on the peer institutions.

State senators and university officials will have to do the same thing as post-secondary education weathers another winter in the Legislature.

— Eric Pfanner
for the Daily Nebraskan



NOW IN THIS FINAL SCENE YOU RIDE OFF INTO THE RISING SUN.

Jury duty makes for bad week

Jurors must temporarily give up life to decide fate of others

Last week was one of the worst of my college career.

Not because I did poorly on a test or skipped too many classes — those things were old hat by the time I was a sophomore — but because I was chosen to serve as a juror.

I got the notice right before Thanksgiving. Good citizen that I am, I filled out the form, returned it, and forgot about it.

You see, I am one of the truly disorganized people of the world. Unless I make a note of it, I won't remember things. I'll write out the checks for the bills, then find them in envelopes, stamped and ready to go a week later.

So the fact that I forgot about jury duty was no surprise.

Besides, I had checked the little box that said I was too busy to serve now, and could they please postpone my duty until the next time around.

They must have known that I'm graduating and would be leaving town.

Last Friday, I came down to the Daily Nebraskan to check messages, and was told that I must report to Courtroom Number Four, on the third floor of the County-City Building at 9:30 a.m., Monday.

You must be kidding. I had class at 10:30 a.m. Monday, and wanted to find out what I'd gotten on my test the week before.

I wouldn't go.

But there was this nagging image in the back of my mind of an official knock on my door in the dead of night and a police officer with handcuffs telling me that what I did was despicable for an American citizen, and that I'd have to go to jail for the rest of my life.

So Monday morning, I showed up at Courtroom Number Four. I figured there was no way I would be chosen to sit on a jury. I had polled some friends who gave me solid advice on how to get out of it. Sure-fire ways, they assured me.

"When you walk in, ask if you're going to get a chance to hang someone."

"Tell them you think the police are biased and unethical, and there was no reason to arrest this person in the first place."

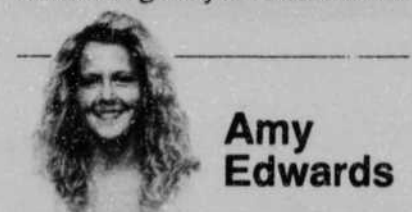
"Ask if the defendant is single, and

could you get his phone number after the trial."

No luck. Out of the 25 or so people called up for jury duty, 18 names were called, and those 18 people had to go sit before the judge and counsel for questioning.

I was one of them.

I was mulling over smart-aleck remarks to get myself kicked off the



Amy
Edwards

panel when the judge asked us to leave, so the counsel could debate their choices.

Six of us would be set free.

I became one of the 12 to choose the fate of two people in one of the truly exciting trials of the year.

A murder? Armed robbery? Some precedent-setting case that would change Nebraska law forever?

This I would not have minded. I had already resigned myself to the fact that my life would not be my own for the next week or so, but I had hoped that I would at least be able to do something of great value to my fellow citizens.

Not a chance. The case I had been called up to serve on was a paternity suit between two very ordinary people — no famous stars or sheriffs for me.

I won't bore you with the details. Lawyers know how to make even the most exciting things sound drab and confusing, with words that are three times longer than they need to be.

But I will tell you some of the requirements of being on a jury.

You have to be patient. The biggest part of jury duty is being asked to leave the courtroom and wait for the attorneys and the judge to make a decision on details of the arguments that jurors are not allowed to hear.

So we sat around and talked about everything but the case itself.

You see, as a juror, you aren't allowed to form an opinion on, or talk to anyone about the case — not even fellow jurors — until the case has been presented to you in its entirety,

at which time you are sequestered — locked in a room with 11 other people to debate a decision.

You learn a lot about people when you sit around with them for four days with nothing to do. I served with a hair dresser, a student who went back to school after raising her three boys, two insurance salespeople, a man who sold mechanical parts and worked on the road for most of the week, a sheriff's deputy who couldn't make gravy, two women who worked in their homes and two people who never talked about their careers.

We all made jokes about the appointments we were missing and the generous compensation from the court — \$20 a day — that we would get for missing those appointments.

By the time we had to debate the case, we had all agreed to postpone our decision until the court gave us a free lunch.

The vote was unanimous. We gave a child a father in the eyes of the state.

And though the case didn't set a precedent, it was an important one to a little boy who is only 2 1/2.

That made me feel good.

I won't say doing jury duty was the best experience I've ever had, but I had always wanted to see what it was like.

I guess something like that never comes at a good time for anyone. When I was complaining about having to put off my 40-page paper and a final project in favor of sitting in a courtroom all week, I wasn't thinking about the reason I was there.

Nobody likes postponing work — it means that much more to do later. But nobody let the fact that they were too busy with their own lives cloud their decision in the case.

Our problems were nothing compared to the people who were in the trial.

I guess if I get called up again (I'm still on call this week), I'll go to court without complaining, hoping that if I'm ever unfortunate enough to have to be on trial myself, I'll have a jury that is as easygoing as the one I served on.

Edwards is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan Diversions co-editor and a columnist.

Sexual assaults of women lack needed media coverage

Is it more important for cattle to roam free in the pasture and for people to eat vegetables than it is for women to be able to walk at any time of the day or night, any where on the face of the earth, free from the fear of sexual assault and/or murder? I guess it is, since there has been a great lack of response on Lisa Donovan's column (column, DN, Nov. 28).

Donovan's column discussed the media's response and favoritism in reporting specific incidences on the rape of women. The New York Central Park Jogger was given immediate coverage on her assault, while another woman in Boston received a small article, consisting of, perhaps, two paragraphs, on her brutal rape and murder a month after it happened. The jogger was white; the Bostonian was black. While race is a

major issue here, so, too is the media's lack of attention toward violence against women, all women, regardless of color.

Even in our "safe," clean, little city of Lincoln, there is a deplorable absence of print on this subject. Maybe it is due to women not reporting these assaults, but I seriously doubt that. Newspapers will not print reports of sexual assaults because they say they do not want to plant any ideas into peoples' heads. How asinine!

It is a sad state of affairs to see people close their eyes to humanity and the abuse of women and keep them wide open for animals and vegetables.

Mary E. McGinn
senior
English