

Sleight of hand

UNL salary increases illusionary

The Legislature's Appropriations Committee needs to be straight with the University of Nebraska and the citizens of the state.

No one denies that a prudent state budget is a necessity this year. But in outlining its plans for the university, the committee has attempted to play a numbers game to disguise just how Draconian its budget for NU would be.

So far, the committee has maintained that its preliminary budget proposal would include 4 percent faculty salary increases for NU.

But University of Nebraska-Lincoln Interim Chancellor Jack Goebel said that isn't so.

In a memo to UNL faculty and staff members, he said the committee's proposal, because of earmarked budget items, actually provided no salary increase. To finance the 4 percent raise, UNL would have to gut the rest of its budget to cover a more than \$5 million shortfall.

Not that a 4 percent raise would be ideal. It would still fall short of inflation and move UNL no closer to its target faculty salaries.

In addition, 4 percent for UNL is unfair, because it pales in comparison to the 6.5 percent and 8.7 percent raises approved Saturday for the Omaha and Kearney branches of the NU system.

Those pay hikes were approved by the NU Board of Regents because it had no choice; UNO and UNK have collective bargaining unions for salary negotiations.

UNL has no such bargaining agreement. But that doesn't mean it should be shortchanged in the upcoming legislative salary battle.

UNL employees deserve raises comparable to those at other state institutions. That means increases of 6 percent or more, not 0 percent or even 4 percent.

The state has a duty to provide fair and equitable treatment for all its university employees. UNL should not be punished because it lacks a collective bargaining agreement.

Fair salaries must not be allocated at the expense of service to the state. Obviously, if both salaries and programs are to continue receiving funding, something will have to give. That something needs to be the Appropriations Committee's preliminary proposal. In times of economic disaster, its desperation move would be justified. But Nebraska is not experiencing an economic disaster; programs and salaries ought to be financed at satisfactory levels.

Obviously, pay raises won't continue at the double-digit levels of the last three years. The UNO and UNK agreements recognize that necessity. UNL faculty and staff members should receive raises in the same level. Anything less would be unrealistic, unfair and unnecessary.

— E.F.P.

Students' views misrepresented

There is an irony in the attitude that shapes the views of those who run this university. Earlier this semester, a student was arrested for having spray-painted anti-war slogans on the sidewalks of this campus. This act was viewed as felonious, a destruction of public property.

Many people would agree that this act was wrong for a number of reasons, mainly because the idea that this university is a public institution, and thus there should be room for the expression of all sorts of political views. But those expressions should be limited so that no one group can dominate the campus, thus leaving the impression that any one view reflects that of the campus, or more dangerously the university.

Now I think it's ironic that in the same semester, six students have hung a yellow ribbon in Architecture Hall. Granted, the ribbon would not inflict the same sort of physical damage that a can of spray paint would, but it does carry the same sort of symbolic damage.

The yellow ribbon symbol has been a rallying point for Americans when our people are in a state of conflict, such as the Iranian hostage crisis, and now the Persian Gulf war. The yellow ribbon has come to symbolize support for the troops, often being trimmed with the American flag or more ribbon in the ever popular American patriotic colors.

My own preference during this war has been the wearing of the yellow

ribbon, along with buttons such as "No Blood For Oil." As a caring human being, I worry for our women and men stationed in the gulf, but I'm also intelligent enough to see the hypocrisy and outright lies of President Bush and his oil seum buddies who have been playing a deadly game with both the lives of Americans and the indigenous people of the Middle East.

The yellow ribbon, combined with a green ribbon, has been a symbol used nationally by people dedicated to peace. It symbolizes support for our troops, but not the illogical, insane and immoral policies of the Bush administration.

By choosing to display the yellow ribbon, these students have made a bold statement that reflects on the entire university system. Their symbol speaks of not only a support of our troops, but of support for the atrocities enacted by George Bush. This is a biased and unfair representation of the attitudes of those who work for and attend this university. These students reportedly displayed the ribbon with the tacit approval of the Department of Architecture.

If this act of expression is acceptable, then perhaps we all should stockpile spray paint. Take the ribbon down, or use it to blindfold justice.

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Utensils 101: forks and fluency

Once upon a time, about 20 years ago when my mother was going to this revered university, she took one of those wonderful calculus classes that math is known for. Her instructor continually pronounced "four" as "fork."

"The square root of sixty-fork relies upon . . ." And so he would continue. Mom knew that "fork" was a number, and that was fine. But it was irritating and distracting. And the number "fork" was not the only utensil mentioned that semester.

I've heard forks and spoons mentioned in a class or two during my stay at the university as well. The problem of faculty fluency is not a new one. The chance for a solution is, however,

The problem remains. A solution awaits.

State Sen. Rex Haberman's bill waits in committee. The senator from Imperial's bill, LB214, calls for the creation of an "evaluation process designed to ensure that all faculty members of public postsecondary institutions are fluent in the English language."

This evaluation is to be done annually, calling closer attention to criteria demanded by personal interviews, observations and evaluations by co-workers, alumni and students.

Stan Liberty, University of Nebraska-Lincoln interim vice chancellor for academic affairs, said the university's current 3-year-old program eliminates the need for Haberman's bill.

This 3-year-old program, however, is two years away from completion. And even in completion, the program only tests T.A.s and not professors. Granted, professors undergo intensive interviews — but no fluency tests. Also, the interviews are run by the university, for the university, just like the T.A. fluency program.

Haberman's bill takes the responsibility of determining fluency away from the university and places it on a third party — the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education.

The bill requires fluency of all faculty members, and lets an unbiased party determine fluency.

And it would be a law, no less.



However, dismissing every complaint of fluency as an example of the ethnocentricity that plagues our campus is only an effective way to close your eyes to the problem, while many students' sleepless nights continue.

Many UNL officials say that there is no problem with fluency. Liberty told the NU Board of Regents Saturday that students who diagnose their professors as not fluent in English may have a case of ethnocentrism.

However, dismissing every complaint of fluency as an example of the ethnocentricity that plagues our campus is only an effective way to close your eyes to the problem, while many students' sleepless nights continue. Not every complaint can simply be dismissed as the problem of a prejudiced, closed mind. Not without a guilty conscience, anyway.

This is the first year that the cur-

rent program has been required of all T.A.s. Obviously, a number of instructors have slipped through the two years' worth of cracks that have yet to be filled.

Last semester, in my introductory language course, I had a problem understanding my instructor. He had a problem catching the "guest" of what I was saying, too.

Apparently, I was not the only one.

Several students and their parents raised complaints to the modern languages department and to the Division of Continuing Studies. Representatives of the modern languages department and the Division of Continuing Studies soon visited the class.

Students in the class were questioned. We filled out those annoying little bubble-forms until our pencils were worn to nubs. He underwent interviews and question sessions from each of the departments. Our grades also were evidence of the fluency problem.

Our instructor isn't teaching this semester.

But we are still required to take the next level in our language classes, and we've got some catching up to do.

My instructor slipped through the university's patented testing system, and, in effect, the university has admitted it by not allowing him to teach. Meanwhile, we suffer the consequences of learning a little bit less from one of the few who slipped through. On the brighter side, I do know a great deal more about utensils.

The point remains that some of the complaints are well-founded and justifiable. Haberman's bill would ensure that every instructor, new or old, would be tested. The university would know for sure who should be teaching, any remaining complaints could be only ethnocentric demands and the university's education standards would be raised.

Sure, we would learn a little bit less about utensils, but how many times have you taken the time to eat dinner in class?

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