

Discrimination

ROTC must follow university laws

Academic senators got out of their back-slapping mode Tuesday to send a strong and timely message to the Defense Department about its discrimination against homosexuals.

UNL students have rallied for years against the policy, which keeps gay and lesbian students out of ROTC programs. They did so again Wednesday, in conjunction with marches on college campuses nationwide. Last March, the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska passed a resolution condemning it.

But so far, nothing has changed.

Perhaps the military establishment doesn't consider students of high enough rank to rate an audience with the decision makers.

In that case, Tuesday's Academic Senate action could prove effective. Faculty bodies at other universities across the nation have adopted similar statements. If enough professors — who wield clout over the curricula and programs taught at their universities — followed, the Defense Department would have to listen.

If the top brass fail to listen, the resolution forces action at the local level. The senate would urge the UNL chancellor to "renegotiate the contracts of the three branches of ROTC at UNL in order to eliminate credit for all ROTC courses" if homosexuals continued to be excluded on Jan. 1, 1993.

The resolution was not a knee-jerk, politically correct appeal to pacifism. It doesn't call for administrators to boot ROTC off campus, merely for ROTC to follow UNL non-discrimination policy. Hence the generous, 1 1/2-year cushion.

ROTC does have value. By infusing the armed forces with fresh batches of college-educated citizens, it supports the idea of a civilian-controlled military. That's one of the pillars of our democracy.

But another pillar is the rule of law. And under the university's laws, programs may not discriminate, among other things, on the basis of "individual characteristics."

That euphemism, folks, stands for sexual preference.

Sexual preference is not, as the military claims, a security risk. It shouldn't be used as a pathetic excuse to disqualify someone from serving.

With academic brass now joining the fight, the Defense Department soon will have to take notice. Or ROTC will flunk out.

—E.F.P.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Traditions back male schools

Your editorial criticizing Virginia Military Institute and the Citadel, Military College of South Carolina (DN, April 5), comes from your lacking concern for traditions. These are traditions of "The Deep South." I have been informed that the South is considered Texas in these here parts. Since I have not attended VMI, I can only rightfully speak for The Citadel. I only lacked one year in completing the transformation to "The Citadel Man," but that is my loss. Before you start tearing down all-male institutions, prepare for the same to happen to your all-female institutions.

Let me first address the claims you, Mr. Editor, have against the military service academies. Given by your statements, women are already faced with mistreatment and harassment at these institutions since they were allowed admission in 1976. So why do you want to create a new place for this harassment to continue? Speaking in my opinion and not for either of these two fine military institutes, VMI's Keydets and The Citadel's Cadets would rather destroy their respective schools before allowing women admission. I will not address the problems of where to house the women, but this would mean locks on the barracks doors. The results would be the destruction of the first building block of each corps. This is honesty, and how can you have it with locked doors?

Late Monday night on CNN Crossfire, this issue was a hotbed of anger. The name of the female Virginia state senator escapes recollection. She said it is OK to prevent state funding for VMI's all-male institution but the all-female institutions (private or not) are above this ruling. She was quickly labeled a "Virginia feminist senator" — and rightly so I might add. Under Virginia state law, all schools private or public receive state money for each Virginian enrolled during a given school year. She also knows that VMI will be destroyed before women are allowed to enroll. Even with this knowledge, she is HELLbent on VMI's destruction. Typical as her type is portrayed, she wants it all. The male institutions opened for women, but women's institutions closed to men.

Here is an idea for each of you to ponder. Why are there no unisex greek houses? Each of you want your bonding whether it is male or female. That is why you have your sororities, and we have our fraternities.

By the way, why is the DN concerned with issues in Virginia and South Carolina? You should first clean up the trash in your backyard before looking into that of others — trash being defined as race and gender problems.

A.M. Hedrick
graduate teaching assistant
astronomy



WALTER GHOLSON

Disabled students offer example

I was pulling an all-nighter, desperately trying to get a passing grade in the algebra course that has haunted me each day and night like Dickens' ghost of Christmas past.

I racked my brain trying to recall stuff I wanted to forget. I worked problems, yet I kept coming up with the wrong answers. The light would not come on, not even a flicker.

Then I started to create rationalizations for my obvious mathematical incompetence. I was a victim of a covert educational plot to retard the left side of my brain. This retardation must have started back in elementary school. I never did trust my sixth grade math teacher.

The result of this mistrust is that earlier in the semester I was afraid I would be the first person in line at drop/add. I had convinced myself to give up.

Then another light flickered on. It was the image of Ed, one of the students in my math class.

He's one of those students who always does his homework. He's always on time for class; one of those guys who always asks the most informed questions and who always has the solution to problems before anyone else. You know the type.

After two weeks of this excellence, I started to wonder how he did it. Yes, he studied, but what drove him to achieve?

The more I watched him progress, the more I began to see a connection between my math anxiety problems and that which propelled Ed.

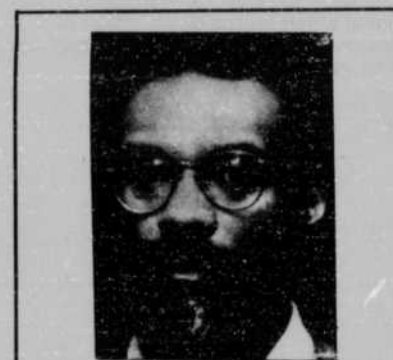
At that instant, Ed became my inspiration and the major reason for my not avoiding something I knew I was afraid of.

I jumped back into the books trying to memorize formulas and to apply them practically. I kept this vigil until 3 a.m., when I began to crash and slowly burn out.

As I closed my eyes trying to get the B-squares and negative constants to go away, I remembered the bumper sticker on the back of Ed's wheelchair. It reads, "I just want a little more out of life than I expect to get."

Now keep this to yourself. Ed's one of those students they call "disabled." But that doesn't define the person I've watched for 13 weeks.

"How can this be?" I foolishly



Early Americans placed their emphasis on form and beauty, so they attempted to hide all that was not perfect and doom those who weren't to back streets and hovels. They built a world with no borders or barriers for humans who were "abled."

pondered. How can people who have to enter most buildings from back doors deal with being students?

I drifted off to sleep thinking about the Cartesian Coordinate system and Ed.

That next morning I talked to my professor and arranged for a math tutor. Next I made an appointment to see a counselor to talk about my math anxiety. I was determined to overcome my disabling fear of numbers.

I was going to follow Ed's example and continue to struggle against the odds.

According to Kathleen Jaudzemis, an attorney for the law firm of Cline, Williams, Wright, Johnson and Oldfather, in her summary of the 1990 Americans With Disabilities Act, 43

million Americans have one or more disabilities and the numbers are increasing.

Jaudzemis said society has historically isolated, segregated and discriminated against individuals with disabilities. She said discrimination is particularly critical in employment, housing public accommodations, education, recreation, health services and access to public services.

This kind of discrimination, she said, costs the United States billions of dollars each year in unnecessary expenses resulting from dependency and nonproductivity.

Jaudzemis said that unlike victims of other discriminations, these individuals often have had no legal recourse outside of several watered-down laws governing educational programs for the handicapped.

But in July 1990, President Bush signed a law providing legal remedies for special populations who are discriminated against in employment, public services, mass transportation and accommodation by private institutions.

In the Americans with Disabilities Act, discrimination is broadly defined as any action that intentionally excludes individuals with disabilities from participation in mainstream activities. The law is a result of years of struggle by disabled Americans to obtain their civil rights.

The math light burns each night at my desk, and it occasionally flickers in class. Regardless of my final grade, I have been presented each day with a lifelong lesson in perseverance and a fine example of excellence in a world not designed for special students like Ed. Students who in spite of barriers continue to travel through a world constructed for the "perfect" person.

Early Americans placed their emphasis on form and beauty, so they attempted to hide all that was not perfect and doom those who weren't to back streets and hovels. They built a world with no borders or barriers for humans who were "abled."

Well, Ed is one of the most abled people I've ever met. Now, if I could learn his math skills, maybe, just maybe, I might be "normal" one day. Whatever that is.

Gholson is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.