

Slap on the hand

NCAA self-punishment ironic

The National Collegiate Athletic Association, which occasionally punishes wayward schools, is punishing itself. A special NCAA panel on Monday recommended numerous changes in Committee on Infractions and enforcement staff procedures. The recommendations likely will be adopted.

How ironic. Many schools in recent years have penalized themselves in an attempt to fend off harsher penalties from the NCAA. Now the NCAA is restricting itself to fend off interference from state and federal government.

Congress is holding hearings on intercollegiate athletics, and seven states have passed laws pushing the NCAA toward due process in investigations. That's why the recommendations likely will be adopted.

The NCAA is on the run, not the best circumstance for changes. But we'll take them.

One of the recommendations that would speed up the process would allow schools to agree to certain penalties without all the hearings. This is the essence of self-imposed penalties, such as the scholarship the Nebraska men's basketball team forfeited this year because of extra benefits given to former players Tony Farmer and Jose Ramos.



David Badders/DN

Speed isn't as important as justice, though, and the panel suggested changes to remove the kangaroo-court character of past investigations.

Enforcement staff interviews allegedly have had interviewers haranguing and threatening witnesses, with the interview "transcripts" having little relation to what was said.

The panel proposed tape-recorded interviews.

Investigations allegedly are conducted with the assumption that the school under investigation is guilty.

The panel suggested hiring retired court judges as hearing officers in major cases to give investigations the air of "innocent until proven guilty" fairness.

As natural as these changes seem, they are a major hindrance on NCAA enforcement, which often relies on hearsay, secret witnesses, sheer faith in guilt and other judicial no-nos.

The NCAA can't be expected to operate under every rule of courts of law because the NCAA doesn't have all the advantages of courts.

The organization doesn't have subpoena power, so needed witnesses can refuse to testify. And if someone lies to the NCAA, chairman Dick Shultz can call that person nasty names, but that's about it.

That's where the fourth major recommendation — public hearings — would help. Cases that can't be won through evidence could be won through public outcry.

If this suggestion is accepted at the 1993 NCAA convention, future infractions committee hearings will be battles of public perception. Hearsay, secret witnesses and sheer faith in guilt are admissible evidence in these battles.

If NCAA investigators can gather enough evidence to convince the infractions committee that a school is guilty, the public will receive the same information and probably reach the same conclusion. Most people won't care if due process isn't followed.

The NCAA would be able to reach basically the same results, only faster and with less room for complaints.

Certainly NCAA hearings wouldn't be perfect and just. But the changes are a better step than government interference. That's good for now.

—P.D.



WALTER GHOLSON UNL minority alienation zone

The other day I saw a rather interesting bumper sticker. It read, "I Don't Give A Damn How They Do It Up North."

I presumed that this was a message to all non-native Nebraskans and that the message was specifically aimed at those recent arrivals from any place outside of the Midwest.

I also presumed that when translated into the lingo of up North, the message said, "I don't think it's broken, so don't ask me to fix it, and pay no attention to the people who are crying."

And according to what was being said at recent forums on minority issues, such a complacent and hostile environment exists at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for most non-American and non-white people.

A few weeks ago, a steady stream of students, staff and faculty members tried to give the Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Minorities some sense of how it felt to be a minority at a predominantly white institution.

Then the NU Board of Regents listened to statistical data, scholarly research on institutional racism and testimony from minority students about encounters with xenophobia at UNL.

One of the people who didn't testify at the regents meeting was Vaughn Robertson, assistant director and counselor at UNL's Multi-Cultural Affairs Office. But then, he didn't have to attend, because for 11 years he's been telling the same story of statistics, research and personal experiences to administrators, faculty members, students and anyone else who needed talking to. I was one of the fortunate people who received his counseling and advice.

Back in 1989, when I first came to Lincoln from Washington, D.C., I was convinced that I'd landed in the twilight zone, but thought that if I could find some section of the city in which I could feel at home, I wouldn't feel so alienated.

I walked around Lincoln most of that morning looking for a soul food restaurant, a black book store or any other sign of African America. I learned later that there hadn't been anything like that in Lincoln "for years."

I could almost hear Rod Serling's voice in the background:

"In 1989, Walter Gholson, from Washington, D.C. finds himself in Nebraska's capital city. He has just spent the morning looking for some sign of his cultural roots. By the end of the day he will find that he has wandered off the highway to a place where he must forget his cultural security and embrace the mindset of alienation. For he has ventured off the



When you enter the room, Master E and Malik are listening to tapes of Public Enemy with the bass cranked up. You greet them, having learned earlier to say "what up" as opposed to "howdy."

path into the Midwestern time zone."

I knew two other African-Americans in Lincoln besides Robertson and both were native Nebraskans. When I tried to explain my surprise at the absence of an obvious black presence in the capital city, people said, "Oh, if that's what you want, you should go to Omaha."

Most of the black people I met didn't seem to think my problem was real or that it shouldn't bother me to be in a city with no black community. But it did, and I resigned myself to the fact that I would never be able to adequately explain to them how strange it felt.

I felt the same way about the regents meeting, that it was almost impossible for them to believe that what they were hearing was any more than the homesick whinings of outsiders trying to change their way of life, that these complaints only obliged them to say, "I don't give a damn how they do it up North."

And it is this kind of ignorance of how it feels to be in the shoes of a minority person and the reluctance to accept the fact that this is an urgent problem that really bothered me.

When Robertson teaches his University Foundations class, one of the things he tries to instill in his students is a sense of how it feels to be a stranger in a strange land.

One of those methods involves what he calls his "guided tour of reversed situations." The tour is based on what it would be like if a white student decided to attend a predominantly black university. It goes some-

thing like this:

"Let's imagine that you have decided to go to Howard University in Washington, D.C. You're on the last leg of the trip to D.C. with two white students from Oklahoma who also will attend Howard University.

"On the drive in from the airport, the first thing you notice is the absence of white people on the city streets. You knew that D.C. had a major black population, but you expected to see a few white faces somewhere.

"When you get to the university, all of the staff members, students and faculty members you see are black, and when you get to your dorm room you meet your three roommates: Malik, Shaka and a guy who introduced himself as 'Master E from NYC.'

"At this moment, you experience an immediate sense of alienation.

"The first thing you think is, 'I've got to find those two white students who were on the plane with me.'

"But you don't have time to think about your situation because you've got to unpack and get ready to attend the reception-dance for freshmen and transfer students later. After unpacking, you decide to get a haircut before the reception.

"You find your way downtown but notice that all the barber shops have black barbers. You know they won't discriminate but you don't want to take a chance of getting a bad haircut, so you say to hell with that plan.

"At the reception, almost all the students are African American or from a foreign country, except for 25 white students whom you don't know yet. The music is jazz, blues and rap. Not one Guns 'N' Roses record has been played. You end up talking with mostly white students who also seem to be feeling like yourself.

"After the reception, you find your way back to the dormitory after getting directions from two elated black men who called you their 'white brother.' When you enter the room, Master E and Malik are listening to tapes of Public Enemy with the bass cranked up. You greet them, having learned earlier to say 'what up' as opposed to 'howdy.'

"You shower and get into bed. But as your thoughts filter out the sounds of 'We got to fight the powers that be,' you wonder whether you made the right decision when you came to a predominantly black university.

"Now that you have reached this point in the tour, you may be able to understand how it feels to be a minority."

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

EDITORIAL POLICY

Signed staff editorials represent the official policy of the Fall 1991 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Its members are: Jana Pedersen, editor; Eric Pfanner, editorial page editor; Diane Brayton, managing editor; Walter Gholson, columnist; Paul Domeier, copy desk chief; Brian Shellito, cartoonist; Jeremy Fitzpa-

trick, senior reporter. The Daily Nebraskan's publishers are the regents, who established the UNL Publications Board to supervise the daily production of the paper.

According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its students.