

## Passing the buck

Administration shells 'the Hill' again

For weeks, President Bush has tried to play on voters' frustrations with Congress by complaining that he can't get anything done because of those stubborn people "up on the Hill."

Cantankerous Capitol Hill residents prevented early approval of unemployment benefits, Bush said, making him look as though he had no compassion for Americans who have no jobs.

Last week, finally, an agreement was reached on jobless benefits. Also last week, Congress tried to heed Bush's call on a different domestic issue.

The Senate endorsed a plan to place a floating cap on credit card interest rates. It did so only after Bush on Tuesday urged banks to lower rates from the 18-19 percent range. Lower interest rates, he said, would make people spend again. That could bring the economy out of recession.

On Friday, the stock market experienced a mini-crash, the fifth-worst drop in its history. Many economists blamed the collapse on the enthusiasm for the ceiling on credit cards. Eliminating usurious interest rates, they said, would dry up the easy credit that makes economic growth possible. With no plastic, people wouldn't spend because they couldn't spend.

But the Bush administration tried to sidestep blame for the stock decline.

Jack Kemp, secretary of housing and urban development, argued that the Senate was actually at fault. Bush's appeal for lower interest rates, Kemp said, was merely a request for bankers to act voluntarily, not for increased government regulation such as the Senate plan.

But if Bush really believed that bankers would slash the interest rates merely because he said it would be nice if they did, he is either naive or he doesn't understand a capitalist system.

Banks exist because they can make money. Right now, however, banks are hurting. Because of the large number of bank failures recently — many brought on by even riskier loans made during the 1980s — money lenders must earn all they can from credit cards.

High credit card interest rates are a risky but profitable way of making some money to alleviate the financial hurt. Banks won't drop their rates simply because the president fusses about the high price of plastic money.

If Congress passes some sort of flexible ceiling on these interest rates, Bush once again will have achieved part of a backhanded domestic agenda. Once again, however, he will also be able to blame the negative side effects, such as the stock market drop, on the Democratic Congress.

—E.F.P.

## Trading Apollo spacecraft preserves space heritage

On behalf of the Nebraskans for the Advancement of Space Development, I would like to state that we were gratified to see your positive stand regarding the trading of Apollo 009 for a number of valuable space artifacts. It is in the best interest of this spacecraft that it be restored by the Kansas Cosmosphere for future generations to enjoy. We should always remember that this spacecraft does not belong to us as Nebraskans, but it belongs to all citizens of the United States whose taxes paid for its development and to the people of the world who share in the promise of space.

On the other hand, the attitude shown in the letter from David Davis ("UNL bungled Apollo 009 barter," DN, Nov. 18) typifies the sad lack of knowledge about our heritage that is all too common in regard to not only the space program in the United States but also to the efforts of nations around the world.

Davis may be new to UNL, but he

is also totally uninformed as to space history. Apollo 009 was a test capsule used in a sub-orbital flight. It did not go to the Moon, nor did it have any crew. It was simply a test vehicle. The items the Cosmosphere has offered are of such historic and educational value as to be deemed priceless. For instance, the Apollo 13 computer is the device that literally saved the lives of three astronauts. When a pressurized tank on their craft ruptured, the injured spacecraft was already on the way to the Moon, thousands of miles from Earth. This on-board computer was used to navigate Apollo 13 to a safe return to Earth. I doubt Jim Lovell, Rusty Swigert or Fred Haise — the crew of Apollo 13 — would have considered their computer to be a piece of "trivial space junk."

Craig Cleaver  
president

Nebraskans for the Advancement of  
Space Development

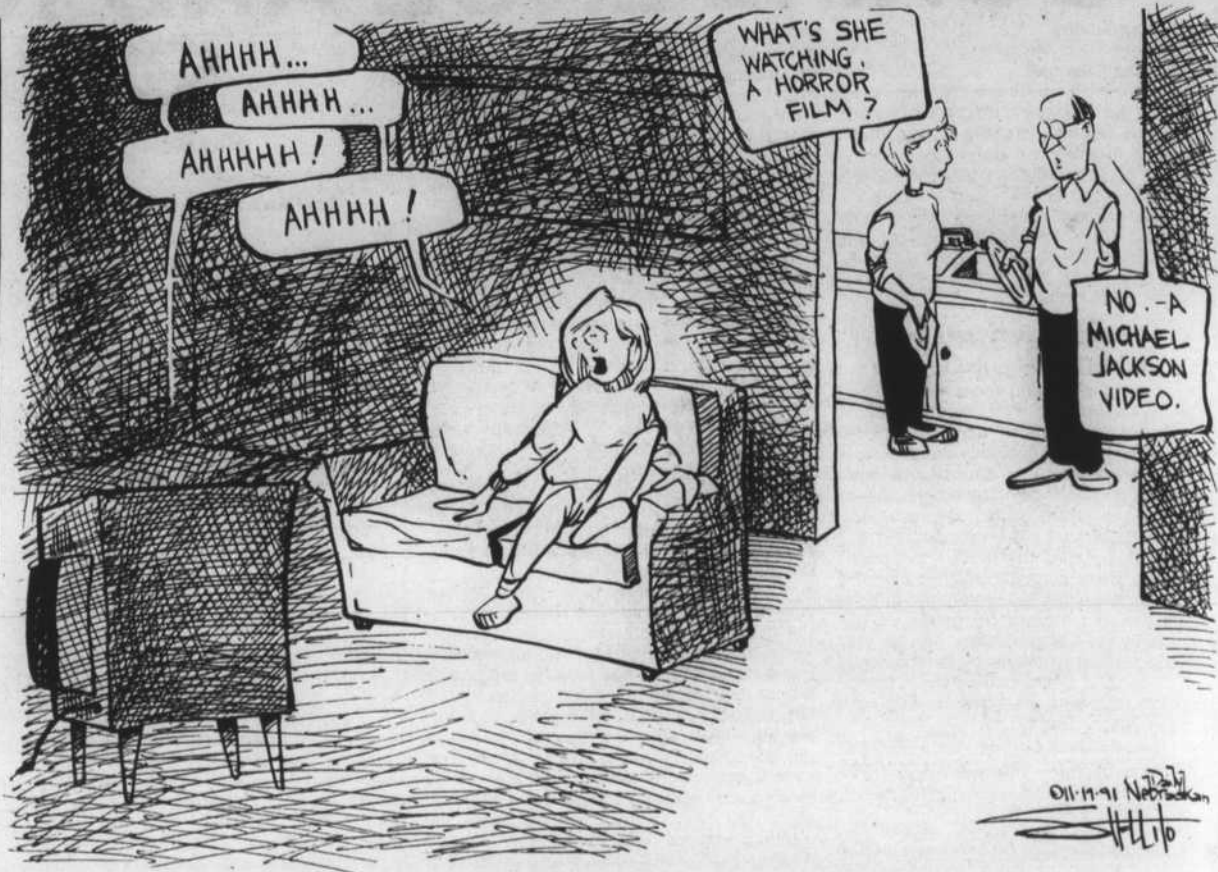
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Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication. Letters should include the author's

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Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.



WALTER GHOLSON

## Colleges should remove blinders

One of the most complex issues facing university administrators these days is how to re-tool their institutions to reflect state and federal mandates for cultural, racial and gender diversity.

This problem is not going to be easy to solve because of the long history of excluding these groups from mainstream American institutions.

Affirmative action guidelines at most universities are at best long-range promises to achieve racial and gender equity by some far-off date that has passed several times since the document was written.

The guidelines are usually huge volumes chock full of grandiose plans for implementing the almost impossible dream of equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, creed, color, sex and sexual orientation, religion, national origin and just about everything else that has been used to discriminate against minority groups.

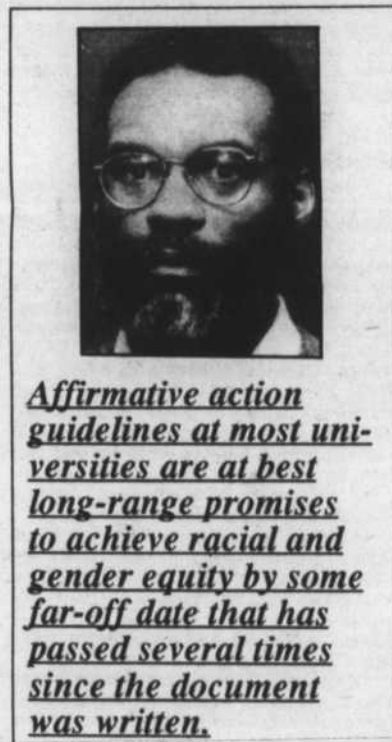
For the most part, they are collections of wishful-thinking documents designed to appease federal inspections. In short, they are hundreds of words saying the university is "planning" to become an equal-opportunity employer as soon as it can locate some "qualified" people.

And for years, the elusive question of qualification has been used as the main reason why most of these "liberal" institutions cannot find anyone from these under-represented groups whom they believe has the education and experience to become a member of their elite academic country club.

As a result of being forced to find qualified members from those targeted groups, the institutions say their standards must be lowered to find someone or risk losing funding and accreditation.

At this point in the game, the old-boys' network starts to chant "quotas, quotas" while its spokesmen make speeches about how unfair it is to have to hire a person just because of race or gender.

Maybe I missed something, but isn't that the main reason for all those pages of plans affirming the actions of universities to provide equal op-



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portunities for those who have been locked out of mainstream education for centuries?

After all, it seems perfectly clear to me that if all the ducks in the pond happen to be orange and male, and all the ducks outside of the pond are purple and female, the solution would be simply to make room for the other ducks before they forget how to swim. But in the university pond, the problem seems not to be in the choice of ducks, but in the size of the pond.

The prevailing fear is that in order to include qualified ducks of other genders and colors in the pond of qualified swimmers, either the pond must be enlarged or some of the old boy network ducks must get out of the water.

And this seems to be one of the major problems facing our educational institutions when it comes to implementing their plans for equality: The fear that draining the pond to enlarge it will uncover those ducks who haven't been swimming, just

treading water for the last 20 years; the fear that after such long and illustrious careers in pursuit of academic stagnation, many of these "qualified" professionals have developed something to replace their webbed feet — a permanent set of blinders that prevents any peripheral vision and keeps their attention on the security of their elitism.

As a result, they have become non-functional fixtures in the ivory towers of academia and are having a difficult time with anybody's suggestions that they have to change.

But change they must if they are seriously committed to providing challenging educational experiences for today's students. To prepare these students for a future that is not color- or gender-blind, they will have to undergo some radical surgery.

The real problem here seems obvious. These old ducks have grown quite fond of their ivory-tower blinders and many of them really don't want to swim with the landlocked ducks.

The other day one of my favorite professors said that if American universities are really interested in changing their image, they should discard all that affirmative action jargon. He said they should just come out front and say they need a Native American, a Mexican, an African-American and a female.

Of course, he was right, but such talk means that he runs the risk of being labeled quota-happy.

For me, the need for such a simple solution is also easy to understand. It's like being in a race where everyone has been issued track shoes except you. By the time you get your shoes, the other runners are half-way around the track.

No one wants to talk about why you weren't issued shoes, but if you happen to get close to the other runner, everybody wants to know how you got your shoes, not why you got them late.

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

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