

Behind the times

New student information system needed

About a month from now, thousands of UNL students will file through the Administration Building. They won't be lined up for free pizza, beer, condoms or parking.

Instead, they'll be trying to adjust their schedules. While many universities nationwide have moved to high-tech computer student information systems that make possible class registration over the phone, UNL will continue to borrow time on its existing, overburdened technology. That means course request forms, bureaucracy and lines.

At a time when University of Nebraska-Lincoln officials are trying to figure out how to cut corners on costs, it may seem silly to suggest taking on an additional expense.

But if UNL does nothing to upgrade its current student information system, officials have said, it could simply collapse. And students will continue to miss out on the benefits of newer technology, such as touch-tone registration and the "degree audit" service — a sort of automated, fast senior check.

The new system would cost \$800,000 to \$1 million. Not a big-ticket item, perhaps, but one that becomes huge against the backdrop of a 2 percent budget reduction.

A new system, and the conveniences it would bring to students and administrators, wouldn't change the quality of education at UNL. It wouldn't decrease class sizes, diversify curriculums or attract better instructors. It wouldn't make students smarter, and it wouldn't teach them more.

At UNL, however, students crave convenience. If you really want to rile up the student body, don't talk about apartheid or the collapse of the Soviet Union. Organize a sit-in to protest parking shortages. If students knew what they were missing by not having the benefits of a new student system, there probably would be a riot.

UNL officials are looking at several options to finance a new system. One would be to make students pay for it. But Jim Van Horn, associate vice president for administration, said that would be a last resort. We hope it remains that way. While students would be the most visible beneficiaries of a new system, administrators would gain just as much from improved service.

In addition, the new system would be inoperable for a few years. That means some students might have to pay for a system they wouldn't get to use.

The Office of Student Affairs has long been neglected by the NU Board of Regents. At its Saturday meeting, the board could go a long way toward rectifying that problem by shuffling UNL resources and priorities to include a new student information system.

—E.F.P.

What others think

Take AIDS for what it is: impartial killer

Take AIDS for what it is and quit lecturing. Like it or not, today's kids are having sex. That's a fact that no amount of parental haranguing is going to change.

Parents should be concerned about the precautions their sons and daughters are (or are not) taking against sexually transmitted diseases, not that the act is occurring.

AIDS doesn't care which church

you go to, god you pray to, or how many A's you got last semester. It performs one function unfailingly well. AIDS kills. We must do all we can to prevent its spread. Latex condoms reduce the risk of contracting AIDS through sexual contact.

Debate over.

—The Daily
University of Washington

U.S. no stranger to days living in infamy

While Dec. 7, 1941, is remembered as a "day that will live in infamy," the United States itself has engaged in no small number of invasions throughout its history. Central and South America, traditionally regarded by U.S. rulers as our "back yard," have been especially hard hit by U.S. military attacks, from direct intervention with troops, as in Panama, to the use of proxy forces like

the Nicaraguan contras. Now, as the United States establishes a permanent military presence in Saudi Arabia in the wake of the gulf war, it appears we can look forward to an era of either "low-intensity conflict" or all-out battles in that region as well.

—The Daily Iowan
University of Iowa

LETTER POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others.

Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. Whether material should run as a letter or guest opinion, or not to run, is left to the editor's discretion.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted.

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



DAVID REITER

Buchanan to run on convictions

Shortly after the gulf war, political commentator Pat Buchanan was shouting that George Bush was unbeatable.

Now Buchanan is taking aim to beat Bush himself. On Tuesday, he announced that he is running for the Republican nomination.

Buchanan has never served in public office, but he has a great deal of experience in politics. He was a speechwriter for President Nixon and served as director of White House communications for President Reagan. His campaign in New Hampshire is being managed by Angela Buchanan, his sister and former U.S. treasurer.

The mainstream media refer to Buchanan as an "arch-conservative." Many conservatives are unhappy with Bush, but some of them are not thrilled with Buchanan, either.

It isn't hard to figure out why. In some ways Buchanan sounds like a Democrat.

Recently, the Democrats were having a ball criticizing Bush's world-wide travels. They wanted the President to "come home."

Buchanan is saying much the same thing. He wants to focus the powers of the government on strengthening America first. Indeed, "America First" is the slogan of his campaign.

Buchanan is an isolationist. He opposed the gulf war prior to its outbreak. His main reason was that fighting the war was not central enough to U.S. interests.

Buchanan doesn't like foreign aid much. In Tuesday's announcement, he affirmed the importance of contributing humanitarian aid whenever it is needed, but he strongly denounced routine programs of foreign aid because they do nothing but transfer U.S. wealth to other nations.

Some conservatives disagree with Buchanan's isolationism. They think the United States must have a prominent role in shaping world events.

Another sore spot for some is that Buchanan favors protectionist policies that would tend to insulate American workers from the harsh competition currently provided by the Japanese.



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Conservatives criticize protectionism as a socialistic policy inconsistent with a free-market approach to economics. They think protectionist policies would have undesirable consequences in the long run.

There are also worries about Buchanan's advocacy of restrictive immigration policies and his criticism of Israel.

Regardless of the merits of his particular views, there are a variety of reasons to welcome Buchanan's candidacy.

First, there is the observation made by Eleanor Clift, a political commentator and regular participant on "The McLaughlin Group," on which Buchanan also regularly appeared until his candidacy. Clift said jokingly that Buchanan's leave of absence from television has created enough new jobs that this may turn the economy around by itself.

The Buchanan campaign is guaranteed to make the contest more interesting. It would be great fun to watch Buchanan debate Bush.

Buchanan is a professional debater. Bush may be good at foreign policy, but let's face it: He is no Michael Kinsley, Buchanan's liberal sparring partner on "Crossfire." Unfortunately, the White House has said that Bush will not debate Buchanan.

A more serious positive effect of Buchanan's challenge is that it will force the Bush organization to figure out what it believes. Or at least what it is going to say. Even if conservatives do not win concessions from Bush, they, along with everyone else, should be happy just to have Bush's position clarified.

The most important contribution of Buchanan's candidacy is that he will provide an alternative to Bush's political model. The president's political efforts are aimed at consensus.

Buchanan, on the other hand, vows to practice what he calls "the politics of confrontation." It is not that Buchanan desires confrontation for its own sake. Rather, he sees it as a necessary outgrowth of the commitment to principles.

Again and again Buchanan stresses the importance of principles. His primary criticism of Bush is that the president has "walked away" from the conservative base of the Republican party. And Buchanan says Gerald Ford lost to Jimmy Carter in 1976 because he too abandoned the principles of conservatism.

One gets the impression that when Buchanan talks about the politics of confrontation, he means business.

On ABC's "This Week With David Brinkley," Buchanan said he would shut down the government for three months if that were necessary to get his budget proposals through Congress.

Buchanan's campaign may not succeed.

But it will almost certainly demonstrate something we need to see much more of, especially in politics: the courage to have convictions and stand by them, even if it means losing.

Reiter is a graduate student in philosophy and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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