

Rotten rules

NCAA pushes new standards too high

New NCAA regulations designed to bolster academic rules for college athletes go too far in a flawed attempt to improve the nation's schools.

Instead of helping the education system by pushing inner-city schools to do better, the measure only pushes some poorer students out of college.

Proposition 16, passed at the NCAA Convention in Anaheim, Calif., last week, will raise from 2.0 to 2.5 the high school grade point average required of those athletes who score 700 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test. A sliding scale set up by the measure means that athletes who have 2.0 GPAs must have SAT scores above 900 or American College Test (ACT) scores over 21.

The new rules would take effect for athletes entering college after the 1995-96 year.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln students who have taken the necessary core classes in high school now must only meet one of three requirements for admission: they must be ranked in the upper half of their high school class, score 20 on the ACT or 850 on the SAT. Students who do not meet any of the requirements can still be admitted conditionally.

Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne contended the proposal creates higher standards for athletes than other UNL students.

He said the stringent rules, if applied to the entire university, would eliminate 25 percent of all athletes, 35 percent of football players, 48 percent of minority students and 17 to 18 percent of white students.

It is difficult to see the reasoning behind enacting measures making it harder for a student to get into UNL simply because he or she happens to be an athlete.

Osborne said he wondered why this subject was an issue at all because of research that has shown graduation rates were higher for athletes than non-athletes. He makes a very good point.

NU Athletic Director Bob Devaney also expressed apprehension over the new rules. Devaney said athletes should at least be given the opportunity to try their hand at higher education.

"Let them in, and if they can't do the work, then it is OK to eliminate them or send them to a junior college," he said. "But at least give them a chance."

UNL Chancellor Graham Spanier said that despite some reservations, the university voted for the proposal in Anaheim. Spanier said he was confident that athletes would rise to the new standards.

More likely, there will simply be fewer students admitted to UNL, an institution funded by the taxpayers of this state — including the parents of some of the students the measure will affect.

Some have put forward these types of plans as Proposition 16 to force inner-city high schools to improve by setting ever-higher goals for the students. But all it will really do is regulate away poorer students' opportunities to go to college.

Many of the students targeted by these harsher regulations are minorities who just haven't had the chance to obtain an education comparable to those in more middle-class districts. That doesn't mean they should be denied the chance to improve themselves after graduation.

While upgrading the nation's schools is a noble goal, forcing athletes — in many cases poor minority students — to meet higher goals than the rest of the crowd is not the way to go about it.

—A.J.P.

LETTER POLICY

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Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit all material submitted.

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SEAN GREEN

Employment chill getting colder

Before my grades came in the mail last week, I was a little worried.

After I got my grades, I was relieved, for a while. Then I went back to being a little worried.

I was relieved because my personal Christmas miracle, as usual, involved my Spanish grade, the miracle being that I passed.

It wasn't the sort of grade that would prompt dancing in the streets, but it was better than what I had been preparing myself to accept.

However, after the euphoria had worn off, I began to consider some of life's bigger questions.

If all goes as planned, I will graduate in May. That can be a scary thought at any time, but in 1992, it can lead to chronic nightmares and bed-wetting.

Since few things go as planned, especially when my study habits are involved, I probably don't need to worry about graduating in May. But when I consider the possibility of my graduation, however unlikely it may be, I break out in a cold sweat. It's the kind of cold sweat death-row inmates break into when they hear the backup power generators starting to hum.

Last week, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that the jobless rate reached 7.1 percent in December 1991.

Some claim the 7.1-percent figure is on the low side. They point out that the figure does not include those who have simply given up looking for a job and have taken themselves out of the job market.

Neither does it include those who are working for minimum wages at places such as McDonald's but who have invested time and money in college or technical school in the hope of reaching somewhat higher career goals.

I don't think I'll get much satisfaction from the knowledge that I can say, "Would you like fries with that?" in Spanish.

Actually, I can't say, "Would you like fries with that?" in Spanish, which explains why I was a little worried about my grade.

Many college students, and, to be fair, most Americans, start to nod off when newspaper columnists start throwing around words such as "prime interest whatchamacallit" and "marginal propensity to do something or other."

But more and more people are paying attention to the economic situation, including thousands of employees of General Motors who got pink slips for Christmas this year.

President Bush has promised an economic solution to the nation's ills,



I've talked to a few jobless people myself, and most of them have told me that when you're unemployed, it doesn't make that much difference who the president is, or what the Fed did last week.

which he will announce in his State of the Union address later this month.

The Democratic presidential hopefuls, as usual, are promising miracles if they are elected.

And, to boost the economy, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan has bravely pledged to lower interest rates again, if needed.

But Greenspan also told members of Congress last week that the economic circumstances today are unlike any he has witnessed in his four decades as an economist.

With political leadership such as this, the unemployed and the soon-to-be unemployed may have good cause to be nervous.

I see the American economy as an old, rickety bus with bad brakes, careening out of control down a narrow mountain road.

The only thing I can think to do is hope the driver knows something about the situation that I don't. And, of course, with Bush at the wheel, I can hope he doesn't vomit into the slipstream.

When the network news programs talk about unemployment, they seem to always show pictures of people standing in line, waiting for an unemployment check.

These "victims of the recession" often expound on the economy and say this or that politician ought to get in gear and do something or other.

But standing in line and talking big-time economics to camera crews is the glamorous part of being unem-

ployed. I've talked to a few jobless people myself, and most of them have told me that when you're unemployed, it doesn't make that much difference who the president is, or what the Fed did last week.

Unemployment and job searching means questioning everything, including yourself. Mostly yourself.

If you happen to have a family, they get to enjoy all the benefits of unemployment along with you.

And if you are unemployed, it doesn't make much difference whether you are part of 7.1 percent of Americans in the same position, or 70.1 percent.

When I enter the job market, I'll be competing with professional reporters who already have experience in the "real world," and who were let go from major newspapers undergoing corporate down-sizing.

Corporate down-sizing — a euphemism for "our company is pretty much going to hell, profit-wise, so you're fired" — is not unique to journalism; it's happening everywhere.

Well, OK, it's not happening much in Nebraska. Nebraska has managed to avoid the recession. Or, as some economists claim, it has already had its share of what they call a rolling recession.

A rolling recession is like an economic steamroller that goes over all the country, flattening one area at a time. It went over Nebraska in the mid-1980s.

But it's no secret that some students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln are trained for job markets not available in Nebraska, and I'm not just talking about jobs for Hollywood producers or surfboard polishers.

So many students, including myself, will be going out into the great wide-open, to quote Tom Petty. That means going into areas that are being hard hit by the recession and trying to find a job.

Even though the economic news is bad, there's probably no reason to get upset about getting good grades, or even average grades, or even my grades.

Since the alternative to graduating and being unemployed is not graduating and being unemployed, it's not really a tough choice.

Still, the "cold cruel world" they warned us about at high school graduation seems to have become a little bit colder.

Green is a senior news-editorial major, a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter and a columnist.