

**RAINBOW COALITION**

**Older students share stress**

By Robert Christensen

All students probably have had the experience of attending a class with non-traditional students. You probably looked at them with a different name in mind — my kids call us old fogies.

The questions all students must answer are: "What are non-traditional students, and how do they differ from traditional students?" "How can non-traditional students add to the educational experience?" And, "How do non-traditional students adapt to UNL?"

Non-traditional students (generally those more than 25 years old) are one of the fastest growing "minority" groups in higher education. Of course, their most obvious feature is that they are about the same chronological age as the traditional college parent.

Some of us have a rather high forehead, from our eyebrows to the nape of our neck, or have that "distinguished looking" gray hair. Some of us may have bulges or wrinkles. But if we get beyond the cosmetic outer appearances, what might we find?

What are some of the concerns of non-traditional students?

Many of us are concerned about receiving a quality product for our investment. We want our tuition dollars to yield a valuable educational experience, or we are going to let someone know we are dissatisfied — or go elsewhere.

We expect to be treated with respect and want to see others treated with respect. We expect our textbooks to be accurate and affordable. We have a low tolerance for second-rate, low-quality or poorly prepared lectures. And we may be a little more vocal about these concerns than some traditional students.

We are concerned about the lack of adequate parking at an affordable rate. Many non-traditional students must leave campus during the day or go to work or tend to family commitments. Unless we have a reserved parking spot, we may be late or miss class altogether. And few of us have the resources to purchase a reserved parking spot.

We are concerned with balancing our class time, our family time, our study time and our work into a schedule that seems several hours short each day. We find that we face a great deal of stress. We often wonder if there is light at the end of the tunnel or if we are just meeting, or being run over by, another train.

We are concerned with the lack of funding to keep in place some of the

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programs that are especially helpful to us. Many of the non-traditional students have been away from school long enough that we need the various tutorial programs that are available.

We are in an age group that finds structured fitness programs necessary to ensure a higher quality of life. We fear that some of the programs we find so helpful will fall prey to the next budget cut, if they haven't already.

You may notice that these concerns are not unique to non-traditional students. Non-traditional students are a lot like any other students. Our outward appearance may differ, but we are all here to get an education. Our age (or race, religion, sex, etc.) doesn't determine our concerns. Our desire to improve our education does.

How can non-traditional students add to the educational experience at UNL?

One way is to make the administration aware of changes that must be made. One of these changes is the extended hours of some of the academic services offices.

The Adult Student Network has supported extended hours for at least two years. This semester evening hours until 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday have been instituted in student affairs offices. This is a benefit to all students but especially to non-traditional students, who find it difficult to deal with the administrative tasks that we all must face.

Imagine a mother trying to fit a class schedule around a family and child care, to say nothing of finding parking while ordering transcripts. Consider the primary income provider who is allowed to leave work only long enough to attend his/her classes, or perhaps to attend night classes.

The evening hours will provide a chance for these students to attend to needed administrative tasks. They are now able to meet with the office of financial aid concerning grants, loans and scholarships, or general studies advising concerning academic progress or career planning concerning employment prospects.

One area that UNL has not addressed is the area of credit for life experiences. This is a system in use at a number of college and universities, including Rutgers, the University of Rhode Island and Midland College.

The administrators at these institutions realize that many life experiences provide the same education that students gain in the classrooms. They realize it is unproductive to ask a student who is well-versed in a particular area to take entry-level classes in that area. So they allow credit for "life experiences" to help students proceed toward their degree in a more timely manner.

This would benefit non-traditional students by allowing them to enter their degree programs at the levels of their competency. At the same time, it would free class space for students who aren't proficient in that subject.

It would be a more economical use of educational resources. It would be a recruiting tool for new adult students. And, as UNL is able to recruit more adult students, a broadening of the educational spectrum will occur.

The University Health Center is primarily geared toward the traditional student. The center is not as aware of the ailments that older students are more prone to suffer.

Because the Health Center deals primarily with 20-year-olds, the diagnosis for someone with joint or muscle pain might be physical stress. For patients in their 40s, the diagnosis might be something entirely different.

As more students with children are enrolled, the center may need to offer pediatric care — something that is becoming more available at other academic institutions' student health centers.

How do non-traditional students adapt to UNL?

The Adult Student Network is a support group of non-traditional students that meets weekly during the academic year to share successes, problems, solutions and other experiences.

We have informal "brown bag" meetings from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Wednesdays in the Nebraska Union, usually in room 216. We invite faculty, staff and other students to discuss our mutual concerns. Our goal is to help adult students assimilate into UNL and have successful educational experiences.

We would welcome anyone who wished to "check us out." We don't check IDs.

Christensen is a junior in the Teachers College.

**Dorm life costly for students**

In 1985, I took on the burden of a student loan to cover my rent and some bills. I worked 15-20 hours a week to pay the rest of my living costs while taking classes full time. I was under the delusion that this situation was not as comfortable as my classmates who lived in the dorms — until they got their housing bill. My poor classmates were socked with two large bills every year, while I shared a moderate monthly rent payment. In 1986, a group of friends gathered money and food to help a fellow student make his housing payment and remain in college. He graduated in 1989.

In 1987, I noticed that one by one, as they reached their sophomore year, classmates moved off campus. I thought they wanted a sense of independence. They just wanted relief. One of their semester housing bills was several hundred dollars higher than the same basic living costs I incurred living off campus.

In 1988, I felt lucky to have lived off campus and prepared to graduate with a loan debt \$1,000 smaller than my on-campus counterparts. I saved money because I was willing to spend the time to drive to

and from campus, to get groceries, gas and do laundry — something my on-campus friends were "privileged" not to do. Dormies — don't be fooled. The only thing you're saving is time (and paying dearly for that).

Now freshmen are required to live on campus and the same restriction has been or will be extended to sophomores. Neat. Require them to live here and then raise the rent. There's something verging on unethical in that. There is a rumor that the guiding purpose behind the live-in requirement is to help students do better in classes. I find that such altruistic goals often bow to the winds of economics. In this case, experience has already shown that students only can live where it is affordable no matter how badly they want to learn. Hey! History speaks for itself — living off campus is affordable. Make dorm living equally affordable as off-campus living and you'll see, it's not so hard to keep students around. Start thinking economics! Students do.

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**Sex discrimination questions need answers**

The front-page article from Feb. 25 on how the Human Rights Committee wants faculty members to know sex discrimination is a violation of UNL policy ("Committee reiterates university prohibition of sexual harassment") needs some address. The article flatly stated sexual discrimination will not be tolerated at the university. What is the university going to do to stop sexual discrimination? What are the policies going to be? If I am harassed by a professor, what support is going to be given? What

will happen to the perpetrator? What will happen if the perpetrator says obscene things? Will the policy be different if the perpetrator touches the victim? When a victim makes a complaint, what will happen next? Suppose the perpetrator has tenure and is widely respected by peers, what will be done?

The article appears to be frightening to anyone doing any kind of sex discrimination. In reality, the article is like a tape of a vicious dog barking. This is all it is. There is a difference

between having a vicious dog and a tape playing a dog barking. If anyone believes the university will take on the responsibility to discharge someone or have any other penalty that is severe enough to halt sex discrimination, that will be surprising. I am betting nothing will change.

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**Osborne should punish all players involved**

The status of Nebraska football has been one of the controversies the last couple of days. The group of seven instigating the juvenile show-down at the "house-party corral" was, needless to say, an embarrassment to the football program. We saw a glimmer of hope when Coach Osborne stated that punishment for those involved would follow. We do believe that Coach Osborne was trying to make a statement by kicking two players off the team. We can only assume that the two were the initial ones at the party who returned for backup protection since no names have been "officially" released. What separates the actions of the two from the other five? They all went back

with the intentions of defending their manhood and pride, backing it up with their physical prowess. Let's see, if it takes seven football players to beat the hell out of a few baseball players, how many would it require to take on the tennis team or the women's gymnastics team? We wonder who would win. What's the point? You're bigger. Who cares?

We do not think any statement was made by removing only two players. Osborne should have, if he wanted to set Nebraska apart from the Oklahomas, Colorados and Miamis, thrown all seven off the team. That would have made an impact on us. That would tell us that Nebraska football will not tolerate that kind of behavior.

It is unfortunate, but these seven players gave the entire program a bad name, not just two players. Where are your real guts, Tom? Get rid of this cancerous growth on your team, or it WILL spread. Now that would be a statement.

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