



Pain paved man's road to UNL



Student Profile

Former addict plans to help others recover

By Kristine Long
Staff Reporter

UNL junior Thomas Prather says he has been to hell and back.

His trip started at age 12 when he first smoked marijuana.

The trip got worse when he started drinking alcohol and using cocaine, heroin and LSD.

Homeless, he lived on the streets of Los Angeles, Chicago and Detroit. He served time in jail for stealing money to buy food. He spent six months in a hospital recovering from the third-degree burns he got when his trailer house burned down. He had no friends, no career and no money.

Prather's trip lasted almost 17 years. But he has finally returned.

Prather said he wanted to help other drug addicts recover and pay back those who helped him recover.

He said he was lucky to be alive.

"I kind of figure I'm running on borrowed time," Prather said.

Prather, who grew up in Urbana, Ill., said his addiction started because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Prather said one reason he turned to drugs was that he was bored with school.

"In some of my classes I felt like I knew more than the teachers," Prather said.

Prather also said he had a low self-esteem because his peers made fun of his small size.

"They nicknamed me 'Mosquito,'" he said.

So with few friends and a low self-esteem, Prather said, he became a prime target for his drug-dealing older friends.

Prather said he thought drugs could be his ticket to friendship and fun.

But soon he didn't need friends to have fun. Prather said once he withdrew from people, his life revolved around drugs.

After graduating from high



Robin Trimarchi/DN

Tom Prather, a junior psychology major at UNL, was once homeless and addicted to drugs. Prather now wants to get a job where he can help people recover from drug addictions.

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Tuition hike undesirable, regents say

By Jeff Zeleny
Senior Reporter

NU Board of Regents members disagreed on whether a 5 percent University of Nebraska tuition increase, recommended Tuesday by the Legislature's Appropriations Committee, would be desirable along with proposed budget cuts.

Regent Don Blank of McCook said he wasn't completely opposed to increasing tuition, because NU has lower rates than other schools. However, the tuition rates don't show the entire picture, he said.

"When we compare Nebraska to Kansas or some other states, we might be lower in tuition, but the state appropriation is lower," he said. "The students are paying a higher percent of tuition."

Lincoln Regent Charles Wilson said he was concerned about the possible tuition hike and said it should be the last option considered.

"I think we should do everything we can to try to minimize tuition increases," he said. "The Legislature is going to expect the students to pick up some portion of the increase in cost — there isn't any way politically around it."

Wilson also said the NU campuses' tuitions were lower than most other institutions in their respective peer groups, despite what people might think.

"I know it is high to the students; but relative to other institutions, our tuition is not high," he said. "Depending on what peer group you pick, it's in the medium-to-low area of tuition."

Regent Nancy O'Brien of Waterloo said she disapproved of the committee's recommended tuition increase. Raising tuition would be her last choice, she said.

"To my knowledge, it's not up to the committee to set tuition," she said. "The board does it, and we take it very seriously."

The committee also proposed the previous cut recommendation of \$13.98 million be cut in half. Blank said the new proposal was better, but that it still could have a devastating effect on the university.

The \$7 million cut will have to include eliminating programs, so difficult decisions lie ahead for the board, Blank said.

"You can only take out so many phones for so long," he said. "When you're comparing academic classes to research, it's not a fun time to be on the Board of Regents."



Two students needed on search committee, Benes says

By Steve Smith
Senior Editor

Controversy has arisen about student representation on the search committee for a new University of Nebraska president, but at least one NU official said student representation was accurate.

In previous presidential searches, the committee allowed one student representative, said Regent Nancy O'Brien of Waterloo, co-chairwoman of the search committee.

"It's worked well before," O'Brien said. "The students get a direct role in the selection process this way."

The NU Board of Regents decided last month to establish a 17-member presidential search committee by this Saturday.

At that meeting, then-ASUN President and Student Regent Andrew Sigerson urged the board to appoint two students, rather than one.

He said one student could not adequately represent students from all four NU campuses.

The board, however, was not convinced, and the motion failed.

O'Brien said Tuesday that one student on the committee was an adequate number.

"If it were, for example, the selection of a chancellor, then we would definitely look for more student feedback," she said.

But students don't have as much direct contact with the president as they would with their chancellor, she said.

ASUN President Keith Benes disagreed. "The central administration may be a little bit more removed than the chancellor," he said, "but the decisions that they make still affect students."

"We need a bigger voice in the selection process."

O'Brien said the board of regents respected the students' view on the issue.

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—O'Brien regent

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I don't think the decision to put one student on the committee was any kind of slam on their intelligence,” she said.

O'Brien said central administrators, faculty members and the chancellor's office could lobby for more spots if students were allowed another position on the committee.

"Every constituency could ask for more representation," she said. "And then we'd be asking for trouble."

The fairness of representation depends solely on perspective, O'Brien said.

"I do feel that one student can represent all four campuses," she said. "We're not necessarily looking for representation on a campus standpoint, but simply the perspective of a student."

Benes said he still thought one student could not adequately represent the interests of more than 52,000 students in the NU system.

"There will most likely be one faculty member, one central administration official and one person representing the chancellor's office from each campus on the committee, yet only one student for UNL, UNO and UNK," Benes said.

Benes said he was looking into the feasibility of getting another student on the selection committee.