

DEB McADAMS

# Students have important stories

**R**oughly 17 percent of UNL students seeking an undergraduate degree are older than 24. They are classified as "non-traditional" students.

The number of non-traditional students is increasing throughout the nation, probably as a result of the economy. During the last decade, thousands of people lost their jobs and discovered no market for their skills. Some have invested years in jobs that top out at subsistence incomes.

Hard work no longer pays off when you don't have a college degree.

Sometimes people become non-traditional students because life threw them a curveball. Vince was trying to stay alive in the burning jungles of Vietnam during his "traditional" student years. Afterward, he was busy trying to cope with the brainwashing that helped him survive Vietnam.

Non-traditional students generally speak up in class. Many of them come from situations where no one cared what they thought. We all paid attention to what Vince thought of James Baldwin's drug-addicted brother in "Sonny's Blues." When we could only speculate about the experience, Vince would tell us what it was like to really need heroin. He would punctuate his monologue with a grin minus a couple of teeth that he had sacrificed to the drug. Vince gave us something in 20th Century Fiction class that tuition couldn't buy. He shared his life experience with us.

Many non-traditional students are trying to change their life experience. They want something better for themselves and their children. A number of these people work full time, go to school, maintain homes and raise families. Their courage and tenacity seldom make the headlines, but they leave an impression on their classmates.



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I was a classmate of Valerie's for nearly a year. She was a smiling, energetic woman who seemed a little scatterbrained. I'd known her for several months before she slowly revealed the trauma of her existence. She was trying to end her marriage to a violent, possessive alcoholic while she was working to earn her teaching certificate.

During the months that we shared studies, Valerie's resolve to change her life grew stronger, and her husband reacted. He started taking the children from day care while she was in class, and his drinking made Valerie fear for their safety. She started bringing the children to class.

Near the end of our last semester as classmates, Valerie's husband tried to pry her front door open with a crowbar before he pitched a brick through her living room window. She feared for her life, but the police couldn't help her. Valerie took her children and fled the city, but not before she completed that class. College was more to Valerie

than a chance for a better life. It was the risk of her life.

Most non-traditional students don't risk their life in order to change it. They merely risk their security. They give up jobs that they know how to do in order to learn something that they want to do. They sit in classrooms full of people who are 10 and 20 years younger than they are, hoping to make up for lost time. They have fewer decades to rise in their chosen profession and less time to create a decent retirement for themselves.

Non-traditional students frequently experience a type of transition anxiety. Breaking into a profession takes more than a degree. It requires an attitude.

My friend Doug is an undiscovered computer genius who takes one or two classes at a time. He works for people who are blind to his abilities, and they have him filling holes in parking lots instead of developing computer programs.

His education will include learning to see himself as a professional and not a laborer on a tar shovel. The university doesn't offer many courses that teach people the power of visualizing what they want to become.

Non-traditional students carry a message for traditional students. It's OK if you don't know what you want from life when you're 20 years old. There are a lot of challenges in life, and you can never be prepared for all of them. Your dreams may change, or life may delay them, but they are not gone. They are waiting for you.

It's never too late to create the type of life you want for yourself. You simply have to want it bad enough and believe that you can have it. Seventeen percent of UNL students already do.

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SAM KEPFIELD

# Conservatism is wave of future

**C**ollege Republicans take over Young Democrats!

Conservatives protest Hillary Clinton!!

Conservative newspaper spreads scurrilous lies!

Is this the end of civilization as we know it?!

You'd think so, with all the squawking going on in the formerly lone outlet for information, the Daily Nebraskan edition of Pravda. The vitriol, hatred and condescension heaped on conservatism betrays the fear and ignorance of that noble political tradition.

So what exactly is going on? Fortunately, you have me, a thoughtful conservative and the only voice of tradition, reason, logic, defending truth, justice and the American way to explain it.

The flap over the College Republicans' guerrilla-style takeover of the Young Democrats was not some evil Watergate, Bill Avery's comments notwithstanding. Then again, what is he supposed to say — "It happened because I'm an incompetent fool and a worthless advisor, and no one really cares about the Young Democrats anyway?" Of course not.

Ask yourselves what would have happened if the YDs had sneaked into a CR meeting and managed to remain inconspicuous, despite their long hair, beads and tie-dyed apparel, and done the same thing? The Daily Nebraskan edition of Pravda would editorialize thusly: "It's a valuable lesson not only for the College Republicans, but for all students, that organization and involvement are important."

The final word on this is that the YDs have learned a lesson. Their next meeting is this week, and you can bet there will be more than six people there. Maybe, if they are careful, they'll be like the College Republicans and institute a secret handshake and password.

Allied with, but not a wholly owned subsidiary of the College Republi-



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cans, is Students for America. Organized in January, SFA is perhaps the best thing to happen to the campus in a long time. It also has the lefties on campus squealing like stuck pigs.

Think back over your college years. Every time there's a protest, what is it? It's a gay-lesbian "kiss-in," a bunch of angry feminists burning Barbie dolls in a wok, or a group of American Indians protesting Columbus Day, all in the name of "raising awareness." They're fringe groups — out of the mainstream — who make a lot of noise and get plenty of attention.

It's just fine for COLAGE or the Afrikan People's Union to protest and vent their pain and frustration, but when a group of clean-cut conservatives protest Hillary Clinton, we're told by the Daily Nebraskan edition of Pravda to check our First Amendment rights at the door. We ought to be sensitive to the fact that she's a role model for women and a symbol of

progress in society. You've heard it all before.

That is why SFA saw the crying need for a conservative newspaper, which finally hit the streets Monday. It's the result of much hard work by the SFA staff and presents provocative commentary on campus and national issues. You'll either love it or hate it.

How did they do it? By going out and soliciting advertising and support from interested parties who want to break the choke-hold on information that the Daily Nebraskan edition of Pravda enjoys. The Nebraska Ideal isn't a socialized newspaper, subsidized by the university and using the handout as a cover for incompetence. It's free enterprise and free speech in action.

It's a needed antidote to the Daily Nebraskan edition of Pravda, which is very good at telling you what you "should" do — abusing that innocuous six-letter word to death. It is the height of folly and arrogance for it to presume to have a monopoly on truth, dictating from on high what all good, enlightened, sensitive, caring and compassionate little robots "should" feel. Not think, mind you. Feel.

The effete corps of impudent snobs who run the College of Journalism and the Daily Nebraskan edition of Pravda are understandably upset over this exercise of the First Amendment. The Ideal is part of a new wave of rising conservatism that dares challenge the intellectual bankruptcy of the prevailing liberal touchy-feely fascism in the media and academia.

Rather than a "lost generation," we are the future. The threadbare socialist doctrines of liberalism, having failed in Europe and Asia, will soon be nothing more than an historical oddity on the ash heap of American history.

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