

Daily Nebraskan
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EDITORIAL

Five alive

New teaching program would benefit UNL

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is leaving itself out of a national trend in teaching programs. Some universities have started a mandatory five-year program for their education majors, but not UNL.

The longer program has some advantages, such as a chance for these students to pursue internships without delaying graduation. The fifth year also allows students to earn credit toward a master's degree.

Both have clear benefits. Internships teach students whether or not they want to pursue teaching because they experience the job more than student teaching allows. Mike Angelotti, associate dean of the College of Education at the University of Oklahoma at Norman, said the internships give students a better understanding of what they teach.

Master's degrees are in high demand in the career world. Any credit toward a master's can get the student off to a running start should he or she decide to pursue a master's or doctorate degree.

UNL should consider extending its Teachers College program to five years. Students currently stay around five years on the average but do not receive the additional benefits of other schools' five-year programs, such as internships and graduate-school credit.

One Teachers College student said she thought a five-year program might deter future students from attending UNL, despite the benefits. This should not prevent UNL from implementing the program. Any student who will not attend a university because the program is too demanding is not the type of student UNL should want to attract in the first place.

Get out, stay out

No U.S. troops should remain in Somalia

The White House announced Tuesday that 750 members of an Army Ranger unit would be pulled out of Somalia within the next few days. Those being pulled had the training to participate in the now-aborted hunt for Somali warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid.

The withdrawal reflects the Clinton administration's desire for a new focus in Somalia. The current goal is not a military one but is instead centered on politics.

The withdrawal of the Army Rangers from Somalia makes a lot of sense. If the Rangers' mission has ended, those troops no longer need to be risking their lives in Somalia.

But the move is not entirely positive.

The White House said the troops were being ordered out because the 3,600 Marines Clinton ordered to patrol the Somali coast had arrived. Clinton is staying with the plan he announced earlier this month to increase the total U.S. force in Somalia from 4,700 to more than 10,000 troops. Then all U.S. troops are scheduled to be withdrawn from Somalia by March 31.

The removal of the 750 Rangers is not the needed removal of troops it appears to be. Instead, the U.S. presence in Somalia will increase by nearly 4,000 people because of the Marines. The Rangers' move appears to be a removal step, which is what many in Congress and the public want. Instead, it is only part of Clinton's plan announced earlier this month.

Rather than shuffling the troops around Somalia, Clinton should focus on removing all troops. The U.S. presence is no longer welcome, and no troops should remain in Somalia.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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MARK BALDRIDGE

Coercion costs winners, losers

I think it's time to talk about coercion.

It's a game that takes subtle forms; we can be bound and led without being any the wiser. There are ways to make people comply that have nothing to do with official channels.

One way to play is through the manipulation of language.

Everyone knows the bad guys in Somalia are "warlords," but what exactly does that word mean? How does a warlord differ from, say, a "political strong man"?

And isn't that what Noriega was, a strong man? Until later, when he became a "druglord" and then a "narco-gangster," whatever that is.

Why was he never "the sovereign of a foreign nation," or even a "dictator" or "CIA spook"?

The Persian Gulf War was a "Desert Storm," like some Hollywood production — complete with killer special effects.

The Iranians who held American hostages in our own embassy were "students."

So were the martyrs at Tiananmen Square, all of them. What kind of extra credit were these two very different groups of students working on?

When a presidential candidate in Panama was savagely beaten, at least two of the big three networks called the attackers "goons" from the get-go.

Now, if I were as cynical as some people claim I am, I'd suspect that someone out there wanted me to think of those goons as goons.

They want me to be sympathetic to the students, but not the goons, to like Desert Storm, but hate the warlords.

What does that mean?

It means that someone benefits from manipulating my attention and the attention of our country — someone powerful enough to control the media.

That's more power than a president has, by a long shot.

Somewhere in the shadows the real powers pull the strings, and all their puppets dance.

It's a form of coercion. It's not that we're not allowed to think otherwise — it's just that the terms of debate are limited at the outset by players not entirely in the foreground.

But in trying so hard to hide, they tip their hand: Once we catch on to their ploy we can determine who's who and what's really at stake.

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Whole volumes are spoken in that single obfuscating term, "warlords."

But one doesn't have to marshal the combined forces of the media to play the coercion game.

A very easy way to win is to put opposing players in a lose-lose situation.

You can feed them information, even facts, formulated in such a way that it shapes the way they react.

For instance, I'd guess that 70 percent of the adult population in this country "knows" that:

A) You can't get AIDS from casual contact.

B) Everyone is at risk for AIDS.

They've picked this up from ads and posters they've been exposed to. But, strictly speaking, both of these statements can't be true at the same time and in the same way, though a single group propagates them without comment. It's never questioned.

Buying the first statement keeps us from hating and fearing the victim of AIDS.

The second fills us with an unfocusable dread — very handy if you have a certain agenda.

Myself, I'm for more research into AIDS and for protection of those with the disease — just like I rooted for the Chinese people while Tiananmen Square was going down.

But I dislike being manipulated, and so should you.

It's hard enough to keep track of the facts without this covert manipulation of them by people with hidden motives.

And there are still subtler forms of coercion. They have to do with setting up the question so as to incriminate the respondent.

This version of the game doesn't require enormous resources; anyone with a microphone can play.

When George Bush was asked to guess the price of a loaf of bread, it was a master stroke.

No answer would be sufficient. No matter what number he gave, he was

trapped — because there is no one price, and any hesitation on his part would show he was only guessing anyway.

I really admire the demonic simplicity of that question.

Another way of playing the "heads-I-win-tails-you-lose" game is to polarize a complex issue into simple black and white alternatives.

A perfect example comes to hand right here at UNL.

Regardless of its intentions, the Office of Affirmative Action has pulled off something pretty smooth with its "safe place" stickers.

When an official organ of the university hands out such stickers to professors, the profs are automatically stuck with two alternatives.

If they post the stickers, the office that produced them wins.

But gay students will be watching, we all will. We can't help but watch to see who fails to post the sticker.

It's nothing as clear-cut as evidence of homophobia; it's just a little hint, a little indicator of the professor's stance on the issue.

The same kinds of tactics are used in fascist states to bring the sheep gently into the fold.

If I were a professor, and I imagine I will be one day, I would never submit to that kind of blackmail — though I'm certainly open to talking about sex and sexual orientation. It's one of my favorite topics.

To resort to self-parody for a moment — some of my best friends are gay. In fact, two of my three closest friends in all the world are gay.

But it's my contention that coercion should be resisted. It's never fair, and it's never right to play that game.

Because where you stand on the issues doesn't matter — whether you side with the "warlords," etc., or against them.

In the game of coercion, all those who play are ultimately losers.

Baldridge is a senior English major, a Daily Nebraskan arts and entertainment section reporter and a columnist.

P.S. Write Back

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