

OPINION PACKAGES

OUR VIEW

Out-ranked

To be distinguished, UNL must find focus

Who says they're out of our league? Yale, Princeton, Harvard ... what do they have that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln lacks?

Well, right now they have rankings as the top three national universities in the country, according to U.S. News & World Report's recently released annual guide to "America's Best Colleges."

UNL sits in the distance, a "third-tier" school ranked somewhere between 116th and 172nd among 229 schools in this class. The rankings are based on reputation, selectivity, faculty resources, financial resources, retention and alumni giving.

"Most ranking colleges and universities possess at least one special niche or comparative advantage that can and should be exploited commercially," the magazine reports.

For Nebraska, that commercial niche has been the university's stellar football program — and even that had humble beginnings with a noncompetitive team named the "Bugeaters."

Now that Nebraska has established itself as nationally competitive in athletics, it is time to tackle the school's academic status.

Chancellor James Moeser acknowledged this concern at the beginning of the semester during his state of the university address.

"To be a great university, we must have outstanding faculty and outstanding students," Moeser said in his address.

That's easier said than done. To attract outstanding faculty and outstanding students, the university must be recognized as great.

It is time UNL found its niche in academics — whether that be in engineering, education or architecture. Whether it be genetics, journalism or agriculture. The university needs to hone its resources in further developing these and other already thriving programs.

Rather than spreading itself too thin by trying to do it all, the university needs to earn some national recognition and respect in select fields of study.

We don't need the Ivy League to compete. But we do need focus.

And patience. Change doesn't come easily.

As U.S. News explains, "If the television industry, for example, had evolved at the same pace as higher education, Howdy Doody would still be a star and the 10-inch black-and-white TV would be a living room fixture."

It's time for UNL to move away from its Howdy Doody image in the academic world and to set goals — realistic goals — for itself.

Even the Ivy League schools had to start somewhere:

"Clearly, 360 years after Harvard assembled the nation's first college class in a Cambridge, Mass., cow yard," U.S. News reports, "higher education is reaching a major turning point."

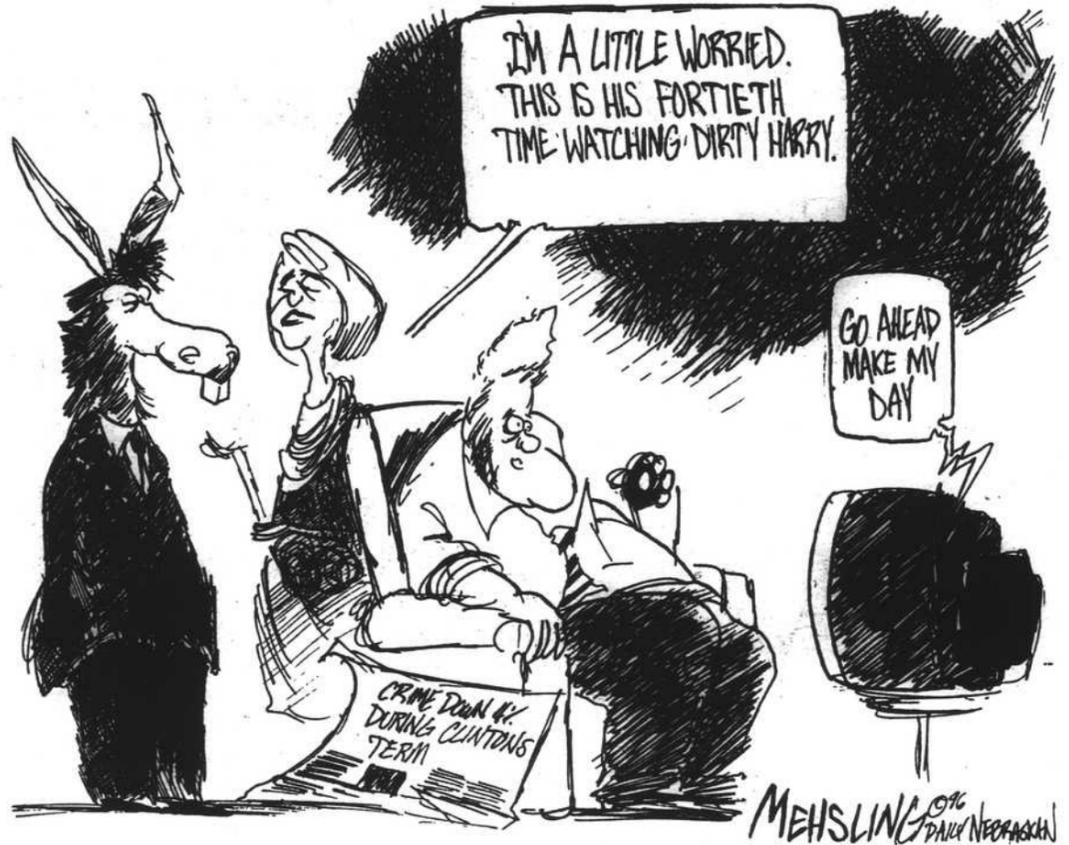
UNL would be wise to follow suit.

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MEHSLING'S VIEW



GUEST VIEW

Matthew
WAITE

As Bosnia's election results tallied, friend watches, wonders and worries

I have been watching the news a little closer lately. Not for a class, not for any peculiar fetish. It is because I am nervous.

I am nervous for friends thousands of miles away from Lincoln. I am nervous for a country that has a piece of my heart.

In February, I went to Bosnia, the war-torn land that is merely images on the TV for most. I sat down and lived with our troops there, the refugees displaced by war and the youth of a city that was without electricity and phone service for three years.

And I fell in love with a beautiful land and the most generous people I have ever encountered.

When I was there, the national elections that took place this Saturday were just whispers. The plans were not completed, the details needed to be worked out.

But now I sit and wait for results. Results that will determine the future of Bosnia.

Voters went to the polls on Saturday to try and elect a multi-ethnic government. That government would be given the task of forming a government that all Bosnians could live with.

To make this easier, here's the breakdown: Everyone in Bosnia is Bosnian — simple enough. But from there you have three groups — Muslims, Serbs and Croats.

As it stands now, the Bosnian Serbs control more than 50 percent of Bosnia and are calling their lands Republika Srpska. The remaining lands are Muslim and Croat controlled.

The time I spent in Bosnia was in Tuzla, an area under Muslim control. I traveled with former Daily Nebraskan photographer Staci McKee to Tuzla and lived there for a week, thanks to the good graces of the UNL College of Journalism and Mass



Communication.

When I watch the news, I see places where I have been. Every time I read a story by The Associated Press from Tuzla, I think of their office in the Hotel Bristol, a shell-fragment-pocked modern hotel.

But who I mostly think about is Mehmed Atic, my friend, guide, translator, miracle worker and adviser. Without Mehmed, Staci and I would have wandered around Tuzla without a friend in the world. We would have starved and never experienced what we experienced.

Mehmed got a nickname from us. We called him the Madman, partly because it was easier to say than his name (yes, we were ugly Americans) and partly because he drove like Mario Andretti smoking crack.

His car was named the Yellow Bird — a two-door Yugo that spewed black exhaust and, for a subcompact, drove like a truck.

I know that the Madman and the Yellow Bird went to the polls. He was a veteran of the civil war, spending three years on the front lines around his home.

Thanks to the international arms embargo, Mehmed spent much of his time in the army without a weapon. He carried the dead and wounded away from the fighting. That was his job, and he did it well. He escaped being wounded for three years.

He cares deeply about his country and its future. His friends, all college students like you and me, also care. I

know they voted.

I know that others we met did the same.

Like Halid Hodzic. Halid survived ethnic cleansing. He was blinded and beaten by Serbs. He wept when he told us his story and begged me to tell the world about his ordeal.

I kept my promise and wrote about Halid in the Daily Nebraskan in February. I will never forget him.

I know he went to the nearest polling area to his home, a small former dorm room in a refugee camp for the elderly and invalid.

For so many people, this election is extremely important. For the future of a war-torn nation, this election is key.

If the new government fails, war could ensue.

I can't have that. The Muslim refugees I spoke to and touched can't have that.

In just a short time, I fell in love with Bosnia, its people and its culture. I swore to the Madman that I would come back.

I have even taken the Koran I received as a gift in Bosnia and prayed to Allah, the way I was instructed. I figure the more help and prayer I can muster, the better.

I pray that one day, I can go back to Tuzla. I pray that I can take the Madman for dinner at the Albatross. That we can eat Mucklalica and drink Tuzla Pivo and laugh.

For me, there are people involved in the news. For me, the elections in Bosnia are not so distant.

For me, the elections are the difference between seeing my friend again or seeing war tear apart a beautiful land.

Waite is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter.

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