

Cyber racism

Professor's e-mail embarrassing to UNL

BARB CHURCHILL is a graduate student in saxophone performance and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

After this week's debate on e-mail and racism, prompted by UNL English Professor David Hibler, would anyone deny the serious problems that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln still face regarding racism and racial equity?

And how about gender equity, since Hibler appears to be an "equal opportunity offender," insulting blacks, American Indians, Hispanics and women — if not anyone that thinks, feels and has a brain.

The way the university charts its progress in the racial/gender equity arena itself is under fire. Different studies disagree on whether UNL has actually already achieved its goal by hiring enough minority and women faculty to keep pace among competitive institutions, or whether UNL still has a ways to go and is not keeping up with their collective university-Joneses.

It's not that UNL isn't trying, but progress is slow. The slow pace is particularly vexing, because it shortchanges students in the diversity arena. Diversity in education is essential, because the world has become a rainbow of colors, positions, viewpoints and agendas. However, UNL and Nebraska itself are lily white, which fails to accurately reflect the mixture of the United States as a whole.

Richard Edwards, senior vice chancellor for academic affairs, shares this concern.

"I think this is an issue in which we're all trying to achieve the same goal, but there are different ideas about how to achieve it," Edwards said.

Edwards is referring to two well-known studies, which have been done to address the issue of exactly how many minority professors are teaching at UNL, as well as how many women are actually teaching faculty. But there are problems with these studies, according to John Benson, director of institutional research and planning and associate professor of architecture. Benson is upset because the study done by the American Association of University Professors surveyed gender equity progress only.

The AAUP survey criticizes the other survey, done by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, because the IPEDS survey counts some librarians as faculty members. However, Benson criticizes the AAUP study, because it fails to take into account that UNL does not have its own, separate nursing school, although most of the other universities used in the study do have nursing schools. Benson's point is that UNL would be treated differently (statistically, anyway) if the University of Nebraska Medical Center personnel residing on the UNL campus were allowed to be counted as a part of the AAUP survey.

Benson prefers the IPEDS survey because it's filled out by virtually every educational institution in the country. It also differentiates the racial and ethnic categories, unlike the AAUP survey (which does not break down by ethnic lines).

The 1997 IPEDS survey states

there are 60 minority full professors out of 668, and 153 female full professors out of 821. (A few professors were counted twice, as there are 12 female, minority full professors.) Women make up just 18.6 percent of full professors, and male minorities make up just 7.1 percent. All minorities among full tenured professors make up 7.3 percent of all faculty tenured professors at UNL. These fully tenured professors are the ones who have been here the longest, and can be used as UNL's "baseline" figure on diversity and racial/gender equity.

We need to look at the professors on the tenure track, though, to see whether or not UNL truly has made a commitment to diversity. And, by the numbers alone, it appears that UNL has. IPEDS lists the number of minority professors on the tenure track, including 12 nonresident aliens (11 men, one woman); eight blacks (three men, five women); one American Indian (one woman); 15 Asians (13 men, two women); seven Hispanics (six men, one woman); and 181 whites (102 men, 79 women).

Women make up a healthy 39.7 percent of the tenure-track professors, with 11.2 percent of those being minorities. There are many more minority tenure-track professors (by percent) than full professors, since minority men make up 24.4 percent of the tenure-track faculty, as opposed to the aforementioned 7.1 percent.

In other words, while full professors still remain mostly white and male, professors on the tenure track have made up considerable ground.

There is even more good news when you consider that minorities

among tenure-track professors make up 19.2 percent of the tenure-track faculty. In 1997, minorities made up 9.9 percent of all ranks of tenure-track or tenured faculty, which definitely shows improvement compared to the measly 7.3 percent of minority faculty among full professors.

Granted, it still isn't enough, but it definitely IS an improvement.

The AAUP survey isn't quite as recent, being done last in 1995-96, and it only refers to the percentage of women, unlike IPEDS. AAUP states there are 20.3 percent of women faculty (all ranks), which is about 3 percent short of the average for our peer institutions (which include Iowa, Ohio State, Minnesota and Kansas). Contrast this with IPEDS, which states that 23.3 percent of women in 1997 make up all ranks of the faculty, and you see where this controversy is coming from.

The AAUP survey also concurs with the IPEDS assessment showing improvement among tenure-track women professors, saying that 40.4 percent of the faculty among tenure-track professors were women in 1995 and 1996. This was a significant improvement over 1993 and 1994, when UNL had only 32.3 percent of women among tenure-track professors.

Vice Chancellor Edwards is pleased with the progress UNL has made, but says more still needs to be done.

"I believe that we've turned a corner. We know that we need to be in this business over the long haul, because one or two years of progress in this area just isn't enough," Edwards said.

Edwards mentioned that UNL has

problems in recruiting quality minority or women faculty because of our locational disadvantage. Qualified applicants may feel somewhat isolated because there aren't too many of their peers here. After all, Lincoln isn't exactly known for its large communities of Asians, Hispanics or blacks (among others).

Edwards says UNL is trying everything it can to recruit qualified minority and women applicants, and I believe him. However, things will NOT be helped by Hibler's apparently racist (or if you prefer, racial) e-mail.

Now, I don't care what Hibler's motivation was. Maybe he didn't mean to come off as badly as it seems.

But the fact remains that how and why Hibler said what he did, using racial slurs is still wrong. Hibler's actions are embarrassing, because they devalue the quality of our education here at Nebraska.

Think about it. What Hibler said, regardless of his motive, really hurts the university in minority and gender recruiting because it makes us all look like a bunch of racist, ignorant idiots. Hibler's comments reflect negatively on and actually slight UNL's efforts to expand racial and gender diversity, which surely can't be what Hibler wants, as Hibler has a biracial son.

Professor Hibler, can you answer this question for me? Why on earth should any qualified woman or minority applicant (much less a sensitive, aware, feeling white male applicant) want to come here, after a long-term Nebraska professor can say something so ignorant?

MARK ZMARZLY is a senior English and speech communication major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Do you know what Saturday is? That's right, it's Single People Suck Day.

It's a day when everyone you know in a relationship gets to look down on you. It's a day where you get to sit around with your single friends and complain about the opposite sex. If you're really lucky, you will have to go to work and serve food to cute little couples who like to hold hands and make out.

We have had to endure the barrage of Valentine's Day advertisements since Jan. 1. Florists, Hallmark stores, Russell Stovers and newspapers have all been informing us that Feb. 14 is a very important day for people in relationships. If you are not in a relationship when these advertisements begin, you have two options:

1. Find someone to date until Sunday.
2. Throw yourself into a deep depression after realizing that these cute advertisements are actually telling you, "You suck."

In case you haven't realized, these options are not very healthy. Where has society gone wrong? When did this holiday go from cute to annoying? Here's what happened, as I see it:

Roughly 2,300 years ago, Romans practiced a pagan celebration around the middle of February. This festival was a celebration of a young man's rite of passage to the

pagan god Lupercus. During this festival the young men of the area selected the name of one of the teenage girls from a box. This teenage girl would become the man's sexual companion for that year. (It was like a good old-fashioned Arkansas family reunion.)

Eight hundred years later, Pope Gelasius attempted to get rid of this pagan festival by changing the rules. Instead of the name of a girl, both young men and women were allowed to draw the name of a saint from the box. The challenge was to emulate the behavior of that particular saint. (They sure knew how to party.) Pope Gelasius then chose St. Valentine to be the new "poster boy" for the festival.

Why St. Valentine? Valentine became the patron saint of love after his beheading by Emperor Claudius in 270 A.D. Claudius outlawed marriage in his empire because he felt a married soldier was a poor soldier. Valentine continued to perform secret marriage ceremonies despite the Emperor's orders. Valentine was imprisoned and sentenced to death when the Emperor discovered the secret marriage ceremonies.

While in prison, Valentine fell in love with the blind daughter of the jailer. Their love was so strong and Valentine's faith so pure that the young woman was cured of her blindness. Before Valentine's beheading he left a message for his love signed, "From your Valentine."

The mid-February celebration then changed from a sex lottery to a holiday where young Roman men would attempt to show their affection to the woman they desired. They

would give handwritten messages containing Valentine's name to the woman in question.

Valentine sent a sincere letter displaying his love. He did not — I repeat — did not send two dozen roses, a box of chocolates and a life-sized teddy bear, and he did not take out a personal ad in the Roman Daily News. He did not send a singing Gladiator-O-Gram. He did not give her a dozen roses made from panties. He simply wrote down the emotions and feelings he had for the love of his life.

Valentine's Day is the day when all unromantic guys get a chance to repent for their sins. In one day you can lavish your loved one with a dump truck full of sweet, soft and fuzzy things, and she will forgive you for the time you showed up drunk at her sister's wedding and threw up in the holy water. You guys out there running around buying this crap are the reason that Hallmark is raking in the cash. You are the reason that I'm sitting here typing and listening to "A Classic Affair Limo Service" advertisement on the radio.

At this point there is nothing you can do. Don't give your girlfriend a love note and a copy of this article. I don't want you to blame me for getting slapped. Buy the roses and jewelry or whatever else you had planned. Take her to dinner or whatever. Then promise yourself that you will be a romantic year round, that you will not have to rely on one day out of the year to show your partner that you care.

When this happens, Feb. 14 will cease to be the day that all single people are reminded that they are ALL ALONE.

Singled out

Valentine's Day practices are painful for the dateless



MATT HANEY/DN