

Faculty says rankings don't tell whole story

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Reputation data was gathered by a survey distributed to law school administrators around the country. The surveys asked administrators to rank each of the about 175 law schools in the United States.

"I probably know as much about a number of law schools as anyone in Nebraska," Perlman said, "yet I probably only know 10 or 12 schools well enough to say anything about them."

John Bernthal, chairman of the Special Education and Communication Disorders departments, said the rankings were nothing more than a "beauty contest."

"It's very difficult to get any objective data in terms of why people rate institutions or programs higher than another," he said.

Audiology and speech and language pathology master's and doctorate programs in Bernthal's department were ranked 28th and 18th, respectively.

Out of more than 230 similar programs in the country, Bernthal said it was difficult to judge what programs were better than others.

But Bernthal said he was pleased with the rankings because his faculty was much smaller than that of other schools.

Often, larger programs at better-known schools are ranked higher than smaller programs, he said.

Robert Egbert, UNL professor of educational curriculum and instruction, said universities that have impressive academic reputations tend to score well in programs where they might not be as good as universities with less-impressive credentials.

UNL's doctorate programs in elementary education ranked 16th in the survey, doctorate programs in educational psychology ranked 24th and doctorate programs in vocational and technical education ranked 24th.

In comparison, Harvard University has a strong academic reputation, Egbert said, so its elementary program was ranked third, although UNL prepares better teachers, he said.

Richard Durst, dean of the college of fine and performing arts, said he knew of one survey in which professors around the nation ranked Princeton University's law school among the top programs in the nation.

The only problem, Durst said, was that Princeton doesn't have a law school.

This kind of anecdotal evidence proves that prospective students must examine reputation-based surveys with skepticism, he said.

UNL's master's program of fine arts ranked 89th in the survey, and the drama master's program ranked 48th.

"I would hate to see people use these rankings as some kind of a qualitative indicator of an academic program," Durst said. "If people simply look at the rankings one to 100 without looking at the qualifiers - what made the ranking what it is - they're selling themselves short."

Durst said choosing a graduate school by using just the U.S. News rankings was like someone buying a car based solely on what's written in Consumer Reports.

"There's no substitute for coming to campus and seeing what the environment is for yourself," Durst said.

Students need to "test-drive" an academic program, much like a car buyer needs to take an automobile for a spin around the block, he said.

It's important for prospective students to talk to faculty members and examine the curriculum and facilities at universities they're interested in.

"You can have the most highly ranked program, and it may not be the place you want to be," Durst said.

On the list of top-ranked programs is exactly where UNL's physics programs should be, said Roger Kirby, chairman of the physics and astronomy department. The program is 83rd out of 88 programs.

"Of course everybody will complain that there are some injustices," Kirby said, "and indeed there are, but the schools at the top will be better at research than the schools at the bottom."

Kirby said anyone who looks at the U.S. News survey should use the rankings only for a general guide.

"You should just take them for what they are," Kirby said. "They're a list of some of the top schools in the country."

"And I think we're one of them, but you shouldn't say number 72 is better than number 73. They're just meant to be general guidelines."

"You shouldn't take them too seriously."

Food, music, cultures shared at union event

BAZAAR from page 1

were cheap - about \$1 per serving - for mouth-watering cuisine.

Each student association paid \$30 for a table at the bazaar and kept the profits from the items they sold.

The Thailand booth was determined best by two of three judges because it included live music with its food and souvenirs.

"It's great. I'd come here every week if they had it," said Darrel Harmon, a university visitor.

A long line of those wanting Mehndi, or temporary tattoos, formed near Mehndi artist

Archana Rathi.

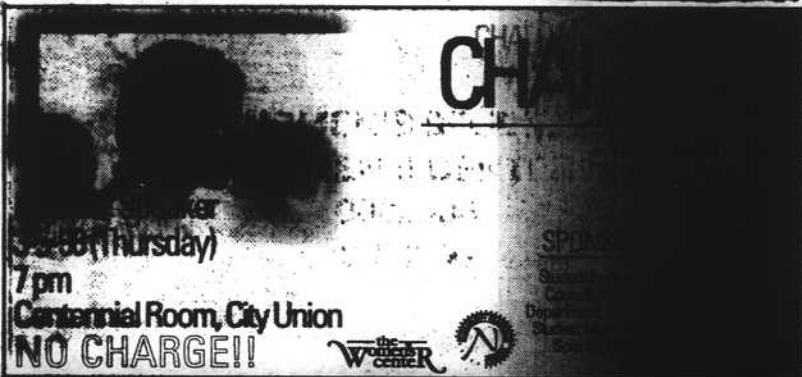
"There's lots of new things, even for folks who've been around before," said Judy Wendorff, an international affairs adviser, who was wearing one of Rathi's temporary tattoos.

Mehndi designs are made by applying henna - a dye extracted from the leaves of a henna plant - on the skin in intricate patterns.

"We wanted to bring everyone together, no matter what their cultural background," said Amruta Kshatriya, vice president of programs and activities for ISO. "That's what the bazaar is all about."



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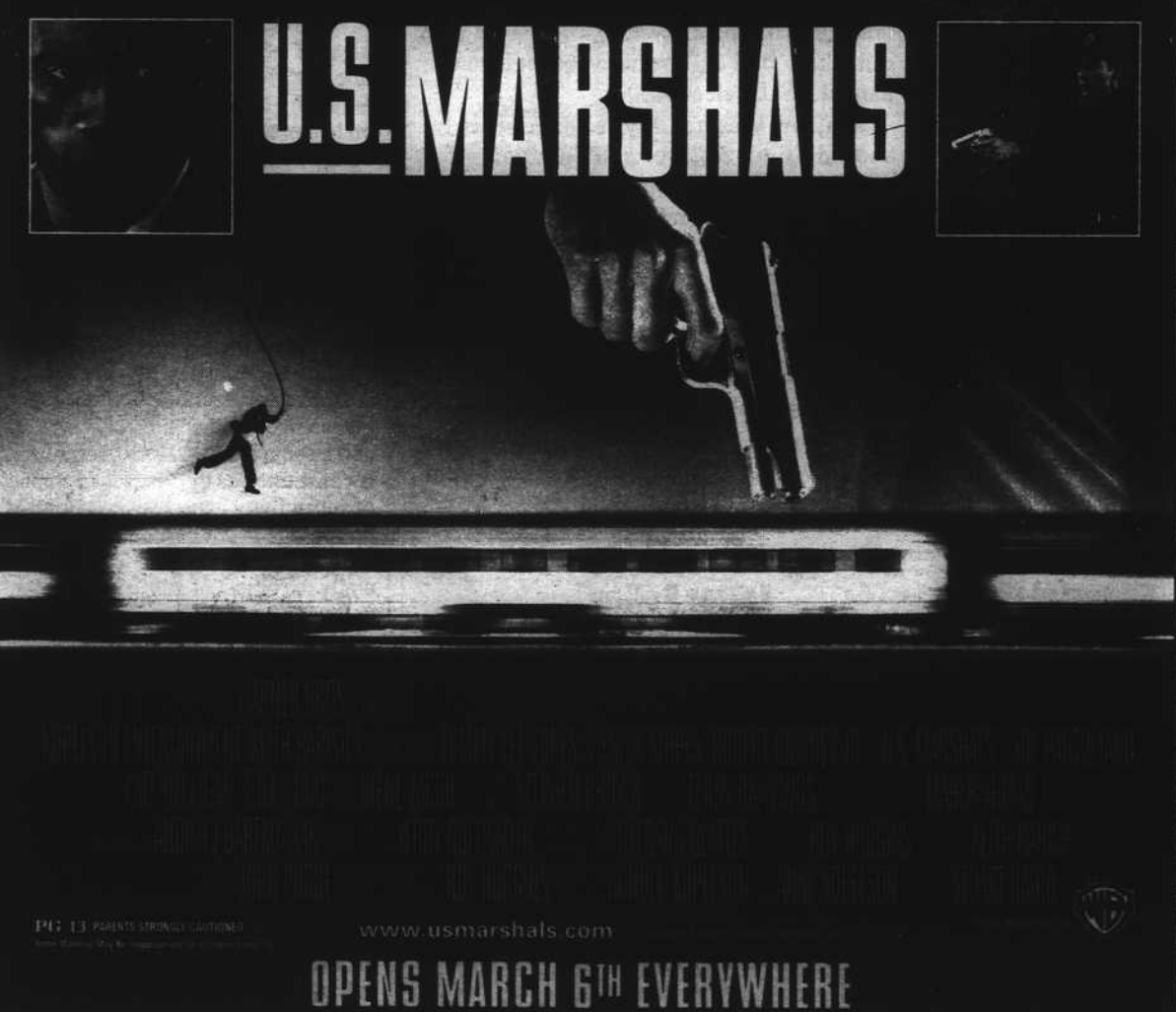


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