

OPINION PACKETS

Our VIEW

P as in problem

Street expansion lacks sense of timing

Timing is everything. It's been said before, it will be said again; and in the case of the city's decision to switch downtown Lincoln's P Street from a one-way thoroughfare to a two-way road, it makes for a perfect fit.

While it's difficult to fault city officials for their desire to revitalize the downtown area — a desire that is supplemented by the P Street renovation — their decision to begin this renovation in the waning days of summer and the waxing days of autumn are substantially flawed.

As one of the downtown area's main roadways, P Street experiences high levels of traffic. But with the exception of football Saturdays, it rarely saw situations that even approached gridlock.

Chances are, that's about to change.

P Street is not only a business-laden stretch of road; it is the first available turn toward campus for motorists leaving Interstate 180. That means a few city blocks practically become a singular outlet for an interstate's worth of traffic — too much for three lanes to handle.

In a few days, that same traffic will be channeled into one lane. One lane of traffic ringed by construction equipment, no less.

And even if Eddie Robinson himself makes the unfortunate error of using I-180 to get to Memorial Stadium, chances are he won't make it to the game on time.

Diverting gameday traffic to other downtown thoroughfares — including O and M streets — may seem like a reasonable solution; but that still won't stem the confusion and exasperation that will run alongside Go Big Red spirit for many football Saturdays to come.

The timing of the renovation is equally questionable on every other day of the week.

With construction still under way, throngs of college students are returning to town and getting readjusted to driving in Lincoln. Meanwhile, P Street is slouching toward its two-way destiny city block by city block.

And when burdened by the mind-blowing complexities of 400-level political theory, Spanish 101 or even the new-look Burger King, an ever-changing P Street will become a worthy adversary for the average student. Not to mention the slightly inebriated one.

Maybe these P Street plans should have been shelved until the early months of next summer, when Lincoln will be less populated, free from the threat of football hordes and a little better prepared.

But unfortunately, the traffic-wrenching process has begun. And all that is left to save us is the undying hope for a monorail — or something like that.

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Mook's VIEW



Challenge to unhinge

Students encouraged to eat, drink and think lechery



JOSH WIMMER is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

It's a landmark autumn for me. It marks my final semester at UNL.

It marks what's sure to be another winning season by our favorite football team, the North Dakota State Bison. Go, Thundering Herd!

And it marks the fifth time I've sat through "challenge" columns from the editors of the Daily Nebraskan.

If you read last Thursday's paper — or any first issue of the year since, oh, 1901 — you know what I'm talking about. In case you missed it, I'll recap.

At the beginning of every academic year, it's traditional for a couple of editors to publish columns whose themes run along the lines of —

Welcome to UNL. This year is your chance to make dreams come true, but it's not going to be easy.

Frequently, these columns end with a hard-hitting, one-line slogan, such as "Go for it" or "Good luck."

Believe me, I'm not complaining about this. But it's like Brenda telling Dylan not to drive home — it needs to be said, but it's going to go ignored.

If a sexy teaching assistant isn't going to get you out of bed for biology lab, there's nothing a couple of pencil pushers can do.

Never fear. All is not lost. Grade inflation runs rampant on this campus, and if your professors can come up with classes monkeys can pass, we can make the challenge column work the same way.

So without further ado, I issue my challenge to the student body:

(Note: The administration has asked that, because of the beverage alliance, we refer to this as the "Pepsi Challenge" — I'll do no such thing.)

Learn to smoke. It's not as easy as it looks. To wield the cigarette in an aesthetically acceptable manner takes practice.

And once you graduate, you're probably not going to have many chances to try, because you'll be working for the Man, and the Man doesn't

like you smoking on the Man's time.

Now there are, I'll grant, some health drawbacks to the habit, like coughing. But smoking's usefulness, especially to the college student, outweighs these. "How's that?" you ask. "I'll explain," I reply.

The scenario: You're waiting for something, outside, by yourself. If you've ever done this before, you know it bites — you feel like a transient who doesn't even have an invisible friend to talk to.

Enter the cigarette. Instantly, you are transformed. You're no longer a loiterer, suspected of scoping out pre-teens to appear on your Web site. Now, you're *doing* something — smoking.

Anyway, smoking's getting a lot of bad press these days, but mark my words: In 10 to 15 years, it'll be in vogue again, and flashing the occasional photo of yourself with a cigarette will earn you credibility with your teen-agers.

Drink. Drink a lot. A college graduate who's falling-down-drunk is a drunkard and a lout. But a college student who's falling-down-drunk is just a college student.

Your liver will never be stronger. So relish this time.

But let's lose the Busch Light, OK, folks? It's made from corn, and you're Nebraskan — we get it. Do you know what its alcohol content is, though?

It's like barely 3 percent. That's pathetic. In North Dakota, our toddlers put it on their Cheerios. And I'm talking about the toddlers with health problems.

Folks, Jack Daniel's is made from corn too, and it's not the beverage of choice for high school cheerleaders everywhere. You're in college now. Grow up — drink something real.

Freak it real nasty. Premarital sex is fun, and it burns calories. And this is the only time of your life it'll be socially acceptable to be a lecher.

Let's face it: If you're going to participate in a menage a trois, it will probably be during college. Statistics support this: A careful study of numerous issues of Penthouse Letters reveals that most of the women therein are between the ages of 18 and 24.

Practicing safe sex, of course, is in your best interest, because if you catch something from someone, that will limit the sex you can have with other people.

Condoms are available for 10 cents at the Health Center.

And if you're planning on saving yourself for marriage — as noble as that is — let me break it down for you:

Guys, it's not as easy as it looks in the movies. Girls, it will be a very sore honeymoon.

Play hooky. For those of you born in the 1980s, this means "skip class." Parents and professors and other old people will tell you this is bad. But remember: It is always these same old people who drone "These are the best years of your life" over and over again.

The sun is shining, and you are young. There are Frisbees to toss, bodies to tan, snooze buttons to hit and drink specials to purchase as early as 11 a.m. at TGIFriday's.

More to the point, if you have to attend all of your classes to pass them, you deserve to live in a box. Period. We're focusing on academic rigor more each year, folks, but — with all due props to Chancellor Moeser — this is still a state school.

Take the challenge. Like I said, this will be easy. The academic year has only just begun, but I'm sure many of you have already embarked on a path of bingeing, purging and rutting.

Others of you, though, have read this far and are seething. You'll call me things like "hedonist" and "sinner" and "Mr. Wimmer"; and you'll wonder how, with all the problems faced by this campus — and this world, for that matter — I can not only condone but *encourage* the sort of debauchery mentioned in this column.

It's simple. Call me crazy, but I believe that, in spite of whatever's printed on these pages, a lot of you are going to devote more time than not to the extracurricular activities I'm talking about.

I want you to do them well. My Midwestern soul says if you're going to do something, don't do it half-assed.

On top of that, a very wise person — OK, it was some girl in my roommate's ex-girlfriend's sociology class — once said, "Beer brings people together."

This is true, of alcohol as well as other vices. If we're really going to come together as a campus this year, such unity will be motivated not by idealism, but by parties and substances.

Believe you me, your homophobia will fade away when you're nic-fitting and a lesbian bums you a smoke.

Your hatred of grecks will dissipate like dust in the wind when a fraternity boy offers you a beer.

And we'll be a step closer to racial harmony when the boys at Sigma Chi and the Afrikan People's Union throw down their books and head for Pawnee Lake together.

Take up the challenge, comrades. Great things lie ahead of us this year. Go for it.