

# OPINION PAGES

**EDITOR**  
Erin Gibson

**OPINION EDITOR**  
Cliff Hicks

**EDITORIAL BOARD**  
Nancy Christensen  
Brad Davis  
Sam McKewon  
Jeff Randall  
Bret Schulte

*Our*  
**VIEW**

## In activity

### Students abolish apathy in classrooms

We at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln have been saddled with a bad rap.

Nationally, we bear the brunt of some awfully bad press generated by a few big-name, big-problem athletes in the mid-1990s. In the state, we're the elitists who look down on other state colleges and universities. In Lincoln, we're the folks on the cross-burning, window-diving, snowball-throwing campus. And on campus, we get scorned for some serious, grade-A apathy when ASUN elections roll around.

But many UNL professors and students check their apathy and any acknowledgment of a less-than-stellar reputation at the classroom doors. They're activists who work to improve campus by seeking higher learning and a true intellectual community, and more university members should follow their lead.

Some clear examples are students who fight to keep talented teachers and professors who see teaching as an art and a joy.

Last year, more than 1,000 students signed a petition urging administrators to hire Bill McLaughlin, a visiting chemistry instructor and an amazing teacher. Students protested. After weeks of contract negotiations, McLaughlin was hired.

This year, students launched a campaign to extend the contract of the talented biology instructor Russ Benedict beyond the fall of 1999. He'll interview this month for three out-of-state tenure-track positions. Seniors Zac Roehrs and Melissa Nootz lead the effort to keep him teaching and inspiring students right here at UNL.

Roehrs and Nootz reject the title "political fighter." But we think they're activists of the best kind, because they're fighting to sustain a higher standard of education.

Meanwhile, three professors recently were recognized for raising the bar for teaching. Two UNL professors won the NU Outstanding Teacher and Instructional Creativity Awards: Paul Kelter, associate professor of chemistry, and Stephen Buhler, associate professor of English. News-editorial Professor Daryl Frazell won the UNL Outstanding Educator Award.

Each is an active teacher — one that uses the classroom as an interactive teaching tool, not as a lecture platform.

Everyone reading today must follow the lead of the aforementioned students, lecturers and professors and must pursue education actively. On a good campus, activism isn't a bad word — it's the *only* word. Active teaching and learning are essential to the quality of education on campus — especially on a campus struggling for widespread intellectual acknowledgment and with a few black eyes to heal.

Apathy might be the norm, but it's as attractive as the chicken pox. Activism is healthy and necessary; we laud those who view it as such.

*Duffy's*  
**VIEW**



**DN LETTERS**

**King's words**

This letter is a response to the column entitled "Kingly consideration: Professor questions validity of celebrating leader's birthday (Jan. 19)" by Gerry Harbison. He projects Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a "serial plagiarist" who "cut and pasted" his doctoral thesis.

Since I am not a scholar, I won't pretend to defend King's writings except to point out that the words he wrote influenced my thinking. The "works of others" Harbison says King plagiarized may not have been easily accessible to me, nor easily understood by the average citizen. But what is important to me and millions of other people around the world is that King's writings inspired and challenged us to search for a truth that liberated our minds from the devastating effects of white supremacy and imperialism.

I recall the long line of German citizens holding hands and singing "We Shall Overcome" as the walls which had divided their country for decades came tumbling down. This year, archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa delivered an impassioned speech at the celebration of King's birthday in Atlanta. Bishop Tutu repeated the many ways in which King's leadership, courage and advice were fundamental to his people's determination to dismantle the racist apartheid system in their country.

While I find Harbison's opinions racist, sexist and offensive, I appreciate the writer's honesty. It helps to dispel stereotypes about racism in the United States. King addresses this issue in his book, "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?" In Chapter III, entitled "Racism and the White Backlash," he wrote:

"Generally we think of white supremacist views as having their origins with the unlettered, underprivileged, poorer-class whites. But the social obstetricians who presided at the birth of racist views in our country were from the aristocracy: rich merchants, influential clergymen, men of medical science, historians and political scientists from some of the leading universities of the nation. With such a distinguished company of the elite working so assiduously to disseminate racist views, what was there to inspire poor, illiterate, unskilled farmers to think otherwise?"

"Soon the doctrine of white supremacy was imbedded in every textbook and preached in practically every pulpit. It became a structured part of the culture. And men embraced this philos-

ophy, not as the rationalization of a lie, but as the expression of a final truth."

The professor speaks about truth at the beginning of his column. He states: "A university like UNL does two main things: scholarship and education. Scholarship is, in essence, the discovery of new facts and truths about the world. Education is passing on these truths, and the methods of their discovery, to students, so that they can make use of them in the real world or themselves to contribute to the process of discovery in the future."

As an African-American, a member of the underrepresented group he mentions, I would ponder what new facts and truths Harbison is passing on to his students and how they can make use of them in the real world of diverse cultures: at UNL, in their communities, in their country and internationally?

It is obvious that UNL is making an effort to confront diverse racial issues and to help educate both students and personnel. Officially celebrating the King holiday for the first time this year is a step forward for Nebraska. It might be instructive to consider some of King's ideas about scholarship, truth and discovery, presented in his September 1967 speech in Washington, D.C. He began his speech, titled "The Role of the Behavioral Scientist in the Civil Rights movement," by referring to the preface of the book "Applied Sociology" (1965):

"... S.M. Miller and Alvin Gouldner state: 'It is the historic mission of the social sciences to enable mankind to take possession of society.' It follows that for Negroes who substantially are excluded from society this science is needed even more desperately than any other group in the population."

Finally, Dr. King said, "The function of education ... is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals."

**Leola J. Bullock**  
Lincoln

**Represent whom?**

ASUN elections should not exist at all.

First of all, they waste the time and money of all involved during campaigning.

No matter what anybody says, this method for developing a student body senate excludes individuals. How many

times have we heard "ASUN is run by a small portion of the student body" or "I don't care what ASUN does, because they haven't made any attempt to focus on my issues?"

Pitting the students against each other in that manner forces them to work in opposition to one another, rather than work together for the collective good of the student body. Previous experiences with certain representatives also show through with glaring clarity as the "Us vs. Them" mentality is perpetuated.

So what is the answer?

The ASUN student senate should be chosen each year by a randomly generated list, the executive body could be chosen by the existing senate at the end of the term to carry on to the following year. New senators and committees would be randomly selected using departmental lists.

Starting at the top of the randomly generated list, individuals would be contacted by previous senators or committee members to explain the time commitments and duties of these positions. If interested, the selected become involved; if not, the next randomly selected person is contacted.

This method would accomplish several things.

No time or money would be wasted on a campaign that nobody, except those involved and their peers, really cares about. The wall around ASUN would crumble and individuals would feel more comfortable discussing issues with members not elected through affiliation.

The composition of ASUN would also be dramatically equalized. No more clinging biases, no more concentration on one area of the student body. Equal chances, random selection. Random selection would allow individuals the equal opportunity to participate, when otherwise they may be too intimidated to do so.

Most importantly, the antagonism of an election would be eliminated. Everybody has an equal chance, everybody would be new, everybody would try to work together without the problem of previous biases.

Then we might see the invigoration of the student body and opening up of student liberties, rather than the banal operation of a semi-democratic election that no student has extra time or money for, and only 3,000 of the 20,000 students care about.

**Graham Johnson**  
graduate student  
German, environmental studies  
and social studies

**Editorial Policy**

Unsigned editorials are the opinions of the Spring 1999 Daily Nebraskan. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, its employees, its student body or the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. A column is solely the opinion of its author. The Board of Regents serves as publisher of the Daily Nebraskan; policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. The UNL Publications Board, established by the regents, supervises the production of the paper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student employees.

**Letter Policy**

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor and guest columns, but does not guarantee their publication. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject any material submitted. Submitted material becomes property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Those who submit letters must identify themselves by name, year in school, major and/or group affiliation, if any. Submit material to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St. Lincoln, NE. 68588-0448. E-mail: letters@uninfo.unl.edu.