

OPINION PAGES

Our
VIEW

Start at home

UNL should begin fight for more gay rights

"Equality begins at home, Nebraska." This slogan rang out on the Capitol steps last Friday at a rally coordinated by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. The group's message was clear: Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people deserve the same rights as straight people.

Unfortunately, this message may be lost in this legislative session. LB69, a bill that would make it illegal for employers to discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation, will probably not be voted on this session. It was not made a priority bill.

However, it is still a priority issue to many. So, rather than waiting for the Legislature to pass a bill into law, maybe we should look to private and public enterprises to adopt these non-discriminative practices now - starting with this university.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has already added sexual orientation to its equal employment opportunity statement. In addition to race, religion, gender, age and disability, people cannot be discriminated against based on their sexual orientation.

This is encouraging, but should we really expect anything less from a university that claims to be committed to equality and diversity?

In fact, the university could be a much greater agent of change if it would just throw its weight around a little more. For example, it could start demanding that the private companies it hires, for example for towing or construction, also adopt an antidiscriminatory policy regarding sexual orientation.

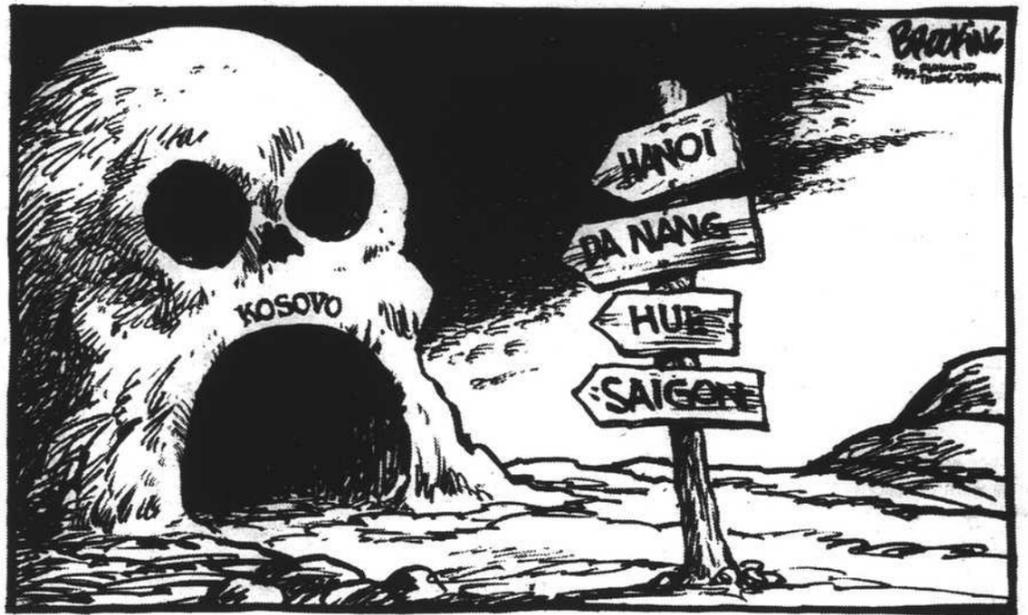
The university could also expand its own commitment to protect the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered employees by offering domestic partner insurance benefits. These benefits would allow gay employees to obtain insurance coverage for their partners the same way straight employees can get coverage for their spouses now.

Other universities, including the University of Iowa and the University of Minnesota, have already included domestic partner benefits in their insurance coverage.

The university should also look into some of the wording in its policies. For example, under the family medical leave policy, employees may receive a leave of absence only for the serious illness of a child, parent or spouse. The word "spouse" doesn't include the partners of gay and bisexual employees, although no one could argue that the serious illness of a partner would be just as devastating as that of a wife or husband.

These are not minor injustices. They are buried throughout the human resources policies of companies and corporations throughout the nation. And, until state and national governments correct them, we will have to demand the corporations we give our money to adopt antidiscriminatory policies now. Starting with the University of Nebraska.

Brookins'
VIEW



Happy talk

Remembering success more productive than complaining



KASEY KERBER is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

After reading DN columnists week after week, one might think that we're paid on a "\$1 per bitch" basis.

Bitch on 10 things, make \$10. Bitch on 20 and come away with a cool Andrew Jackson in your pocket.

But believe it or not, we columnists do write occasionally on what's going right instead of what's going wrong.

Why? Because not everything you see in black and white is negative.

There are success stories, happy endings and positive experiences - even if they don't make it to page one.

Personally, as a residence hall president, I've had the opportunity to see that good things do happen to those who work towards them.

In a year when ASUN voter turnout hit another high (laugh) and one write-in party's name was "Apathy," there were some success stories.

This year some residence hall students were able to make their voices heard and achieve results.

They did what many of you bitch about, but do nothing about.

Neihardt Residence Center

Not too long ago, controversy swelled over telling non-honors students currently residing in Neihardt that they would have to leave after the 2000-2001 academic year.

Letters were written to the Daily

Nebraskan from frustrated non-honors Neihardt residents.

These students also contacted housing officials.

And in a vote of the Residence Hall Association, senators representing UNL's residence halls passed a bill saying that non-honors students should be able to stay in Neihardt until they graduate.

Result: A few weeks later, non-honors students were granted an additional year in Neihardt. This allowed most (if not all) non-honors students to graduate having lived their final year in the hall.

Special-interest floors

In certain residence halls, special-interest floors were created this year, such as healthy lifestyle and community service floors.

They were created without student input and many suffered from a lack of activities, involvement or interest.

Some students, like myself, voiced concerns over them. And administrators like Director of Housing Doug Zatechka listened. In his eyes, there were enough concerns to generate a response.

Result: A handful of special interest floors relocated, while still others, such as the aforementioned Healthy Lifestyle and Community Service floors, were completely dissolved.

Also, housing officials have told students of the changes well in advance and welcomed input - even participating in a RHA forum devoted to special-interest floors.

This is a complete turnaround from when students had no voice in special-interest floors this school year.

The rise of the Web

In ASUN, the official ASUN Web page has become a running joke (and annual party platform).

And while RHA's main Web page isn't much better - this year saw an explosion of residence hall Web pages.

“There are more success stories out there and even more being created as I write.”

The reason was simple: Students were tired of waiting for a page to represent their hall.

So they said to heck with it, we'll create our own.

Within one semester, five residence halls had their own pages or were sharing a page.

They included links to useful sites, pictures of representatives, a food service menu and other interesting features.

And while creating a Web page isn't as far up there as inventing sliced bread, it is interesting.

Just think - nearly half a dozen individual dorms were able to do something that ASUN, with a multitude of student fees, manpower and platform promises could not: create a Web page and keep it updated.

These are just a few examples of how students have gotten things done. It's a pathetic list really, nearly as pathetic as the people who bitch about how little impact they have as students.

There are more success stories out there and even more being created as I write.

Each one is a testament to what can be done if you will it to be done. And success blows raspberries at the failures most students associate with apathy and laziness.

The only question is whether you want to be part of a success story or a bunch of useless bitching.

Choose wisely. Because a new school year will begin before you know it.

EDITOR
Erin Gibson

OPINION EDITOR
Cliff Hicks

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

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. They do 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@unlinfo.unl.edu.

P.S. Write Back



Send letters to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 "R" St., Lincoln, NE 68588, or fax to (402) 472-1761, or e-mail <letters@unlinfo.unl.edu>. Letters must be signed and include a phone number for verification.