

OPINION PAGES

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Our
VIEW

Apples and oranges

Raising parking fees is faulty logic

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is in yet another race to catch up to its peers. Only this race – to put UNL's parking fees in line with its peer institutions – is one administrators should bow out of as soon as they can.

While comparisons among similarly sized institutions in the Midwest are useful for some things, such as rating an academic program's performance or looking at the distribution of minority or female professors, parking is an issue that is too different from campus to campus to make accurate or meaningful comparisons.

A campus several hundred miles from here might not be strapped for space, may not allow freshmen to have cars on campus or may have a better public transportation system than Lincoln's.

To compare UNL's parking situation to universities that are not facing the same problems seems like a case of comparing apples to oranges.

What's equally absurd about UNL basing its parking rates on the midpoint of what its peers charge is that tuition and salary rates are not taken into account.

The plan would require UNL students to pay for the construction of new parking garages across campus, although students have already been asked to bear the brunt of certain building construction, which is arguably a responsibility of state taxpayers.

Also ignored in the plan is the fact that UNL faculty members and staff, for the most part, are not paid at a rate that is equal to the midpoint of their peers at similarly sized Midwest institutions.

To make their parking passes in line with peer institutions, but not adjust their pay to the same comparative level, is a blatant double standard.

Plans are in the works, both in the state Legislature and in NU central administration, to raise salaries, which have lagged embarrassingly behind similarly sized Midwest institutions.

But until salaries are at the necessary level, fees charged to employees of the university should not be raised to a level comparable to peer institutions.

The Academic Senate voiced its opposition to the parking plan, and the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska should do the same.

Parking is an issue that needs to be examined at UNL, especially considering the implications of the 12-year Master Plan, which, along with changing the face of campus, would eliminate a good portion of current parking.

But instead of ramming a seriously flawed plan down the throats of students, faculty and staff members, Parking Services should solicit ideas from across campus and go back to the drawing board.

Babin's
VIEW



Six-pack of controversy

Censorship of alcohol advertisements is wrong



ERIN GIBSON is a senior news-editorial major and editor of the Daily Nebraskan.

Listen.

Come on.

Lean in and listen closely, and I promise you, you'll hear it.

It's a faint noise, a slight rumble from within. But it's a roar in the East that promises to roll our way.

The racket is student news editors' anger over a movement that infringes upon all students' First Amendment freedoms of the press and speech.

And the movement is the fight to remove all alcohol advertising from all student publications in order to combat underage and binge drinking.

It's not a fiery issue here yet. No one has asked me to stop printing alcohol ads, although removing alcohol advertising from the student press is one focus of UNL's \$700,000 grant to combat binge drinking.

But in Pennsylvania, it's state law. No alcohol ads can appear in student media. The law targets the newspaper's freedom of expression through advertisers. Advertisers placing alcohol ads are fined – some have paid a \$1,000 fine for one ad.

"It is so flatly unconstitutional," said Hal Turner, editor of The Pitt News, the University of Pittsburgh student newspaper. State law cannot determine newspaper content, he said.

On April 6, Turner's newspaper and the ACLU filed a lawsuit against the state of Pennsylvania claiming the alcohol advertising law violates the First Amendment: "Congress shall

make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press."

Proof positive of the violation surfaced through The Daily Collegian, the Penn State paper. When advertisers could no longer place ads for happy hour specials, the newspaper printed happy hour specials itself in its weekend entertainment listings.

As a result, law enforcement told advertisers they would be fined if they couldn't stop the newspaper from printing news about happy hours. Editors felt shocked. Police holding advertisers responsible for newspapers' editorial content is obnoxious and ridiculous, as well as unconstitutional.

So this law clearly was formed to abridge the speech of student media and, in doing so, abridge the freedom of speech and information of every student on a Pennsylvania campus, regardless whether they drink or don't drink or whether they're 21.

I expect the ACLU and The Pitt News to win their lawsuit, and I expect the state law to be overturned.

The case won't be closed, though.

It won't be closed because the pressure to remove alcohol advertising in most school newspapers doesn't come from a state law. It comes from within the university. Although the administration of this campus has a good track record of supporting student media, I expect similar pressure to surface here as the debate over binge drinking heightens.

Several newspaper editors nationwide have contacted me asking whether this or other newspapers I know of have voluntarily stopped printing alcohol ads.

As a student newspaper editor, I cringe at students who lackadaisically would give up their constitutional freedoms and allow the state and university to become their surrogate parent of sorts, determining what they can and cannot print.

But I also welcome a good discussion, so I asked Daily Nebraskan staff members whether they supported us

carrying alcohol advertising. About 80 percent said yes. Here are a selection of their justifications for and against printing alcohol-related advertising.

For:

■ A college paper at a public university should abide by the law. Since alcohol advertising is legal, we should take ads from liquor and beer outlets as if they were selling flowers.

■ The paper advertising alcohol represents freedom of the press and freedom of choice for its readers. The DN doesn't promote alcohol by running the ads.

■ Not running alcohol ads is censorship. Just because we advertise alcohol does not mean we are responsible for students' individual actions.

■ I believe we should. Our advertising shouldn't make any difference in our news coverage and vice versa. We can promote responsible drinking in news copy and still carry alcohol ads.

■ Hell, yes, run the ads. We are not saying get drunk, and some ads promote drinking responsibly.

■ I don't think our ads are advocating any kind of binge atmosphere, and honestly, I usually don't even notice that we have them.

Against:

■ I think we can get enough advertising without contributing to the drinking problems on campus. Not that there's anything wrong with beer ads, but alcohol just consumes the lives of college students too much to allow us to help the cause.

■ It's a call that should be made by the paper, not by the university, but I don't think we should run such ads. I think it's irresponsible. Not immoral, but irresponsible.

Our general manager, with more than 17 years of work at the DN under his belt, had a different outlook: "The DN should/shouldn't run alcohol ads just like it should/shouldn't run ads for strip clubs, violent movies, abortion, military recruitment, Human Rights Alliance inserts, music with violent/sexist/offensive lyrics, etc. It opens whole cans of worms."

Yes, it does. As does tossing away First Amendment rights to a free press and free speech.

In the end, while I agree that fighting underage and binge drinking is an important and worthwhile cause, I believe combating high-risk drinking can take place without shortchanging the Constitution.

Education and strict law enforcement are the solution to binge and underage drinking, not abridging citizens' rights.

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@unlinfo.unl.edu.

Hey you guys!!!

If you have opinions and the ability to write, we might publish them. If you can't write, but like to draw pictures, we might publish those too.

The Daily Nebraskan is now accepting applications for full columns and cartoons. Any major ad and class standing will be eligible as long as applicants are enrolled in at least six credit hours and maintain a 2.0 GPA or higher.

Prospective columnists or cartoonists must complete an application, available in 34 Nebraska Union, and submit two sample columns or four sample cartoons, published or unpublished. Applications are due Friday, April 16, and interviews will be arranged by the opinion editor.