

OPINION PAGES

Quotes OF THE WEEK

We are trying to understand the fundamental biology of human brain cells.

University of Nebraska Medical Center Vice Chancellor Dr. William O. Berndt, on fetal tissue research at UNL

Here I am. What have I done? I'm just a student.

Bruce Kroese, explaining his role in recent trade meetings in China

We got in a dogfight.

Charlie McBride, NU defensive coordinator, on NU's narrow win in Boulder

I just got this horrible feeling that we're not going to win.

William Safris, Lincoln property owner, on his efforts to prevent a widening of O Street

When I look at it, Mr. Choma, I am struck by the fact that not only did you invite the altercation, but you brought a gun to it.

Judge Karen Flowers, sentencing Kenneth Choma for the murder of David Higgins earlier this year

American values and culture are sweeping the world, and I think there's some jealousy among ancient civilizations.

Bill Avery, a UNL political science professor, on protests in Greece over President Clinton's recent visit

It's virtually certain that Nebraska cannot catch Virginia Tech.

Jerry Palm, of www.CollegeRPI.com, which analyzes the Bowl Champion Series poll

(The university) spent a lot of money on a lot of doodads, but since I use Macintosh, I'm locked out of the system.

Ruben Donis, an associate professor of virology, on Lotus Notes

Do I wish things had turned out differently today? You bet. Don't you?

Seattle Mayor Paul Schell, on Tuesday's riots

He's not prepared to expedite the case.

Kirk Brown, state assistant attorney general, on Carey Dean Moore's attempts to avoid his death sentence

Yes, we should broaden the base of democracy, but surely not through women.

Ahmed al-Shraian Kuwaiti, a tribal leader, rejecting an attempt to give Kuwaiti women the vote

After a quarter of a century, the curtain is finally coming down on direct rule.

Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Mandelson

It's not the easiest thing to play a god.

Mollie Cox, appearing as Dionysus, in a UNL production of "Dionysus in '99"

Obermeyer's VIEW



DN LETTERS

Out(math)landish

Your editorial of Dec. 1 about the Mathland program, as well as the Mathland program itself, are typical examples of misunderstanding of what is mathematics and how it should be taught.

Mathematics is not an "adding and subtraction of actual items," and it is not counting a million beans.

If you want our kids to learn these kinds of things in schools, it is another story, but please do not call these kinds of exercises "math."

Mathematics, first of all, studies relations between abstract objects, independent of their nature. Unfortunately, this approach to mathematics has deteriorated in U.S. school math programs.

One of the major reasons for this is involving computers and graphing calculators in teaching "math."

The learning process is reduced to manipulation with numbers, which has nothing to do with teaching mathematics. A computer might be a very powerful tool for a mature researcher, but it certainly causes a lot of harm in teaching math at schools and universities.

Unfortunately, the attitude of the general public and school administrators is: "The more computers the better; let us start computer involvement in teaching math at the kindergarten level."

As a result, undergraduate students are coming into physics classes without a slightest idea how to solve a simple algebraic equation, how to make sketches (not graphs!) of functional dependencies and how to do estimates.

Moreover, they are less able to learn these elementary skills in the university because they are already spoiled by the "digital" education.

Most domestic graduate students are not prepared enough in mathematics to take graduate courses in physics.

I do not understand why unqualified people who have no idea what mathematics is make decisions how to teach it in schools. I beg all developers of "innovative" math programs, "researchers" in math education and the school administrators: please stop developing "new approaches" to teaching mathematics!

Look at Europe. Nobody there wastes money for "developing" new

programs. They use traditional methods in teaching mathematics, and their kids, on the average, perform much better than American kids.

Ilya Fabrikant
professor
physics and astronomy

Flashing Sign

The basketball poster recall is really asinine.

I really don't see what the fuss is all about - after all, the players weren't flashing actual gang signs.

But maybe the University cares more about an outside group than the students of this institution.

As for bringing a negative image to the basketball team, maybe it should concentrate on winning a few games, that might help.

But I guess now that we have more HuskerVision screens, that is going to make it all right.

Sam Mortensen
junior
agriculture education

Money Matters

While I appreciate the points raised in the editorial about faculty salaries, (DN, Thursday) it's only a part of the picture.

The support staff are no less underpaid than the faculty and no less vital to its mission.

Who is it that processes class reg-

istrations? Who is it that mows the grass and shovels the sidewalks? Who takes care of the upkeep of the buildings? Who checks materials in and out of the library and keeps books organized on the shelves?

As a general rule, it's not the faculty doing these tasks, and I don't say that to criticize them.

However, while the faculty are doing the research and teaching that are the purpose of a university, the support staff is holding together the infrastructure that makes it possible.

The support staff doesn't have the luxury of choosing between staying for \$82,000 or leaving for \$100,000.

Speaking for myself, the increase in parking fees and the insurance plans that cost more and cover less will more than eat up my annual raise, and that doesn't even take into consideration the increases in cost of living.

While I understand the need to give the faculty tangible expressions of appreciation, for the rest of us, we're wondering how we're going to be able to pay the rent or the mortgage.

We're wondering how we'll be able to pay the medical or dental bills.

We're wondering how we're going to get the car fixed if it dies in the middle of the winter.

For us, it's not a question of appreciation or welcome. It's a question of survival.

Brad Pardee
support staff member
Love Library



MELANIE FALK/DN

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