

## Getting what's deserved

### ASUN should support domestic partner benefits

Wednesday night, ASUN will decide whether or not to support the adoption of domestic partner benefits at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The decision should be quite easy for ASUN.

A good teacher is a good teacher regardless of sexual orientation. The time has come for UNL to recognize that fact and offer attractive benefits to all prospective employees and students.

Iowa, Iowa State and Minnesota all provide domestic partner benefits for same-sex partners, and UNL should do the same.

But the issue is purely monetary. It really doesn't deal with respect, like many members of the gay community have claimed.

And the monetary basis only lends credence to gay teachers' rights to equal compensation. Contrary to homophobic beliefs, gay people are just like anyone else. For example, they want to be financially secure as much as any non-gay person.

It's just too bad it has taken this long for ASUN to support domestic partner benefits. Who knows how many good teachers we've lost because UNL's benefits weren't up to par?

According to the ASUN bill, domestic partner benefits would enable "equal opportunity and

quality education for all faculty, staff and students at UNL."

The passing of this bill would certainly be a strong step in that direction.

ASUN's support could add needed momentum to a new domestic partner benefits bill that soon will reach the university-wide Fringe Benefits Committee.

The committee permanently tabled an earlier bill because it was not backed by any state law, and it lacked clarity.

ASUN could send a clear message to the committee stating UNL's need for an inclusive and inviting atmosphere for all.

Even if the university-wide committee doesn't agree, at least ASUN will have spoken in favor of the well-being of UNL's students.

#### Editorial Board

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#### Editorial Policy

Unsigned editorials are the opinions of the spring 2000 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 acts 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 publication 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. The Daily Nebraskan strives to print fair and accurate coverage; any corrections or clarifications will be printed on page three.

### Obermeyer's VIEW



### Letters to the EDITOR

#### Teaching the DN

I am disappointed at the way this publication portrayed the Teach For America program in its Friday, February 18th edition.

Teach For America is a program designed to recruit college seniors destined for graduate school to commit two years before entering graduate school to teach in under-resourced school districts around the country. Applicants do not need to have a degree in education.

TFA is a wonderful program, but it is very controversial because many people see it as depriving qualified education majors of a chance at landing a good job right out of college. In the two years I was involved in the program, I never once saw a single example of such job-stealing. Instead, I saw exuberant people helping to lower classroom sizes and improve educational standards for students in urban Baltimore, a school district that would have an average of around 60 vacancies per year were it not for TFA.

I have three problems with the way the Daily Nebraskan ran this story. First of all, there were several factual inaccuracies, including the stated salary paid to TFA teachers. Your article made it sound like these teachers get paid only \$4,725 per year, when in actuality all teachers make between \$21,000 and \$36,000 per year plus a \$4,725 per year stipend to use toward one's outstanding student loan debts or to apply towards upcoming graduate school tuition expenses.

Secondly, I believe that the editorial staff chose to run this story either because it is a good way to raise social consciousness or because it is timely, given the fact that seniors are trying to figure out their lives after graduation. If you published it for the first reason, then I believe the quote you chose to enlarge regarding my initial apprehensions about the program is misleading. I did indeed have two or three nightmares about going to teach in the inner city, but the reporter who interviewed me concentrated on this aspect of the story instead of the bigger picture, which is that this experience was definitely the best two years of my life, and I would highly recommend this program to anyone.

Jeffrey L. Hellbusch  
Omaha

#### His interpretation

Yes, I was offended by Obermeyer's View, and I did not take the cartoon to be a compliment. I'm not asking you to agree or disagree with me. I cannot determine how you interpret this cartoon, and I will not try to. Therefore, stop telling me what my interpretation should be.

I wanted to comprehend what the Daily Nebraskan was trying to convey with the Feb. 9 cartoon, so I scheduled a face-to-face meeting with Editor in Chief Josh Funk and cartoonist Neal Obermeyer to have open dialogue on the issue.

In Neal's opinion, the university as a whole "uses" me as a mascot and exploits my involvement to represent their goals of being an institution that welcomes cultural diversity. Neal said the point of his cartoon was "to show the degree to which the university has exploited you and positions you to be the minority spokesman." Unfortunately, the cartoon did not convey that message to me.

Those who truly know me understand that I am involved with extracurricular activities because they keep me focused on my ultimate goal of matriculating through undergraduate school to obtain a degree. I enjoy being involved.

As a result of my involvement, the university has called upon me as well as other student leaders to sit on panel discussions and to appear in recruitment brochures and videos. If this is seen as the university "using" me as a recruiting tool, so be it.

It was my junior high and high school involvement that provided a full-ride scholarship to this university through the Tom Osborne Teammates Mentoring program. It would be ridiculous for me to come to college saying, "I don't want to be involved because the university may choose to 'use' me as a recruiting tool."

Guess what? I'm "using" the university to obtain a degree. The perception that I have been "used" as a poster child is beyond me. Why doesn't Mr. Obermeyer choose to look at our student athletes as being "used" by our university for their prowess? Those individuals are also doing something they enjoy, so who are we to criticize them or the university for utilizing those

students?

I do not feel the need to be a recipient of praise; however, I do believe I have tried to make a difference on this campus. Therefore, it is demeaning to compare me to two inanimate objects. It is insulting that Mr. Obermeyer is questioning my efforts on this campus, though I recognize his freedom to do so.

The cartoon certainly expressed racial undertones to me. Why? The choice for us to make in the cartoon was between two mascots and an African-American student.

The Daily Nebraskan editorial on Feb. 14 states that had the third choice been a white student leader, there would have been no objection. The fact is, I am black and therefore my ethnicity does raise the question of possible racism.

Does every African-American student on this campus or in our community feel the same way? No. As stated in the initial story, I am not the spokesman for all people of color.

Neal Obermeyer and Josh Funk stated that they were pointing fingers at the university as a whole. They also explained that the Daily Nebraskan is part of that system, which contributed to perceptions of my being "used." This has been done in different ways, but particularly by contacting me for an opinion on various issues regarding race relations on our campus.

Do I want Neal Obermeyer and the entire Daily Nebraskan staff to publicly apologize to me? No. The editorial board believed the cartoon was acceptable, so why would I want them to apologize to me now?

Everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion, and although I do not agree with the way I was depicted, I cannot take that opinion away from someone else. Despite the criticism I received, I will continue to stay involved with those activities that are near and dear to my heart.

Eddie Brown  
senior  
business

Tom Osborne Teammates Mentoring, Scarlet and Cream Singers, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, president, Afrikan People's Union, undergraduate admissions assistant for multicultural recruitment

### P.S. Write Back

Send letters to: Daily Nebraskan, 20 Nebraska Union, 1400 "R" St., Lincoln, NE 68588, or fax to (402) 472-1761, or e-mail letters@unl.edu. Letters must be signed and include a phone number for verification.