

Dirty dealing

UNMC should have informed citizens about research sooner

The University of Nebraska Medical Center has remained mired in a controversy of its own making since December.

Now the battle of public opinion is being fought on the floor of the Legislature, where two bills, one to ban the controversial research and the other to make the research known, have been proposed.

Doctors and administrators chose to do research using fetal tissue cells without telling the people of the state of

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Nebraska. Since that information was made known, there has been a tremendous public outcry from citizens of this conservative state to halt the research.

The university chose to remain tight-lipped about this research because administrators feared the reaction they knew would come.

That reaction has come, and university administrators are hiding behind the shield of academic freedom.

The principle of academic freedom includes open discussion of ideas as well as the freedom to investigate

those ideas. If the Medical Center had been serious about academic freedom, we would have heard about this research before it started.

In that discussion, we would have fought emphatically to ensure that our scientists could conduct this research.

But it didn't happen that way.

This research, which is supposed to fight Alzheimer's disease, could be doing great things. It could be developing a cure, but the Med Center doesn't want us to know that.

At first, the research was supposed to require a specific type of cell that could only be attained through partial-birth abortion. Following the outcry, the medical center started to search for alternative tissue sources, which were never considered before.

And groups that asked for more information were forced to request it under the Freedom of Information Act.

That should never be the case with state-funded research conducted at a state university.

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LB1427 would require the Medical Center to report all of its research to the Legislature before starting a project. This would ensure some public awareness of and accountability for what goes on in the Medical Center's laboratories.

The Medical Center needs to clean up its act and be more forthcoming about its research.

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Ski's VIEW



Letters to the EDITOR

Afraid of the buffoons

For a person preaching tolerance, Chris Halligan is remarkably closed-minded. Despite what many people believe, the Religious Right isn't the bunch of deranged "cuckoos" the media portray them as. They are simply people with morals and the discipline to stick with those morals. This scares people like Halligan because they have no clue of what real structure and discipline are like.

As for the voting power of the Right; I, for one, am glad it exists. Nixon and Reagan were both excellent presidents. Nixon had unprecedented breakthroughs in foreign relations with the Middle East, Russia and China. Reagan pulled our country out of a recession and set our economy on the fast track it is on today.

Hypocritical "buffoons" like Halligan who claim to speak for tolerance only end up endorsing the same type of bigotry they speak against. These are the people to be very afraid of.

Chris Rodgers
freshman
computer science

Activism at odds

In response to "A Disappearing Act," (DN, Feb. 21) Americans always have been somewhat at odds with the notion of activism.

We are a nation of individuals, but the individualism of self-reliance and duty to community steadily has been replaced by anti-social "success" values. The self-actualization mantra fed to us by mass culture has worked all too well; the only collective act we seem capable of today is the act of consumption. We are, after all, a country that measures success not in terms of literacy rates or the availability of health care but rather in terms of housing starts and automobile production.

We are very good at consuming things. With 4.5 percent of the world's

population, the United States uses about 25 percent of its resources. What's worse, there are a lot of people in other countries who want to follow our example.

Want to be an activist? Take a look at our sprawling cities, our disappearing countryside and woodlands. Consider the alarming rate of species extinction. Water, air and land pollution are still with us - further stressed by our exploding population - and the gap between rich and poor continues to widen.

There are plenty of issues that beg activism, and parking isn't one of them.

David Ochsner
graduate student
English

Bring on the benefits

1985 was a year of changes at UNL. In that year, I proposed that ASUN add sexual orientation to its non-discrimination policy. In years to follow, I continued to address this issue, and eventually the NU Board of Regents added "individual characteristics." This later was defined as protecting sexual orientation from discrimination.

Along with the speeches about inclusion of sexual orientation, I included other

changes that UNL needed to make to become a more gay-friendly campus, including domestic partner benefits, housing for gay and lesbian couples, scholarships for GLBT students, support for the UNL Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association and removal from the UNL campus of ROTC for discrimination, among other things.

Recently, the prospect of adding domestic partner benefits for faculty and staff has raced to the forefront of the debate at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This debate should include the positives of this policy. UNL is one of the few schools in the United States that doesn't have a domestic partners policy, and many others are debating this issue.

Why shouldn't UNL adopt this measure? Why shouldn't it do so, when UNL is not supposed to discriminate based upon sexual orientation? Isn't UNL discriminating by not offering domestic partner benefits in the first place, and isn't it legally bound to provide these benefits anyway? Couldn't potential lawsuits be filed down the line against the Board of Regents for discriminating against gay and lesbian couples who are staff or faculty? I believe the answer is yes.

Rodney A. Bell
Kansas City
chairman, UNL Gay/Lesbian
Alumni/ae Assoc., Inc.
alumnus, 1987



Melanie Falk/DN