

The future of student government

An inside view of next year's ASUN parties and platforms



ASUN can be fun.
I learned this over the past few months, following the student government elections for the first time in my collegiate career.

And like the pigskin prognosticators who quickly predict next year's No. 1 right after the bowl season ends, I'm revved up for next year's round of political parties. Call me a junkie.

With fervent investigation, I've already uncovered some of 2001's early front-runners and even found some insight on their platforms. Without further hesitation:

Party: Apocalypse
Slogan: Disillusioned? Vote for Dissolution.

Skinny: An assist goes to our cartoonist Neal Obermeyer, who overheard from a friend of Planarian Man

that this party would be attempting to abolish student government altogether. The remaining funds would go toward paying for student football tickets. A move like this would set back UNL to the 1850s, before the university ever opened. Traditionalists ought to love it. Says Obermeyer: "Come 2001, the end is here."

Party: Hoax
Slogan: You won't know until election day what we really stand for.
Skinny: With its idea of a "rotating platform," Hoax is in favor of a policy one week, then retracts its support, arguing that its original stance was merely a hoax.

Party: EDSW
Slogan: And let's not forget about the disease-spreading whore...
Skinny: Borrowed from Kevin Spacey's diatribe in "Seven," EDSW stands for the Eradication of Disease-Spreading Whores, male or female, through the process of verbal and physical sparring on campus. Health organizations have given tentative support, just as long as condoms are involved. Shunning is optional.

Party: B Movie

Slogan: Porn? Why not?
Skinny: Word has it that members will run on a platform that includes a brand new sex film department, with an emphasis on recruiting freshmen. Most of it will take place outside, thus saving on light costs.

Party: Empower2
Slogan: Finally, an incumbent. Well sort of.
Skinny: Empower representatives make an unprecedented move for a second run, changing the student bylaws to open up the opportunity. Student political experts from Harvard, Yale and Wake Forest would descend upon Lincoln to study the effects of such a regime.

On election day, the party could pass out cucumbers, which is pretty close to incumbent. Sort of.

Party: Crouch
Slogan: Let's face it: Only one candidate can deliver in the two-minute offense.

Skinny: There might be record turnouts for a party headed by Nebraska quarterback Eric Crouch, who passed out campaign hats last year to his offensive linemen to test the political waters. When Coach Frank

Solich was asked if Crouch could handle the double-duty, he answered, "Certainly."

When Solich was asked to expound, he said: "Certainly."

Party: Wino
Slogan: You know what this campus really needs? A liquor store for winos.

Skinny: Wino keeps the campus dry, but opens a booze shop in the Union for poor winos to raise a few extra bucks. Food stamps accepted.

Booze types will be site-specific - East Campus will deal in moonshine and urine-based alcohol only.

Party: Bun Stays in the Oven
Slogan: Because everyone thinks we're right-wing fascist freaks, we had to come up with a name confusing and humorous enough to lure you into our freakish, right-wing party (By the way, we're anti-abortion).

Skinny: The buns stay in the oven. All other household appliances and pastries are burned in effigy.

Party: Mountain Rocket
Slogan: There is no benefit to building a mountain rocket.

Skinny: ASUN diverts all student

fees toward the construction of a huge mountain rocket, a luge-like vehicle capable of shooting up the sheer face of mountains. There is no benefit to building a mountain rocket. In fact, there may be no way to build one. The party is gaining early support for their being mavericks.

Party: Doghouse
Slogan: Fishpond, only bigger. Dumber, too. But we don't lick boots.

Skinny: Takes Canfield Administration building and revamps it into a giant kennel. Preferably, the dogs will be limited to golden retrievers only.

Party: The Danny Nee Revolution
Slogan: Screw you! (*Director's cut available online*).

Skinny: Return Danny Nee to his rightful place as Nebraska's basketball coach. Lobby to gain Tyrone Lue successful entrance back into college, while pillaging the Nebraska football team for bodies.

Party: The Elites
Slogan: A government of, by and for the elite people on campus.

Skinny: Status quo. Or, at least, it was.

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Fear and loathing in cyberspace

New drug on the street not injected but uploaded



People get lost for hours at a time, their eyes practically glued to their screens as they zone out and over-focus, praying for some moment of clarity to reach out from the monitor and club them to death until their corpses lie, lifeless and still before their machines, so that their tombstones can read "Died Online."

They might as well be thumping the veins in their arms and plugging the mouse right in (saves time on interfacing), eyes pried open with toothpicks so that the information superhighway has no offramps, and they can drift along on cruise control when the pilot's light goes out.

Lethargic. Inert. Jacked-in, surfed-out and definitely online.

The new drug on the street isn't injected - it's uploaded.

It could happen to any one of us. We'll have to fight them off like gatekeepers of the Information Free Age, making sure the lemmings pay the full price of admission if they want the insides of their skulls back.

The symptoms are easy to ignore, simple to overlook and far too subtle to be noticed by the untrained eye. One too many moments checking e-mail, the constant rapping of fingertips across particle-board desktop while waiting for a download, the mutter of "I need more power" under one's breath. It seems like just another Net denizen, but look closer and it's all going out of focus.

Oh yes, you can see it in their eyes if you're willing to peel back their eyelids and pin 'em against the wall. Those bloodshot orbs will peer back at you aimlessly, waiting for their screensavers to overtake the perception of you. You'll know they're already gone, and it could be too late for anything other than a shutdown.

My own personal digital hell began a long time ago, back in the erstwhile days of my youth I've tried so desperately to forget. I began my hacker days as a scrapping on an Omaha system called Citinet.

BBSs, or bulletin board systems, were the early days of the Internet revolution, when people were scrapping by on machines with 64kb of memory and the idea of gigahertz was only in some engineer's dreams. You had to dial up through the phone line, and even then, the technology was new and untested, making us feel like whoever it was in the first submarine.

The lunatic who talked my folks and me into bringing this addiction into our house told us the educational uses of Citinet were limitless. But, like all used-car salesmen, he never let us look under the hood until we bought and found those promises empty and shallow.

Instead, I found an outlet for my creative writing, a place where my imagination was nurtured and applauded, known only by six letters that made up my handle.

Clicks. Sure, it sounds odd, being referred to as Clicks, but think of the alternative - most user names were set up to be your first initial and your last name, and I couldn't, and still can't, envision being referred to as Chicks for the rest of my life.

Damn those who spawned me into this world for inflicting such a ruthless torture upon me and then later, upon my younger brother.

Oh, hi Mom. Ignore that. The Citinet era took up a good three years of my life, although Citinet folded after only a year or so.

Everyone moved to another system, Chatisfaction, but it was still part of the same groove as far as anyone could tell.

I jackrabbed out of the local scene only a few years after the Citinet empire crumbled beneath its own aspirations. And I stayed clean for many years. No modem tracks on my veins, not until my e-mail habits overtook me, but I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's talk about someone else's

suddenly people vanished from classrooms, workplaces, even social existence.

Instead of living their normal lives, people across the world began spending time playing a virtual game of warriors and dragons, planning their social calendar around their Everquest lives.

Just a few short months ago, one of my old friends told me that, while he would indeed be in town for a few days, he couldn't go out during them.

"Dude, I can't. It'd cut into my Everquest time," he said. "Besides, I'm supposed to meet some friends online. We're going to take down a golem tonight."

He's mad, of course.

We, of the sane portion of the Net, call it EverCrack, and those trapped in its icy grasp are EverCrackers.

There's supposed to be humor in that somewhere, I think.

Even though I avoided EverCrack, I can't deny that I'm getting sucked back into my online addiction. Mine takes shape, however, in the form of eBay, an on-line flea market where people buy and sell.

And we kill sneaky bidders.

For the most part, eBay is composed of honest people

making honest deals, but there are a few shady characters. We often call them snipers.

In the last four minutes of an auc-

tion, many times a user will try to swoop down, bidding \$.50 more than the high bidder in an attempt to snatch it away.

I've lost count of the times I've found myself whispering, "Damn you, jazman87, I'll get you yet," like some b-grade villain with a wax-tipped mustache.

My e-mail habit is just as bad, as I need to tap into my two accounts at least once every five hours. Even in my sleep, I rise like Lazarus from the grave, eyes still closed, and I pantomime the motions at my computer, checking my e-mail, even though I can't read it in my slumber.

Even junk mail becomes a moment of excitement now, simply because it's a symbol, a badge of pride that says I exist in a world I cannot touch, a world made up of little 1s and 0s, and inside that world I have a widespread identity, a claim to fame, like a dog pissing on its territory during its daily walk.

I was here, dammit, and don't forget it.

And yet, I can still pry myself away from the machine for a time. I'm not so owned by my machine that I cannot flee from the tendrils of its control. A day or two can pass, and I'm not twitching, but maybe a little edgy.

I've got it under control. Really. But not all are so lucky.

Have we gone too far? Are we lost in the downward spiral of our own madness and obsession, unable to separate ourselves from our terminals for even a moment, long enough to change our caffeine drips?

Perhaps we should proclaim a national holiday - National Power Down Day. Pull the plug, and interact with others in real life.

Until that day arrives, until the docile information-bloated masses of society are given some kind of electro-shock therapy that kicks them in the ass, then the EverCrackers and eBay snipers will keep the flame alive, the power line on, the circuitry sparking.

Jacked In. Surfed Out. End of line.

The journalism guerrilla typed this on a computer. Reach him at journalisticwarfare@hotmail.com.

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