

Forgotten priorities

University must focus on students, not money



With all the many things going on at a university of this size, the main reason UNL exists seems to have been lost in all the hubbub about fetal tissue research, racial overreactions and greek system scandals. This is a land-grant university supported by the people of

Nebraska to provide a quality education.

My case in point will be a student I've named Samuel.

Samuel was an excellent high school student, earning a National Merit Scholarship. He could have gone to Texas for free and paid taxes on a \$4,000 stipend. He could have gone to Iowa and received a similar deal.

But he came here instead, to the capital of his home state. He could not bring himself to sell his honors for a set price. Instead, he sold himself short.

Sure, he had some scholarships that floated him through his freshman year, but these quickly dried up. He is not afraid of work and already holds two jobs because he does not have someone else making sure he gets an education. He applied to be a resident assistant, but the RHA decided not even to give him an interview after the carousel process. He is the kind of person to go to a party only to give rides home. This is the kind of guy who decides on the ethical nature of a decision before saying yes or no.

He has been working since he was 10 years old, first with multiple paper routes and walking the fields in the summer, then working on his 16th birthday as a dishwasher. He stuck that out for two years before coming to this university. Samuel is not averse to working.

Now Samuel is leaving this place.

You see him walking the streets, smiling and greeting people he doesn't even know, handing out candy and giving blood at the community blood bank. He counsels without pretension, listening to other people's problems. He will listen just as readily to your problem with a boyfriend or girlfriend as he will fix your computer. He doesn't ask anything in return, just your good nature.

Samuel is leaving this university to finish his education elsewhere, for you see, Samuel cannot afford living at a public university. He simply does not have the resources to finish his degree here. When he doesn't come back next semester, he will lose everything he ever worked for in high school. He will lose all the honors that high aptitude test scores brought him. He will lose because of many reasons.

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Samuel I'm sure. Samuel is just like you. You are hard workers, you care about your future and you work two or three part-time jobs.

This university has many needs and many avenues of revenue. It achieves much through private donations. It receives a substantial influx of money from the state government. It has contracts with Pepsi and makes a killing through the athletic department. This university is sacrificing our parking, raising new facilities such as the new honors residence hall and is proposing new buildings. Why not use some of this donation money for more scholarships? Why not serve the youth of this state with an education instead of raising new monoliths?

This university is sacrificing good professors because it refuses to compete with other universities in regards to salary. This university may be losing more students than it needs to be. There are 20,000 students who attend classes here; it would cost only a third of the state's allotment to the

supposed to be doing — learning. That is how to attract prospective academic students.

Samuel has realized he is wasting his time, talents and youth in a place that fails him. Does he feel guilty for taking two free years of tuition? No. He sold his academic honor to help this school win in the numbers game for National Merit. He played their games and jumped through their hoops. He tried to serve the university by being a resident assistant and doing something he does naturally, helping other students. Samuel isn't wanted.

The last bastions of human compassion can be found in the food services, the custodial help and Love Library. Only the library is tantamount as a research library for students. Everywhere else Samuel looks, he sees only the business of the new education; money. If this were an ideal world, Samuel would be recognized for his virtues and appreciated; in fact all the students would be. This is instead a corrupt world, which is the only real lesson this university has taught Samuel.

Where is Samuel going? Not everyone has a private university willing to transfer students over with negligible cost. Samuel is lucky in this respect, but he could have escaped debt totally by not choosing UNL in the first place. Where Samuel is going, the religious right holds the reins, but these people are compassionate and willing to give Samuel his chance to help the com-

munity, to achieve what he cannot here.

You hard-working students who wish to better your lives with the constitutional rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, know that someone is thinking about you. Samuel will think about you but he will no longer be giving out candy. He will no longer be smiling at you on the street. He will be elsewhere, but you who are left, who continue to find your place here at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, will have to decide if this is the place for you.

University to house every one of us.

If you want to offer an incentive for those considering becoming honors students, don't build a new residence hall just to charge more money to live there, but give free room and board. Take away the worry of paying bills and let students do what they are

Many of you empathize with



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La ignorancia es atrevida

Los alumnos que creen saber más que los profesores son fastidiosos

Hay un tipo de estudiantes que siempre pretende saber más que el profesor y que sus compañeros. Se niegan a aceptar que aún les falta mucho por aprender, y creen que el aula de clase es la oportunidad precisa para dar rienda suelta a sus ínfulas de sabelotodo. Lo curioso es que en la mayoría de los casos, estos estudiantes son, si no los más ignorantes, los menos preparados académicamente.

Cuando el profesor está planteando un idea bien argumentada y de interés para el resto de la clase, apare-

cen los sabelotodo intentando contradecir, como sea, lo dicho por el docente. Lo peor es que cuando lo hacen no tienen de donde agarrarse para justificar lo que dicen. Sus fuentes de información son mínimas, mencionan a cualquier autor en voga o pasado de moda, o se basan en su escasa experiencia personal.

Entonces afloran expresiones como: "Lo digo, porque eso le pasó a un amigo mío; eso lo leí el otro día en la Internet;" o "Así somos en mi país."

De inmediato uno se puede dar cuenta de que este tipo de estudiantes no saben nada y de que no se han tomado la molestia de comprobar o ampliar lo poco que conocen. Sus discusiones son de baja categoría, pues no tienen la cordura y la paciencia que exige la academia; hablan como si estuvieran peleando en una cantina; su único interés es el de discutir por discutir creyendo tener la verdad o la última palabra; no reconocen que el profesor podría saber más que ellos, tiene más experiencia y ha leído decenas de

libros relacionados con el tema que enseña.

Por otro lado, en este tipo de alumnos sabelotodo hay un provincianismo lamentable que les hace creer que su país, su ciudad o su pueblo de origen es el ombligo del mundo; todo lo juzgan bajo la óptica de lo que dicen o piensan sus paisanos.

Ese provincianismo mezclado con la ignorancia sobre los temas presentados en clase, los convierte en unos estudiantes torpes ante los demás.

Hay que saber que uno viene a la universidad a aprender de los profesores y de los compañeros. A los estudiantes todavía nos falta recorrer mucho camino para alcanzar a aquellos que con un grado de doctor intentan mostrarnos el camino hacia el conocimiento.

Los que creen que ya saben mucho, vayáanse para sus provincias a impresionar a sus amigos y familiares, porque aquí están pasando por ignorantes, igualados y atrevidos.

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