

## Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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### Not hopeless

#### UNL needs to take time to search for new leader

A popular catch phrase has emerged to describe UNL's status since the exit of James Moeser.

We've been referred to as a "headless university."

The phrase may seem fitting, considering the large number of administrative offices that have been vacated for one reason or another over the last six months.

But the university's best and brightest staff and faculty members have stepped up to the task of temporarily filling these positions as search committees assemble and the positions are gradually filled.

We may be a headless university, but we're not running around with our head cut off.

Some around the state have wondered why NU President Dennis Smith didn't work faster to form a search committee this summer, after

*If we want to get the best candidates, it may take a while to search them out. In the meantime, we are still in the hands of capable leadership.*

Moeser departed for the tobacco fields of North Carolina.

Smith promptly responded that he wanted to wait for the results of a study that examined why UNL's administrators come and leave so quickly.

But even so, we shouldn't be in such a hurry to fill the campus' most important position.

It took the University of North Carolina eight months to complete their search process. Moeser even turned down the UNC search committee's initial pleas to apply.

If we want to get the best candidates, it may take a while to search them out.

In the meantime, we are still in the hands of capable leadership.

Since Moeser left, Harvey Perlman has been keeping the chancellor's seat warm — and so far, he's done a good job.

He scrapped the alma mater, which may seem like a small decision compared with those that come across the desk of the chancellor.

But the move showed he is responsive to the opinions of the state's constituents and the student body.

Of course, we aren't ready to give Perlman our stamp of approval yet. He hasn't really been tested in the interim.

He will likely face many more challenging scenarios that will prove his worth as the university's leader. How he handles those challenges will determine whether he is suited for the job.

Perlman should realize that if he wants to be considered for the job, he must distinguish himself as interim chancellor. To do that, he must not approach the job as a caretaker. He must be a leader.

But the university cannot rely on Perlman to lead the institution into the next century.

We don't even know that he wants the job.

We should be searching the nation for the person who will continue to strive for the culture of excellence Moeser promoted while he was here. But don't forget to consider what's already here in Nebraska.

We should take our time doing this. In the meantime, we can test Perlman out and see if he's up to the job — if he wants it.

#### Editorial Board

Sarah Baker, Bradley Davis, Josh Funk, Matthew Hansen, Samuel McKewon, Dane Stickney, Kimberly Sweet

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#### Editorial Policy

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### Virginity's bleeding channels

Beauty scares me. I know of it, but I don't know it. I look in the mirror and my features seem indistinct to me today, fuzzy by my own naked eye. I inch closer and closer to my own reflection until my nose is touching the glass, and still what they see, what you see, is momentarily an unsolved enigma in my mind.



petaluma watson

There was a scene once when I was 17, in Seattle. A guy, short and skinny, kinda phulumphing toward me in this awkward gait, did a triple take on me. I had my hair up, you see.

And this awful tragic thing happens when he's looking, knowing there's no sexual thirst to be quenched, but leering for one last second, to sear my image into the back of his mind. His knee clips the corner of one of those newspaper stands for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

And I hear the thud, and I can hear the bone and I can hear him fall, because he's in pain, and it sounds serious, like a cracked kneecap and I hear him toss out a cheap four-letter phrase and I can hear someone stopping and I can feel the red-hot embarrassment from 20 feet away, now 21, now 22.

And the last thing I was about to do was turn around.

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I'm a weekday virgin. There was one time, in a Denver hotel, when an assistant concierge, a glorified bellboy with rotting teeth and booming pectorals, nearly stole it away from me.

I called late, for some lemon Jell-O, and he was there, smiling weakly to hide his big brown gopher chops.

And I thought, at that moment, there it would be, my Monday morning innocence shattered amidst the darkened hallways and mini-soaped accommodations of out-of-town living. Then I faked an orgasm and tried to rush him out, after which he tossed a tantrum as he, booming bellboy, hadn't yet received his taffy treat for the aborted tryst.

He looked at me, penis hanging out, half limp and getting deader, and pointed at my thighs, still spread wide open and tinged with tiny pock marks of fat. Hair draped everywhere on my face; I could hardly see him.

"You've got bad legs," he said. "Hail damage."

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I call Jayme to talk to her about the assignment in my Shakespeare class. We're reading Henry V.

I'm in silk pajamas. I've got a pimple on my arm so I roll up my sleeve and pop it to finger the goopy substance. I wipe it on my pillow. But not before I use it to moisturize a dry spot on my lower cheek.



Delan Lonowski/DN

And I ask Jayme what's up and she prattles on about this new boyfriend she has and her two cups of multi-name coffee she had for a pick-me-up for the let-me-down of swimming pasta she swamped down for lunch.

Jayme is my friend. She's a sweet-natured asscow. She bravely sports a single, tiny fold of glob around her tum-tum, typically concealed by the latest fashion of the millisecond.

We talk about my tomorrow wardrobe. And I tell her, I just do not know. Will it be my yellow but-tercup dress or my playful lavender outfit?

She mentions a compromise of sheer genius — my ensemble wear of subdued maize with teeny-weeny violet patterns hardly discernible unless you're right up on me. Sorta like an optical illusion. sorta like me

But I hit a mental hiccup and wonder — maybe my plum outfit is better for a day like tomorrow. I have two plums — a wild plum and a blackberry that might well be the same thing under a cloudy sky. I have a dress that is opalescent plum, and it shimmers one color, then another, like the rainbow.

I think about this in silence, thanking Jayme for her sensible tutelage (lying fashionably is a woman's God-given gift) and allow her to prattle more on this boy.

Some guy, I think. Two free finger lubes to any girl who can guess if her new man will sport a dodgy marijuana necklace like the sweet bo-hunk country rebel he must be.

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In the word-filthy supermarket they call a modern bookstore there are rows and rows of how-tos, what-ifs, secrets to, 10 rules to, ways to and means to a happier end for your home, your children, your parents, your pets, your business, your brain and your checking account.

With a large enough library shelf and a valued customer card, you can secure an energy-saving existence.

All these books, with their glossy covers and snazzy simple text designs, are the new modern works of written art, the CEO version of literature.

The sentences are neat and concise and in second person. *Learn how to organize the workplace for maximum, effective teamwork. Become skilled in management-related fields such as problem-solving and efficiency training. Streamline the nature of how office products disperse amongst coworkers. Make a calendar of sharing time with your teen. Find the proper diet for your parakeet. Make sure to caulk all upstairs windows to prevent a winter draft.*

I hear stock traders. I hear how to get ahead without even failing! I hear 85 percent of casual readers are asscows like Jayme or babes like me, so we want release. We want to drift away. We work now. We don't want to think or read complex sentences.

We want valium, in words.

We want light, airy, trite formulaic plots.

We want to relate.

We want Cute.

We want punctuation.

The ..... sanctifies our channeled existence. It's easier to flip that way. To go from bloody violence to public broadcasting with a push of the button. As if you actually thought you could do that — end one sentence with a period and start the next line with a new paragraph, new thought, new set of facts to devour, new 20-minute lesson in life for your tape player.

As if that's how life worked. As if nothing stayed with you. As if they really were just words on a page.

Is that what you think?

Because my picture bleeds from one channel to the next.

Jayme never stops breathing. And so she never hears me. She just prattles on, about the boyfriend, while I subject myself to a 15-minute self-gratifying single-finger massage, thinking of the bellboy and his half-limp penis drawing its trunk in my direction.

It is by no coincidence that her enchanted sigh regarding the new prince meets my climaxing groan, breath for breathless breath. All is well again. It is, after all, 2:37 on a Sunday afternoon.

And Jayme, she's moved on now, to talking about her mother, which makes me think of my mother, which makes my head throb uncontrollably, which makes me want to shrink into a secret, silent universe where daughters don't have a Nadia and penises stay dead. Where sentences don't end and emotions have dimmed to the point of transparency.

### Nature trek brings wild into focus

I usually vacation in the Rockies, but now find myself amidst their stubby elders in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. I already note the differences as Greg and I unload our packs from Dave's pickup.

Everything's impossibly green. More varieties of trees grow here than in Europe. And the humid air refuses to accept our sweat. We haven't even started hiking, and I'm soaking my shirt through. A very late start means we won't reach our backcountry campsite until after dark. We'd best start our five-mile climb.

I try to clear my mind and focus on the forest, but distractions creep back in.

Here comes one now.

A group exiting the forest hails us, asking if we've seen the timber rattlesnake that was on the trail earlier. No, we've seen neither snake nor sun. Sunset comes early to forested slopes.

Our well-worn trail is woven with gnarled roots. In the falling light, it seems to be threaded with copperheads and rattlers instead. A display in the Visitors Center reports that some claim copperheads smell like cucumbers. I wonder how I'd ever notice amidst the largest tossed salad of biodiversity east of the Rockies.

Daylight's fading. Brown and green drain away into gray tones, as contrast replaces color. Our calves carry us across the fanged forest floor. We march to the sawing song of the cicada.

Crack!  
The mischord breaks our step. All three of us see a quadruped shadowrace through the ravine before vanishing.

Now the tales begin. We tell of X-Files, Blair Witch and the fatal bear attack in these woods three moons ago.

A ghostly pallor filters through canopy skylights. Shadows lengthen. Outlines diffuse and blend together. Your eyes begin to play tricks on you.

I look back and imagine the Yosemite National Park murderer has moved east. That the bobbing light now rapidly closing in is held by a hand other than the one that uncorked the bottle last light.

We all know that the danger of starting the car exceeds that of hiking any national park, but "ghost stories" of wilderness woe are entertaining. After all, everyone who assumes risk does so amidst the unfamiliar, not the commonplace.

We soon run low on "When Animals Attack" material and pass time prioritizing the park's greatest dangers, using behavior as our standard. They are:

Oneself (Exhibit A: climbing waterfalls is commonplace here) Others: Wild boars. Bears. Snakes.

It is now pitch dark. Starlight doesn't survive the stabbing stalks of suffocating treetops.

I can't believe I brought two half-dead flashlight batteries and no spares. I'm usually a careful packer and prepared for numerous contingencies, but somehow forgot the obvious this time around. It's called "simple shock."

Suddenly, the inky curtain parts, allowing us to hear the surge of living water. Backcountry campsites are almost always near water. We must be near.

In confirmation, a couple pair of electric eyes flash to life and probe us.

"Y'all are arrivin' a little late, ain't ya?"

Before us, atop a too-little tarp, lies a shirtless six-pack of students. Their neat row invites comparison to a string of battle-field casualties.

"Are the mosquitoes bad here?" I ask.

"Nah, they ain't bad."

But the adjacent tent disagrees.

Through sealed seams it replies: "Unless you ask the girls."

We withdraw a ways and sup on summer sausage and cheese — our first meal since breakfast. However, that's nothing compared to what the Christian group we just met has planned. After tonight, they plan to spend the next two days fasting and tentless as part of a spiritual exercise.

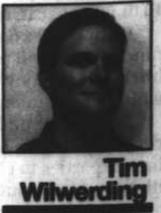
I admire the motive, but question the method. Wilderness isn't the ideal place to go wanting for food and shelter. The next two days will prove to be wet, but they don't know that.

We goof around before retiring for the night. You know, take turns hoisting each other 15 feet up with the steel bear cables, that sort of thing.

We, too, choose to sleep beneath the stars. I feel spiders crawl across my skin. I've never encountered this many. Spiders seem a fitting symbol for the Smoky Mountains. Gazing into the heavens, I note how the wispy fog webs together the surrounding Appalachian ridges. In their passing, the mists draw a cataract across the sky.

Similarly clouded are the reasons why this August eve doesn't recall goals set in May. Summer's coming to the end of its trail. If the journey is more important than the destination, maybe I should review how I've chosen to travel now that the endpoint looms large.

That can wait. For now my presence in a wooded wonderland among friends is achievement enough as I fade into the forgetfulness of sleep.



Tim Wilwerding