

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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It takes more

UNL must pay up to become the 'Harvard of the Plains'

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's mandate requires, in some ways, for it to be all things to all people.

But the mandate doesn't require it to be cheap.

For too long, UNL has touted itself as a bargain-basement school.

Unfortunately, it's not possible to run a cut-rate university without its academic reputation suffering a cut-rate fate.

Gov. Mike Johanns at a higher education forum Wednesday warned the university it wouldn't receive a funding increase. The forum highlighted the need for students to dig deeper into their pockets to receive a quality education.

If they don't, academic programs could be cut, star professors could continue the fast-track out the door, and Help Wanted signs could become even more commonplace around administrative offices.

The forum comes on the heels of a recently announced top-to-bottom evaluation of every NU class offered.

The evaluation will rank programs based on nine criteria, including how well they fit the university's mission, how many students are enrolled and how they serve the community, nation and world.

Administrators won't explicitly say it, but the evaluation is a thinly veiled attempt to weed out classes that either aren't good enough, or aren't attracting the number of students to be profitable.

This newspaper has taken the stance that classes and programs at UNL shouldn't be cut because it's the land-grant, flagship state institution.

If programs are to remain unscathed, though, they have to be good. And to be good, they have to be well-funded.

Some will argue that, as a land-grant school, UNL needs to be affordable to all Nebraskans.

While we agree prospective students shouldn't be priced out of attending UNL, if the state's flagship school truly wants to get back to its roots, when at its founding, people called it the "Harvard of the Plains," it certainly can't charge community-college prices.

Besides, two other schools exist in the University of Nebraska system in Omaha and Kearney that can offer academic homes to students who couldn't afford UNL tuition.

Because as a national research university, UNL has to compete with other national research universities - and its tuition should be in line with its peers.

A boon of extra tuition money should be spent wisely, though.

Not only do the hard sciences, on which attention has been focused recently in the push for research, need funding, but the liberal arts - arguably a comprehensive university's core - can't be ignored.

With new tuition revenue, students should expect professors in every classroom - not teaching assistants.

Students should expect cutting-edge classes taught by people who are the tops in their fields.

Students should expect the list of classes offered to grow, and not to shrink as it now is.

And even though it might hurt the pocketbook a bit, students should expect the value of a University of Nebraska-Lincoln education to soar.

Editorial Board

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

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Submit material to: Daily Nebraskan, 20 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St. Lincoln, NE 68588-0448. E-mail: letters@unlinfo.unl.edu.

Editorial Policy

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WITH THE FOCUS SHIFTING TOWARD SCIENCE & RESEARCH AND AWAY FROM HUMANITIES, THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA IS PROUD TO OFFER SEVERAL NEW FIELDS OF STUDY TO FURTHER DISTINGUISH OURSELVES FROM OTHER UNIVERSITIES.

NEW PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

- AIR CONDITIONING, HEATING, AND REFRIGERATION TECHNOLOGY
- DIESEL TECHNOLOGY
- MOTORCYCLE AND ATV TECHNOLOGY
- AUTO COLLISION REPAIR AND TECHNOLOGY
- MACHINE TOOL TECHNOLOGY
- NONDESTRUCTIVE TESTING TECHNOLOGY

AND WE ARE ESPECIALLY PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE OPENING OF:



THE A.G. EDWARDS HONORS PROGRAM IN WELDING AND METALLURGY

Neal Obermeyer/DN

All eyes on those with no discipline

I sit in seat 179. I used to sit in 180, but I skipped class twice and couldn't remember which seat was mine. So I picked one. I prefer the back row. I take better notes there. I am more comfortable.



Emily Moran

The lecture class is three hours long on Monday nights. I skip sometimes. Sometimes I go.

I am not a perfect student. In fact, I might be one of the worst. I don't have perfect attendance or organized notes. I go to class when I plan to take notes and listen. I know how it works. I have been here four years.

I was in class Monday night. I was tired, but I was there. I had a notebook open. I had a pen. I listened to the lecture. I was quiet. Some of you weren't so quiet.

Some of the rudest students are in this class. And some sit in the same row. I can see you. I know what you do. And I am embarrassed for you.

You should be ashamed of how you act in class. You are a constant disruption to other students, including me. This is class, not the Peach Pit.

You think you're so smart for sitting in the back row. The professor might not hear or see you back there. You can screw around for three hours without losing points. You can be popular.

You read Cosmopolitan, People and Jane. You smile and use your eyes to talk about so-and-so. If that doesn't work, you write notes about it. Because this is important, and it can't wait until after class.

Then you pass a crossword puzzle around. Not just pass, but slide it 6 feet across the floor back and forth to each other. You fill in a word and pass it on again.

Do you share the same brain? Is it too hard to do a crossword puzzle alone? Or just too independent?

Independent \in-de-pen-dent\ adj. (1) not requiring or relying on something else (2) not looking to others for one's opinions or for guidance in conduct (3) doing your own crossword puzzle.

Unless you were the person who paid attention just enough to mock the music, I assume most of you missed the video shown in class.

The biographical video was about "Pink." She was a superstar for stunt journalism and looked fabulous in pink. She was 23 years old when she reported from inside an insane asylum.

Did you miss that part? She was one of the first to do investigative reporting and the asylum was a hard assignment. She should have tried stunt journalism in a class such as this one. She could've sat in seat 180.

She had a knack for putting herself center stage and then writing about it. She challenged Jules Verne's record in world travel.

Did you miss that part? She traveled around the world in 72 days, six hours, 11 minutes and 14 seconds. She even stopped to have tea with Jules Verne.

She poisoned his tea with ragweed. He choked and died. She stole his cat named Simon and sailed off shouting: "I am a stunt journalist for the Daily Nebraskan!"

I lied. She didn't sail off with a cat, instead it was a monkey. His name was ... not Simon. But I guess you wouldn't have known that if not for me. Or the class notes I took.

Student \stu-dent\ n (1) one who attends a school (2) one who studies (3) one who respects the instructor and the students enough to not discuss impertinent information during class.

I sit in seat 179. See you in class.

34 dive (on 2!) all thrown up

Dead air is breathing again; the spores can't be seen. My mind clutter splits in two. Hard and in singular pose. I am thinking of Calgary.

I watched her a night before, rising above her opponent, then coming down upon the ball ... OK, two days ago then, really, because time for me is condensing itself.

Wrapping itself on top of minute after minute. Even between the minutes.



Petaluma Watson

(The poetry classroom is not pear but peach, and the pert blonde rival enters.)

I close my eyes and the clutter zooms me to her eyes again, like I can close my eyes and it's Calgary Calgary Calgary like it's already class time.

But when I try and shoot over and through Sunday, the wall builds and stops me, perching itself over my head while it unfolds. I am on the grape couch, stealing single finger probe or two while I watch a reality show.

(There is this girl in my poetry class, and she peers across the room at me, smiling cheap and weak, knowing that, she has a rival, in this room, there is a rival.)

Nadia, oh my sweet Nads, is in the kitchen, making smelly beans to unload into the toilet a few hours later.

My mother is a serious, professional bulimic. Bulimics have their own tackle box, their own bait. The hook is deep in their stomach, a flip-switch muscle that shoots the food to the top like a geyser and then down, down, down into the bowl.

Bulimics notice things. Calories. Fat grams. That little swirl of white frosting hiding under the plate that will finish off the binge. Ticks on the tape measure. Itty-bitty fault lines on their face they think might be remnants of a late-night Ho-Ho raid from last week.

(It comes to her turn to read, her pants perfectly coiled, her blouse hanging on a handful of smooth Caucasian breast, she pushes up her glasses, her frame erecting in the chair to a straight position and somehow she's all bothered that I've come - I never come - and so this poem that she will read, somehow it has to do in reference to her looks, and since I trump her, trump, trump, trump, she's a bit frazzled, but she'll do it for the sake of doing it, the rabbit backed into a corner, no way out, no way now.)

They remember things, like when the store clerk told them they have fat fingers or their look was regal - not modern or chic or whatever catch phrase adequately satisfied their idea of sexy, slim and safe.

To be a great bulimic, to be Nadia, my Nads, you have to be smart, organized and like to live in a septic tank. You have to own an air deodorizer, accented follow-up squirt of mountain spring scent. My clothes, and my sister's, reeked of it. Not to conceal the smell, if there is any - 2000 Flushes Purple took care of that - but to perpetuate the feeling of static, my Nadia says, to make it sterile. To create the perfect bulimic environment.

(She reads: Evaporation, condensation, forming as clouds that haze my mind. Blue, white, gray then darker.

A cold, clear, delicate crystal falls from the sky, lands on a leaf.

Where are you sunshine?

The droplet slides down the bright green vegetation, revealing rips, tears, nature's imperfections.

A drop hits my arm, rolls down.

No blemishes, no bumps or crevasses. Just magnifying my perfection.

Sunshine knitting through the clouds.

And as it ends, bulbs of tears pop and form at her eyes' outer edges.)

She throws up amid perfect white porcelain. No throw rugs. No wet towels spread out for catching wayward shower water to kneel upon. She wants virginal white, each puke as pure as Christmas snow. Often, she doesn't kneel at all, just hunches in a crouch.

(The room goes blank and my gaze shifts to jock, who's next, he's next to more jocks, who shuffle and laugh as he hunches over his masterpiece:

The lights on, crowd hyped, in the huddle, I am psyched. QB says 34 dive on two, I'll make these guys black and blue. Lining up, I hear the cheers, how I love the glory years. The ball is hiked, I'm like a train, ready to inflict some pain. The pigskin I have tucked away, thinking just of hitting pay-dirt. I follow Mike, who's blocking lead, I'm waiting for my burst of speed. I see the 'backer get close, I give the old Heisman pose. One more man left to beat, I make a dive with lightning feet. I get hit, dragged to the ground. I see the ref signal Touchdown! Under the pile, I smell the grass, knowing that we kicked some ass.)

My Nadia is impeccable. When she makes a dart to the dish, she returns without a hair misplaced. She wears her hair back, tied tight into a bun, so as not to impede her puke's path. Bulimics plan. They think. The consumption of food, and its exiting procedure, become the centerpiece of daily habit.

(It comes to me. Rival looks and, pale blue eyes timid. Jock sneers and curls his lip upward, his mind in my crotch. I read:

So I've got a bulimic mother and the only thing I want to do is sit down with this volleyball player I've become

obsessed with plant my face right on her aureole and suck and suck and suck make her experiences mine and I'm not even gay

"Hmmmmm ..." the teacher says, "I'm not sure that's really a poem," she says.

"Well, sure it is," I say, dramatically flailing it in the dead class wind. "It's broken up into stanzas."

"It's not really much of a concept," she says. "More like a few sentences strung together for effect."

Of course, this is right. I am no poet. This does not stop me from shifting blame squarely on rival and jock, thus establishing myself as above and beyond them, regardless of my useless ditty.

Rival goes: "Awhhh!"

Jock turns red and squeals out: "You fucking bitch."

"Oh, and so what are ya gonna do?" I shoot back. "Not going to invite me to your 30-man suck off train Saturday night?"

"here's bulimic maintenance - Nadia drinks melted Crisco directions: heat, melt, let stand for 12 minutes, consume slowly and gargle to rebuild her rotting food canal because fat pads her wounds. Nadia is perfect. The pioneer.

Because what does puking make you feel like? It makes you feel like wanting to puke some more. And not my vision of anything - not of Calgary, not of Calvin, not of the teary rival, nor the perfect sunny moment when I find the right words to fill the dead space that fingers the back of my brain like Calgary twaddled her swish-swish pants, can't stop Nadia's maintenance of bulimia. Or my maintenance of Nadia. Perfection, you know well, is not easy to achieve.

And the jock has this white hot glare at me, the rival can't look at me, and I'm more alive than ever, energy coursing through me, my crappy little non-poem arriving at the center of attention because I am at the center of attention.

Nadia throws up chicken globules. I throw up my dignity.