

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

Editor: Sarah Baker
Opinion Page Editor: Jake Glazeski
Managing Editor: Bradley Davis

Call to action

Series should inspire objective self-examination

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln was exposed this week as a "mediocre" institution of higher learning.

That should come as no surprise: For months we've been barraged with data and studies that indicate UNL ranks only marginally in the realm of academia.

Now, in a series of articles and accompanying analyses by the Omaha World-Herald, it's confirmed once again - though the Cornhuskers may rule on the football field, our degrees are not worth as much on the academic gridiron.

Anyone interested in the university's development should pay attention to The World-Herald's series. It identifies deeply rooted problems that have stifled the university's growth.

Nebraskans, proud of their state and university, can sometimes be defensive of institutions held dear. Now is not the time for blind allegiances, though.

While UNL prides itself on offering tuition that is affordable, it's become clear that its bargain-basement fees are simply too low to support a quality school.

The series shows that for UNL to improve, it needs to be examined with a removed eye - void of the divisiveness that can pit academic programs against each other.

The series also highlighted several issues it said were key to UNL's academic reputation:

■ Compared to its 10 peer institutions, UNL was last among its peers in terms of tuition support - creating what The World-Herald said was a \$26 million annual shortfall.

While UNL prides itself on offering affordable tuition, it's become clear that its fees are simply too low to support a quality school.

The NU Board of Regents, which has recently suggested a tuition hike may be coming, must discuss the issue frankly with all Nebraskans.

The regents should set a new rate that, while remaining fair to students, is more in line with major research universities.

■ UNL's agricultural endeavors need refocusing, given the dramatic shift from family farming to corporate farming.

While ag college enrollment and ag food production have dropped since 1980, UNL's ag budget continues to rise. This, while UNL continues to offer its agricultural research and know-how at no cost - a practice the university said is insisted upon by the state's farmers, but one that was abandoned by other leading ag schools.

While the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources should continue working to save the family farm, it must also recognize the reality - and allocate its resources accordingly - that corporate farming is the new wave of agriculture. The farming companies should pay for the research from which they benefit.

■ Because UNL has limited resources - regardless of whether administrators raise tuition or research revenue increases - certain top programs must be emphasized when allocating those resources.

While a major research university must maintain a comprehensive academic offering, some stand-out areas could be strengthened with an injection of money or faculty brain power. That's why the prioritization process that will identify UNL's strongest program is so important.

The prioritization, along with all discussions about UNL's future, must be approached with the same dispassionate, realistic tone: Only then can this university truly achieve greatness.

Editorial Board

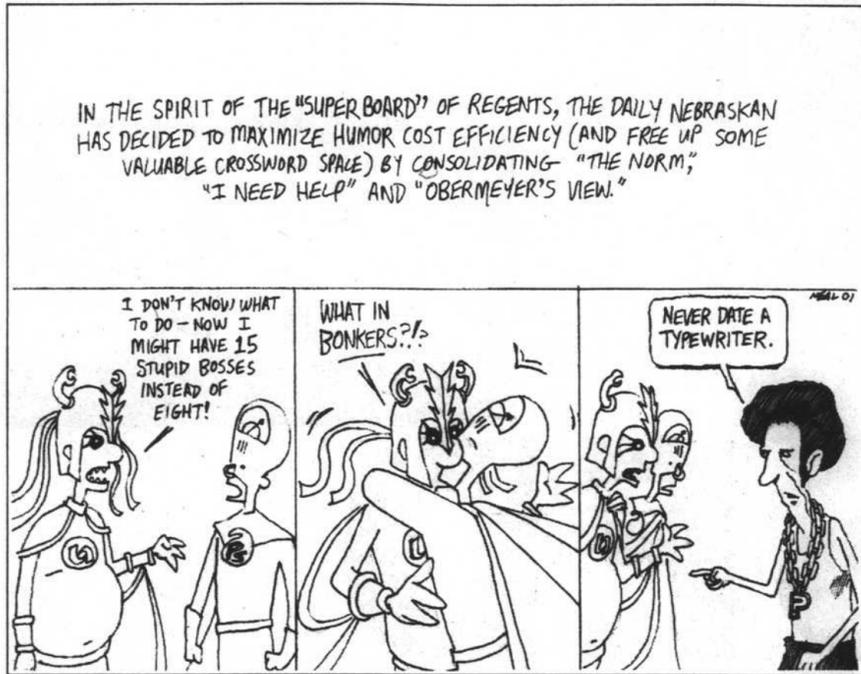
Sarah Baker, Bradley Davis, Jake Glazeski, Matthew Hansen, Samuel McKewon, Kimberly Sweet

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Editorial Policy

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Backyard Gypsy's Forecast

Greetings, my fellow scoundrels.

It seems we are all gathered together to harass each other for yet another semester. I know you are just as excited as I am. To aid you in your personal growth and self actualization quest, I have taken the painstaking trouble to peer into my crystal ball and look into all of your miserable, lousy futures. I accept big bills only - nothing less than a fifty, you cheapskates.

Capricorn (Dec. 23-Jan. 22): You lucky duck. Put down your guitar and get off that street corner immediately! You've parried the gaze of the gods long enough. Whether you are cold or bold, whether you are going places or going nowhere, no matter. Believe me, the mighty gods have searched far and wide for a better sign to take us all into the new year, but guess what? They failed. Therefore, you are the Brand New Year. Work it baby!

Aquarius (Jan. 23-Feb. 22): You have no clue what you are talking about. You are the guy that stands around at the construction site telling people, "Nah, don't do that, why'd ya have to go and do that? Put it back." And, "Here's what you need to do..." You exude an annoying whine every time you open your mouth. People actually hide when they hear you coming. I have no advice for you because you wouldn't listen anyway.

Pisces (Feb. 23-March 22): Your code word this semester is *motivation*. Avoid the coffee house at all costs. Those people will still be there ten years from now and so will you, if you don't get your butt in gear. You love to make day-long quips about the travesties of your day. These can go on for hours, but, while everyone will always listen to the ultimate charmer, you will never get a damn thing done with your mouth in full gear. Try Scotch tape if you must.

Aries (March 23-April 22): You are a self-absorbed high voltage achiever whose lackadaisical cover may fool fair-weather friends, but those closest to you know that deep down, therein lies a "brooder." My advice to you: Rent "Risky Business." Don some shades. Dance in your skivvies and realize that, "Sometimes you just have to say, 'What the f***!'"

Taurus (April 23-May 22): Heartless wench and self-absorbed jerk are upgraded terms for your character. So you've got opinions? Well, don't we all. What's really funny is that



Yasmin McEwen

you think the rest of the world wants to hear what you have to say. I would be willing to bet that George W. Bush is a Taurus. Why so? Because he insists on talking about things he knows nothing about. I would take the bull by the horns, but that might only confuse you.

Gemini (May 23-June 22): "Wasn't Me," is your theme song, and for you the grass is always greener on the other side, because you are the type who will go over there to find out. Commitment dodges you like the plague and it takes everything you've got to show up on time.

Cancer (June 23-July 22): Can you say codependent? That's right, you thrive off others' darkest days. Their agony defines your purpose: nursemaid. Give up the cause. It's time to start living your own life! Did I mention that my favorite food is crab? I love to pound those shells to smithereens with my mallet. BAM! BAM! The meat is so tender inside. Maybe it's time you weren't so tender anymore.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22): You are the worst of the Prima Donnas. Get over yourself already. Almost all Leo's suffer from extreme chronic halitosis. What does that mean, exactly? It means this: You emit a baneful odor from your mouth whenever you speak. It is only because people like you so much that they refrain from telling you.

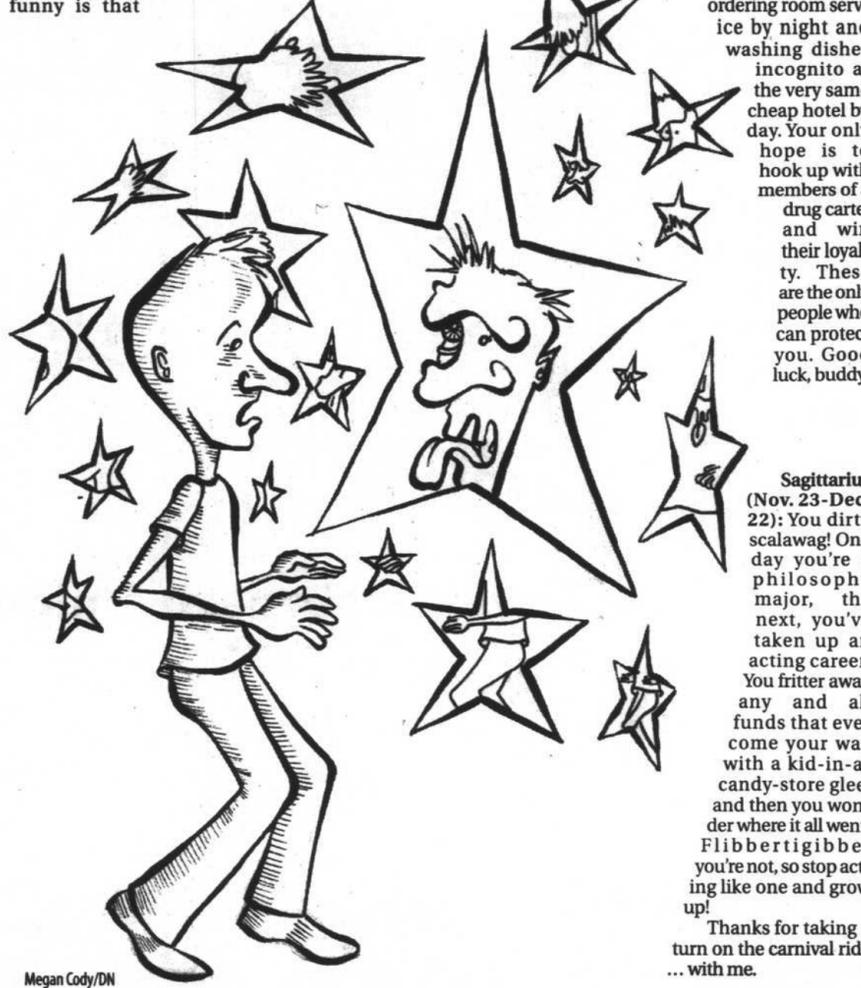
Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You filthy malingerer! All you do is lie around your dorm room and analyze the patterns of the trains coming through the yard in the pre-dawn hours. You win already, you are an analytical god. So stop hi-jacking the lecture hour by sitting in the back of the class and shouting out, "Why?" or "What do you mean by that?" every other ten minutes. Soon your professors will put a bounty on your head.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): People like to tell you all of their problems because you sit there and listen patiently, and all the while, a smug little gleam in your eye glows bright. Inside you are thinking, "Dear God, thank you for making me so balanced and perfect. I hope I am never like this person that I am listening to right now." Let's be honest, sometimes you can be a bit full of yourself. It's okay, though, you are still loved in Belgium.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22): You are not paranoid. They're really after you. The only way to survive is to hightail it to Mexico and hole yourself up in some cheap hotel with only your laptop to join you. You will spend the rest of your life on the Internet ordering room service by night and washing dishes incognito at the very same cheap hotel by day. Your only hope is to hook up with members of a drug cartel and win their loyalty. These are the only people who can protect you. Good luck, buddy.

Sagittarius (Nov. 23-Dec. 22): You dirty scalawag! One day you're a philosophy major, the next, you've taken up an acting career. You fritter away any and all funds that ever come your way with a kid-in-a-candy-store glee, and then you wonder where it all went. Flibbertigibbet you're not, so stop acting like one and grow up!

Thanks for taking a turn on the carnival ride ... with me.



Megan Cody/DN

From Beach Boys to blackouts

A time comes in every crisis where a critical ethical decision must be made.

When a criminal chooses reform - or more crime. When an addict chooses sobriety - or more drugs. When the government chooses to help - or to hurt.

That time is quickly coming for the people of California.

I suppose that California was, once upon a time, a land of opportunity and unlimited dreams. As it is now, it's more of a festering wound, where dangerously evil ideas take root and attempt to infect the nation.

Oh, I could go on and on. Whole reading, whole math, bilingual education, city-level restrictions on private businesses. ... Granted, California did not and does not have the exclusive claim to these liberally-minded experiments, but it is in California where these ideas took root and gained a somewhat viable status in the public eye.

The latest example is in the realm of power. Real power. Electricity.

"The government ... has issued a proclamation asking the people to be patient and put up with hardships just a little longer."

In my mind, California is a mythical place occupying the space delineated by the Beach Boys and shots of the Hollywood sign. I know there is more, much more, to the large and varied state than these simple stereotypes, but that does not stop the irony of recent power outages there.

It's been a problem all over the West Coast, actually, where temperatures have recently dipped and demands for power have increased beyond available supply. Editorial writers encouraged readers to throw another blanket on the bed, or to wear another sweater - I'm surprised they didn't suggest warm fires and fur coats carved from the hide of the Woolly Mammoth. Turn the thermostat down to 60, 55, 50 degrees. ... The cold, after all, is just an illusion.

It's worse, though, in California. The Southern California Edison Corporation, among other power companies, recently has stated that it will go bankrupt if it is not allowed to charge more than the rate it is currently charging its customers. The rates were frozen in 1996.

Bankruptcy. A future blacker than California's homes.

"I want you to see the exact picture of what it is that you propose to enter - before you decide whether anything can justify your entering it."

Oddly enough, the whole debacle is being celebrated as the failure of "deregulation." I'm not certain how an industry can be really "deregulated" when price controls are in place and government officials - called regulators - still hold the whips over the industry.

"Nothing exists but contradictions."

But what really stings are the solutions proposed. One of the first solutions involved a nation-wide rate cap on power. That solution was thrown clean out. I suppose sane people still work in the government, after all.

Not to say that the solutions enacted have credibility or even moral rectitude. Bill Richardson, the reigning Secretary of Energy, has commanded that other utilities sell SCECorp. energy to make up for its shortages.

The utilities involved aren't sure they'll be paid.

"Confidential ... Emergency ... Priority ... Essential need certified by office of Top Co-ordinator ..."

It's an interesting scene, as a state scurries like a rat to escape the consequences of its own actions - as if causality could be diverted.

You'd wonder how long this Disneyland of a state could keep this up, where the very pipelines which feed their ignorant gluttony are sewn at the seams with makeshift bonas of cardboard and chewed leaves. Its citizens seem largely oblivious that an event horizon which bends and sucks in logic encircles and engulfs them - and it's getting bigger.

"The inhabitants of New York had never had to be aware of the weather. ... Now, facing the gusts of snow that came sweeping down the narrow streets, people felt in dim terror that they were the temporary intruders and that the wind had the right-of-way."

These words are from Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*. Rand was a crackpot, by some accounts. But her words are proving horrifically prophetic.

And the day will come, when we must choose either to follow this descent into a renewed Dark Age or to right ourselves and find the future.

I shouldn't say that. That day is today.



Jake Glazeski