

## Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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## Two-timing

### Satellite campus promises to create unwanted redundancy

At a time when the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is under increasing pressure to bolster its flagging academic reputation, news that a state college is opening a branch a few blocks from UNL's main campus should be disheartening to taxpayers.

Peru State, one of three state colleges, will open a satellite campus at the Energy Square building at 11th and O streets.

The college says it chose the downtown Lincoln site for its technology degree program because of an existing partnership with Southeast Community College, which also has a branch location in the energy building.

The Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, charged by the Legislature to ensure Nebraska institutions of higher education follow specific missions – and don't duplicate each other – committed a serious error when it approved Peru's plans to open a campus so near to UNL's.

Though UNL doesn't offer a technology program similar to the one Peru will offer downtown, Peru's president, Ben Johnson, said the small college aims to eventually start programs in business and teacher education at 11th and O.

Not only will this pit Peru State against UNL come student recruitment time, but it will also pit the two institutions against each other at the state tax coffers.

It makes no sense to force taxpayers to fund two institutions doing the same thing within several blocks of each other – especially in a state with a tax base as small as Nebraska's.

Peru touts its partnership with Southeast Community College, in which students can take classes at the community college and then transfer to the state college, as a reason for its new downtown program.

In fact, Peru administrators said, the state college already shares a building with Southeast at 88th and O streets.

But this student-sharing program could directly compete with UNL's deferred admission program by which students who don't meet the university's admissions requirements can attend a community college to take care of the basics before they come to UNL to earn their degrees.

That's not to say UNL, a national research university, is in direct competition with Peru State, aschool with a less-comprehensive mission.

But perhaps Peru should stick to its own territory – a small town in southeast Nebraska – and stay out of the university's back yard.

After all, this is the same school that several years ago, faced with a sagging student population, was approached with closing.

Some lawmakers said Peru, the first college to open in Nebraska, was no longer fulfilling its mission and had become a waste of money.

Students could get the same education at other state institutions, lawmakers argued.

Peru students and administrators fought hard to stay open, and its expansion to downtown Lincoln is a ploy to boost student enrollment. Unfortunately, Peru's desperate tactics to prove its relevancy are coming at taxpayers' expense.

And the college president's flippant attitude toward the expansion smacks of disrespect for UNL administrators and state taxpayers, both of whom are engaged in efforts to improve the state's university on a limited budget.

"The university just doesn't want to compete with poor little ol' Peru," he said.

No, Mr. Johnson, it's just that UNL administrators are mindful of the fact that state taxpayers don't want to pay for a school on every block.

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Neal Obermeyer/DN

## Action in faith is irrelevant

"We are beginning an experiment at Berkeley to detect tachyon-like quasiparticles. There are strong scientific reasons to believe that such quasiparticles really exist because Maxwell's equations, when coupled to inverted atomic media, lead inexorably to tachyon-like solutions."

—Raymond Y. Chiao, professor of physics at the University of California-Berkeley in Scientific American's online "Ask the Experts"



Mark Baldrige

I've had another of my bright ideas. One of those light-bulb-over-the-head moments, my next \$1,000,000 in pocket money.

And I'm giving it away. I only ask for a little credit. Call it the Baldrige-Herzfeldt (or whomever) Device, something like that. My name on the patent.

So here it is: Let's build us a tachyon radio. Not a transmitter (currently only God knows how to make a tachyon) but a receiver. Tune your tachyon receptors for the very latest in late-breaking news.

What I'm suggesting is that tachyons, those quaint "quasiparticles" which apparently move backward in time, may be in use in the Megaculture of the future for sending messages to the past – namely to us.

At present, it is only possible to send messages one-way, but it is so terribly easy that we don't realize we're doing it all the time.

This newspaper is one of them. Cave paintings, the Taj Mahal, the story of Cinderella – all are messages from the past to the future, encoded in the artifacts we find around us.

Want to send a message to the future? Carve it in stone and bury it in some conspicuous place.

But to send a message to the past... Practically speaking, it's impossible. Or merely highly improbable – unless the tachyons have anything to say about it.

I imagine they would be transmitted in short bursts. Maybe we should be listening for something like Morse code.

When we get the thing built, of course. And it would be as if some savage – on some backward island where Coke and Pepsi have yet to do battle for the souls of the locals – were to invent herself a radio.

She'd have made a careful study of crystals and their properties, of course (a highly intelligent savage), and, wrapping wire and somewhere finding or otherwise concocting a little speaker, she'd have stumbled accidentally on the crystal radio set and tuned into the BBC – build a little box and voices come spilling out of it.

Like magic. Except these "tachyonized" voices would be directed specifically at us, the future waiting patiently for the device to be built so it could open dialogue.

And you can bet the opening gambit will be something clever and self-referential:

"Watson, come here, I need you!" "Greetings Dr. Herzfeldt (or whomever) and All the Ships at Sea."

Just think what valuable information we could obtain from an open discussion with the future!

But a wailing, a veritable gnashing of teeth, arises from the Trekker population:

"What about the Time Continuum?"

Let me tell you kids exactly what you can do with your precious Time Continuum...

And anyway, it doesn't exist!

Cause and effect, is that all you can imagine? Don't you know that time is not a linear progression? Or haven't you been riding the light-speed trains with Uncle Albert?

Time is like a river; some parts of it flow backward.

The general tendency, till now, has been downhill, of course, so it's easy to be fooled.

But what about when it reaches the sea?

At the moment Dr. Herzfeldt (or whomever) plugs in the device and the signal starts flowing (backward) to the past (our present), well, the whole of history breaks down like the rusty tin god it has become (and good freaking riddance!).

The nightmare hallway of time, with its doors that never open, or open only on identically horrible halls, finally opens up into one enormous room.

And it's a party! Or it's like a café or coffeehouse of the old days, with everybody chiming in on everyone else's conversation. A conversation that happens to take forever.

I long for the day when ignorance is no excuse, when the barbarism and "stuporstitution" of the present will be eliminated forever in favor of an enlightened despotism of knowledge. A world which is constrained only by necessity, in which



Shawn Ballarin/DN

humanity hits only the marks it aims for, avoids the pitfalls and knows the difference.

And I can't see any reason why this wouldn't be the end result of my program to build the tachyon radio – except for one small thing.

It's not something I hadn't thought of, but I was keeping it from you till now, and it comes in the form of a ratio:

Signal to Noise.

There's a problem with sending particles back into time. Can you think what it would be?

Well, every time you lift, say, a glass of yummy hormone-flavored milk to your adolescent chops, you are moving particles, or atoms or what-have-you stuff, into a new configuration for the future.

I mean, if you don't drink the milk, or if you do, it makes a difference, however small, to the what-happens-next (or so we think – who knows?).

So, sending particles skittering into the past might inject significant noise into the received signal of time. Static on the channel, if you care to think of it that way, altering the past.

The more static you pump into the channel, the weaker the signal becomes, inexorably, until the past, as we know it, never happened at all.

Italics aside, 100 years from now this column might not have been written at all.

In which case, the idea of the Baldrige-Whomever Device will be lost and rediscovered later – and I'll get no credit.

Which is all the more reason to build the thing today as far as I'm concerned. I mean really, is there anything in history we couldn't do without?

Wipe the slate clean, I say! All we stand to lose is centuries of servitude with the mass of people under the boot of a few short-sighted tyrants.

Certainly, the horrors of the recently departed century would not be missed.

I say, plug it in, Dr. Herzfeldt!

Get in touch with God! Turn your radio on!

## Hail to the puppet-chief

"I love my country, but I fear my government." – Bumper sticker

OK, I just can't stand it anymore.

I think I'm going insane. I don't understand this country! What makes me even more furious is that I'm a genius (please, don't laugh), and I still can't figure it out.

Allow me to specify: George W. Bush, the newly coronated president, met with mucky-mucks and big-wigs the other day to talk about defense. Y'know, during the campaign, he promised all these new gadgets and ultra-death-kill toys for the military, and now he's trying to make good on those promises.

One thing he wants to do is build a missile defense system bigger than the one Clinton spent billions on only to see that it couldn't shoot down a blimp.

Bush acknowledges that this is "a sensitive topic for many, but we have to fulfill our obligation to protect the citizens of this country." Yeah, smirked the columnist. More like you have to fulfill your obligations to all the weapons contractors who donated some of that \$100 million that barely got you into office, you schmuck.

OK, question: How many missile attacks have we experienced in the last 40 years? None? Are you sure? You'd think the way everybody in Washington wrings their hands and grimaces like a goomba over the damn thing that half the country had been blown into marble-sized chunks by missiles from Afghanistan.

But how many terrorist attacks have been pursued to successful completion against American citizens, both at home and abroad, in the last 40 years? Dozens! Hundreds! The World Trade Center, Oklahoma City, Libya, Beirut and the USS Cole! Any of those ring a bell, Bush?

If Bush's concerns center on the protection of American citizens, why isn't he doing something about terrorism? Missile shield? Basically, there was no threat, there is no threat and even if there were a threat, the system doesn't work! Can you see the source of my frustration?

He'll pour another \$50 zillion into this project, I know. So much good could come from that money. It's such a damn waste.

Also, if Bush is concerned with protecting his citizens, there are other things he could consider.

He could, for example, consider supporting Clinton's proposal that bans road building for logging access in 58.5 million acres of federal forest. Fifteen million of those acres are in Tongass National Forest in Alaska, where Bush wants to drill for a few drops of oil.

The program also provides \$72 million for a six-year assistance program to ease the economic transition from logging to other forms of employment. This is so sensible! They are our forests, after all, and keeping them pristine can only improve the health and beauty of this country.

He could also consider creating a committee determined to find solutions to our growing energy problems through investigation into alternative fuel sources. He could, in the process, tell the oil and petroleum industries to kiss off if they get pissy because frankly, we're running out of oil. Alaska only has so much and Saddam only has so much and he's not going to give it up anyway, not if we bomb his whole country down to 5 feet below sea level.

Taking these actions would be a step towards long-term protection of the citizenry and not just protection from vague and undefined threats. Starting campaigns slanted towards protecting the environment and the development of alternative fuel are clear steps towards underwriting the future of this society.

In all seriousness, folks, this goes beyond the traditional scuffle between pro-environment liberalism and pro-business conservatism. The energy crisis in California is merely a prelude to the difficulties the world faces in the coming decades if we do not find an alternative, renewable source of energy.

I do hold great confidence in our ability to create such alternatives. That's not what I'm worried about. What does worry me is the mentality of Bush and like-minded corporate individuals who lack the ability to see beyond the short term profit motive to the long term needs of society.

Oil and petroleum corporations have an interest, at least in the short run, in seeing the search for alternative energy stunted, since such alternatives could cut into the oil industry's profits.

Bush could surprise everyone by enacting far-reaching initiatives aimed at protecting our way of life in the long run. He could act now, keeping in mind the needs and quality of life for future generations.

But he won't, not in a million years. He is simply too indebted to the industrial powers and capitalist gasbags who got him into office. He does not have the option of working for us and ours — he is a puppet, a decoy to keep us entertained while a silent aristocracy plunders this country.



Seth Felton