

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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Just rewards

Athletic department decision unfairly breaks promises

They're pretty elementary principles: If you promise someone you'll do something - do it. And by all means, treat people how you want to be treated.

By the time people get to college, it's hoped their senses of personal ethics are developed enough to embrace those two ideas.

Unfortunately, the University of Nebraska Athletic Department embraced neither when it announced Monday it would take an ax to the Nebraska Spirit Squad's funding.

The Athletic Department, faced with a substantial budget overrun, cut all out-of-state scholarships to NU cheerleaders and Scarlet dance team members.

This, without any notice given to people who have sacrificed blood, sweat and tears to support NU teams.

And this, without any notice to people who have likely planned their next one to four years at UNL banking on a tuition discount.

Shawn Perry, a senior cheerleader from out of state, said in a Wednesday Daily Nebraskan story he, and most of his out-of-state friends, couldn't afford to return to UNL without the tuition concession.

To be fair, the Athletic Department had to find somewhere to trim fat from a sometimes glutinous program -- during the 1999-2000 fiscal year, the department was about \$250,000 over budget.

It was plain mean, though, when the Athletic Department decided to eliminate all out-of-state cheerleading scholarships with apparent disregard to the feelings or plans of the people whom the cuts affect.

The Athletic Department said the decision was purely budgetary, but no decision that affects people directly is just about dollars and cents.

Barry Swanson, the department's assistant marketing director, said cutting cheer funds was the "only option" to make up for shortfalls.

But certainly department bean counters could have found other superfluous spending that could be trimmed before dramatically cutting funding to a program - basically, in some cheerleaders' words, sounding the death knell for a good cheerleading program.

Especially when a good number of out-of-state students were recruited to cheer under the premise they would get tuition discounts.

Many of these students say now they can't afford to return to UNL next year if they're expected to pay out-of-state tuition.

The least the department could have done was allow those who have counted on tuition discounts to continue receiving the discount until they graduate - that way the Athletic Department would be fulfilling its promise.

Certainly in the world of cut-throat business, people lose their jobs without notice in moves big businesses say are necessary to remain nimble and competitive among their competitors.

And the NU Athletic Department is a big business of sorts - its budget was \$39 million last year.

But it's also part of a larger academic institution - one that's supposed to espouse the values important to maintaining a just society.

In dealing with 20-something students who have committed their talents to the university, it's not right for the Athletic Department to have broken its commitment to them.

A Fortune 500 company might have right and reason to slash its employee rosters, but a unit of an institution of higher education shouldn't run like Berkshire Hathaway.

Instead, cost-cutting efforts should be made while mindful of the fact that people are involved and promises have been made.

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IN A MOVE OF UNPRECEDENTED CRUELTY,
OUT-OF-STATE CHEERLEADERS WILL BE FORCED TO PAY
OUT-OF-STATE TUITION!

SADDLE UP, DRAMA QUEENS!
IT'S DOWN TO A FREE
LUNCH* FOR YOU!

*FREE LUNCH CURRENTLY INCLUDES ONLY FREE LUNCH,
BOOKS, CLOTHING, AND \$500 STIPEND



Neal Obermeyer/DN

But it all starts with a sale

It starts with something simple, like a sale ad or buying a present.

I don't plan to go astray and fall back into the pattern, the addiction, the destroying habit; it just happens.

And once I am inside the cloud of my obsession, the haze is so thick that I can't see my way out until I've had my fix.

The fix varies, and one time, the fix was buying a new car - a Mercedes Benz to be exact. Only that time, the fix wasn't over - I had to have a thousand-plus stereo installed to complete that fix.

Another time the fix was buying six pairs of the exact same shorts - two in navy, two in cream and two in beige.

I remember once I saw a show on Oprah about people that had this problem with compulsive shopping.

I laughed and guffawed at the absurdity of it all. I remember this woman taking the TV crew up to the attic in her \$200,000 home where she pulled out shrink-wrapped board games, Barbie dolls, clothes with tags.

She was in tears. She told Oprah that her husband didn't know, and he'd be so mad if he found out. Then she got an evil gleam in her eye when Oprah asked her if she ever thought she would stop. She said she didn't know what it would take for her to stop.

I know the gleam. I know there is no stopping the mission once it has been started. I will dig my heels into the gleaming white tile floors of the store and say, "No, I'm not leaving until I look at just one more powder blue sweater." Doesn't matter that I've got, say, three back home in my closet.

These days I'm pretty broke. These days I have all the clothes I need and then some.

Yet it continues. And it will pour itself over my life like a syrupy shame that I cannot escape. Like so many of my obsessions, this one is no different; there can be no end until the fix has run its course.

I was addicted to not eating when I was in high school. My friends and I would store cases of Diet Coke in our lockers, and we would ration out our pieces of bubble gum throughout the day.

After school, we would head home to jump on the scale and then don our workout clothes. I usually spent the bulk of my evening working out.

Sports weren't for me because I couldn't get in enough constant workout time.

I wanted to be able to run 10 miles and then come home and jump on my bike and ride 15 and then come home and do 350 sit-ups and then stretch.

After I grew out of that obsession, I delved into the scarier depths of eating disorders, and it wasn't until I had several run-ins at the hospital that I decided it was time to end the quest for bodily perfection.

These days I go out to eat. These days I feel pretty fat.

The difference is that I am no longer puking five times a day and running 15 miles on Sunday mornings "just for fun."

There are other addictions I could list, but for the sake of brevity, I'll try and get to my point.

Throughout all the trips to Abercrombie and throughout all the mind-numbingly monotonous bike rides from my house out to Elmwood and back, there lies the essence of my obsession.

I am made of motion. I am made of frenzy.

Some weird neurotic desire to do things over and over again is deeply ingrained in the grain of my bones.

Some people take drugs for this. Some people attend meetings. Others ignore it.

I'm somewhere in between. I recognize my problem, yet I have some strange fascination with it at the same time.

The bottom line is sometimes ... I like it.



Yasmin McEwen

Letters to the editor

Thanks, Jim ...

For the record, Jim Ford, let me say that I agree that your new grading system will be an improvement.

What I don't agree with is how you and the Academic Senate turned your back on the students to get that system.

If you'll remember back in November, ASUN addressed the same issue. After receiving 400 e-mails on the issue, all but one against changing the system, ASUN listened to the students and voted against the system.

Have you forgotten so soon? Your primary responsibility is to serve the customers of this university, its students. Good institutions listen to their customers. You work for us, not the other way around.

As for your system being in the best interest of the students, I don't buy it. We, as students, are capable of defining our self-interests; I thought we made that perfectly clear back in November.

To the 13 of you who voted against this new system, thank you for listening and respecting the voice of the students. For the other 38 of you, take a step back and try to remember why you are here.

Rory Kay
Political Science, Business Administration
and Economics
Junior

For nothing!

I was under the impression that after the ASUN worked to defeat the change in grading policy, we would not have to worry that it would be implemented.

This university is not known for its academic achievement. What is supposed to happen now that the minus system is to be implemented? GPAs will no doubt decline.

Those with scholarships will struggle even more to keep their grades high enough to keep those scholarships, possibly causing some to leave the university because they cannot afford it, like the cheerleaders and the Scarlets.

Jennifer Erlon
Criminal Justice
sophomore

Three-year promises to come

I'm sorry, do I look pale to you? I think I might be coming down with something: a bad case of prophesy.

The air above the valley is filled with helicopters. Their shocking noise and spotlights tear the evening sky into a moving grid ... like the interlocking gears of heaven.

That's what it's like, it just comes over me, a dizzy spell.

On the ground, giant LED screens light up and begin to glow ...

And on the stage, burning in the moving spotlights, and in the giant screens coming now on line, appears the form of a man in a sharkskin suit and miraculous silver hair which twitches not one inch in its pomade, being anchored amidst the turbulent air, apparently, like walking on water, by sheer, heroic faith.

I wrote these words, I don't know, about three years ago as part of a short story.

It was published in a short-lived local zine, Killjoy.

But it was only a story! It was all fiction in those days.

It is the preacher and he shouts, huge speakers shattering the choppered sky: "THUS, us, us! SAYETH, eth, eth! The LORD, ord, ord, ord!" The crowd goes wild.

I swear, it's not my fault. I was trying to be ridiculous! I was trying to be absurd!

How was I to know my own words would come back to haunt me in the news?

The preacher lifts his arms straight up, signaling a touchdown for the Holy Spirit. And a roar breaks against the ceiling of noise at the ceremonial Grand Opening of Six Flags Over Jesus, the "largest Mall and Christian amusement park, combined, on Earth."

Talk about life imitating art! Three years ago, I thought I was being funny, imagining such a monstrosity; I went on to describe:



Mark Baldrige

The Arc of the Covenant Arcade... Pete's Tabernacle O' Chocolate... and "The Pit" BarBQ near the baptismal font where the waters gush always red and white and blue.

I described the whole thing as "looking like God's own spaceship double parked across from a casino."

And then, Monday morning, I woke up in a world double parked across from my short story.

And so did you. The Daily Nebraskan covered it on Tuesday: Some preacher in Florida raised \$16 million somewhere and spent it all on his own Christian Disney World.

I opened Monday to some kind of protest I didn't quite understand - unless it was simply a protest of the tastelessness of "Holy Land Land," as I like to call it.

Spooky, isn't it? But this is not the first time something I wrote as a fictional "joke" has come true with a vengeance ...

Ever heard of the Oklahoma City bombing? I probably shouldn't even mention it, but the investigation's got to be closed by now and I never met that bastard McVeigh or any of his unholy crew.

Yeah, about three years before the tragedy, I wrote a story - sort of a story within a story - about some terrorists who, get this, blow up Oklahoma.

It was supposed to be funny, and it was - in the context of the story.

I have to admit, it's not so funny now. And neither is the bit about the amusement park quite so amusing anymore.

In fact, the whole prospect of writing things for fun has sort of paled ...

The question that arises now, at least in my mind - utterly convinced that I am somehow "seeing" about three years into the future - is:

Which of my absurd, irreverent, even dangerous fancies will take on flesh and go marauding next?

Who can tell? I write a lot of crap. None of it seems likely, and yet some of it comes true!

My advice to you is to stay tuned throughout the semester. Clip and save everything I write.

File my words away and then, as the three-year limit approaches, scan the headlines and try to figure out what comes next!

It could be anything!

Write back ...



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