

## Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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

### Get over it! Grade scale's effects on Honors Program hardly sad

Honors students are used to getting lots of breaks.

That's why some of them are smarting with the news that with UNL's adoption of a new grading scale, they still have to maintain a 3.5 grade point average.

The new scale adds minus grades, which means a 3.5 no longer is a B+, but is closer to an A-.

Terrible, isn't it, what honors students are expected to achieve these days?

Certainly students in UNL's Honors Program sometimes must work harder in classes specialized for them than regular students in regular classes.

But if this new scale forces honors students to work a tad harder, what's wrong with that? The point of tinkering with the grading scale was to make everyone work harder - even the nonhonors students - to increase the value of a University of Nebraska-Lincoln degree.

Without the change, UNL's grades would continue to suffer from inflation when compared with schools that had a plus and minus grading system. (A B+ under UNL's new system, which most schools use, corresponds to a 3.33 grade point average as opposed to the old 3.5.)

If honors requirements were loosened, they, too would have suffered from the same grade inflation the new scale was intended to alleviate.

Besides, when honors students sign on the honors application dotted line, they've enrolled in a program that's supposed to expand their academic horizons - a program with high expectations.

And a program that has lots of perks - free books that students can sell back and pocket the profits, special residence halls, special computer labs and special, small classes.

If these requirements scare some prospective honors students away, then so be it - perhaps they weren't cut out for the program anyway.

For if this program is truly to be comprised of UNL's "best and brightest," then standards certainly shouldn't be loosened for its members.

Some professors and honors students have questioned the fairness of keeping the GPA requirement for the program at 3.5, even in the light of the grade-scale change.

At least some discussions should have taken place, they said, so all involved could come to an amicable solution or compromise.

But those discussions certainly would have been mere smoke screens for what was inevitable anyway.

What would have been unfair is to force this change upon "normal" students without their consent - in fact, student government voted against supporting the new scale - and allowing honors students to meet with administrators to discuss their qualms with the plan before its implementation.

Though students, through the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska, were against the grading change, it's set to become policy in Fall 2001.

With all the talk of increasing UNL's academic standing, this newspaper believes the new grading scale is a needed change.

Honors students: It's time for you to get with the program - or get out.

But whatever you do, please stop your whining.

#### Editorial Board

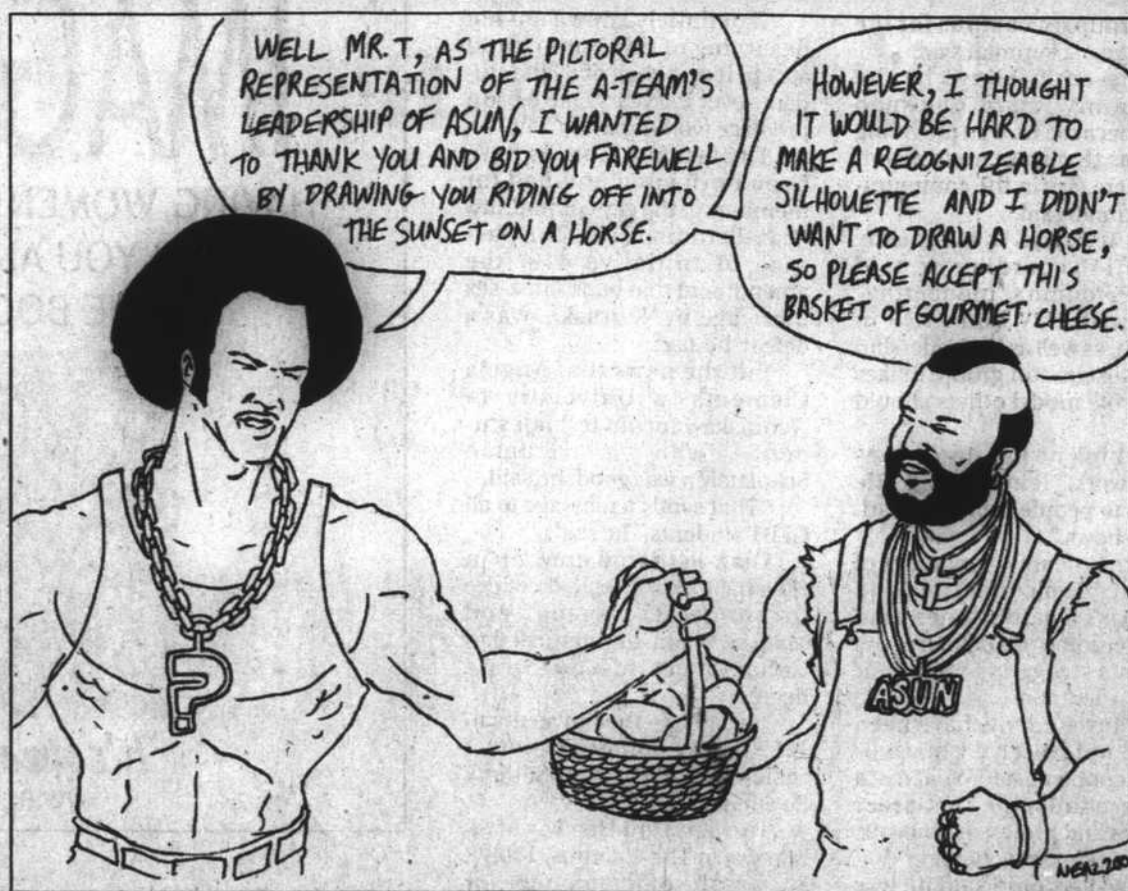
Sarah Baker, Jeff Bloom, Bradley Davis, Jake Glazeski, Matthew Hansen, Samuel McKewon, Kimberly Sweet

#### Letters Policy

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor and guest columns, but does not guarantee their publication. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject any material submitted. Submitted material becomes property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Those who submit letters must identify themselves by name, year in school, major and/or group affiliation, if any. Submit material to: Daily Nebraskan, 20 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St. Lincoln, NE 68588-0448. E-mail: letters@dailyneb.com

#### Editorial Policy

Unsigned editorials are the opinions of the Spring 2001 Daily Nebraskan. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, its employees, its student body or the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. A column is solely the opinion of its author; a cartoon is solely the opinion of its artist. The Board of Regents acts as publisher of the Daily Nebraskan; policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. The UNL Publications Board, established by the regents, supervises the production of the paper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its employees.



### Kicking the crude habit of using oil

California sits in darkness today. Rolling blackouts have become almost routine, while sales of backup generators have tripled in the past season.

For most residents, the periodic blackouts have been more of a nuisance than any sort of hardship. But as the summer season looms and an army of hungry air conditioners stands at the ready, the situation may become more severe.

Representatives of industries relying directly on electricity for their livelihood, such as those involved in refrigeration, assembly line production or computer output, have suggested that if blackouts continue, they may be forced to shut down production. Already, some California-based companies are seriously considering relocation to other states (CBS Evening News, March 21).

While the trouble in California seems distant now, it's certainly a prelude to the growing energy crisis this country faces. Nebraska officials have declared that the state has enough power to meet demands for the next year, but demand continues to grow while supply is becoming increasingly finite.

Meanwhile, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries is scaling back production, leading to an even tighter crunch. The Bush Administration has been cautious so far, except in its steadfast faith in the free market. Bush has refused to consider price controls in California, despite signs of price gouging by power companies (at this time unfounded, however).

So! The list of troubles goes on, and we're basically up excrement creek without a paddle, boat, air horn or even TP. What do we do? First, we stop kidding ourselves. The current problems are not due to a shortage of power plants, the evils of deregulation (though it sure didn't help California) or the work of Satan. The current problems send a clear message: We are running out of oil.

Once we accept this, we're on the road to success. It's like alcohol addiction - you can't get cured until you admit you have a problem. Unfortunately, too many people are still in denial. They see a quick solution in the Alaskan wilderness, or untapped fields in Wyoming or squeezing more crude out of Iraq.

Wrong! All red-herrings. Distractions! We are running out of oil, and the sooner we admit this, the better. Alaska holds enough oil to meet our power demands, depending on the estimate, for 100-200 days. This is not a solution. It's like a transfusion for a patient whose wounds are still bleeding.

The cure lies in ending our dependence on oil. Not just foreign oil, but all oil. And we must do it soon. We must have real alternatives to oil. Our inaction now ensures a more acute crisis later.

The answers lie in solar, wind and hydroelectric power, and piles of those hybrid Hondas that get 60 miles to the gallon. 60! I salivate just at the thought of it.

And it doesn't stop there. We have the capacity to design our cities more efficiently. Buildings can be constructed according to climate and terrain, thus greatly enhancing their energy efficiency. They could even be designed to harness the wind (you know that wind tunnel by Oldfather Hall?), and there are solar panels now available that generate power even when it's cloudy out.

We can do this. We made the atomic bomb, put dozens of satellites in orbit and mapped the human genetic code. Solving our energy crisis should be a snap. I have great faith in human ingenuity, but new innovations are being curtailed by continued dependence on oil products.

The sooner we cut this bind loose, the better.



Seth Felton

### Letters to the editor

#### Thanks for all the squirrels

Just wanted to write and say thanks to Mark Baldrige for writing a cool editorial on Neal Obermeyer.

I know a lot of people don't appreciate Neal's humor, but I say those are the people who take themselves too damn serious. Those of us who know how to laugh at ourselves don't mind Neal's humor at all.

As a matter of fact, at one point, I considered Obermeyer's View to be the lone bright spot of the Opinion page. He's provided some much-needed comic relief in the post-Munson years.

Thanks, Neal. If I ever see you in a bar, the first round's on me.

Jon Hieb  
senior  
finance

### Hardest job you'll ever love

This column is dedicated to the kids of the Science Focus Program at the Lincoln Zoo.

Among other things, these kids taught me that "Atomic Dog," is not sung by Bill Clinton's brother. They taught me that regardless of the grade, they will write whatever story they choose. They taught me to laugh and that making fun of yourself is so important in life. They taught me what it was to believe once again in learning.

Cheers to you, you deserve to rule the world. Uh, some of you that is. ...

I am a student teacher. There are a lot of us. Today is our career day, and we're all looking for jobs. But teaching is more than the short catch phrases you tell a principal.

There will come a time when you may ask yourself, "Just what are we supposed to be grading these kids on?"

How well they sit in their chairs and pay attention? Whether they look up and make eye contact when you are speaking? Comments to be circled in No. 2 pencil on bubble sheets, "Student pays attention in class?"

Here's a question for you: What if they don't pay attention?

What about the guy who keeps his head down over his paper, shielding it as you walk over to his desk during a free-write? You wonder what it is he is so focused on and you lean down and look through his barricaded fortress consisting of bent arm, shoulders hunched over the paper.

To your horror you see that he is drawing circles - in black ink! And you ask him if he is OK and he looks up with sunny smile and says, "I'm fine."

Dazed and confused you walk away, thinking: Could there be some kind of hidden meaning hiding in the abyss of those black ink circles? Slacker. Unmotivated. Learning disabled. All labels that may float in the air. Fight those labels.

Later that evening you settle down to grade your students' futuristic stories. Stories you assigned. Stories that had to be 6-8 pages long. But you didn't realize that - and for you, "that" means reading, commenting on and grading at least 200 pages, not including those who went over the limit.

There are five of those. So as you are fighting sleep, your eyes fall upon an exciting story that jolts your senses to the present. Suddenly, you are hanging on the ledge of a tall skyscraper, suddenly you are falling through the air and then you are saved by a futuristic car that flies through the atmosphere at hazardous speeds. Then you are riding shotgun to one of the most exciting stories you've read all year.

There are full-bodied characters, the dialogue is engaging, sentence structure is advanced and without grammatical error, and Yes! Thank you God, there is a solid plot line.

Your pen is going crazy with markups, you can't get enough. You turn to the title page and uncover the name as you circle your grade of C+, which is really an A, and stands for Creative Genius Plus so much more. This story belongs to ... black ink circle boy.

There may also come a day, a breaking-point day, when you will lose it in front of your kids. You may decide that the day is warm enough to embark upon a journey. A silent observation nature walk around the school yard. The sun is shining, the snow is melting. Get the picture?

Of course this may be a day when three of your 10<sup>th</sup> grade golden-hallowed girls are

deciding to rebel against any and all authority. This may be a day when they decide they do not want to take a silent walk, they want to shuffle their feet and giggle loudly the entire time.

You will yell: "This is a silent walk, you MUST be quiet!"

More shuffling, more giggling. Your limits are being tested, but you don't know that; the only thing you know is that these kids are disobeying you. Someone decides to throw a snowball. You catch it mid-air with your hiss, "This is not junior high, you people are being immature and I am sick of it!" Everyone stops, turns and stares at you.

You are now the wicked witch. The snowball loses its momentum, misses its target and falls noiselessly to the ground.

Someone in a faint voice says, "But I thought this was supposed to be a silent walk."

Now that you have ruined the walk, your kids decide to behave. You will go home to weep in private tears of student-teacher frustration. And on Monday, you will apologize. You will forgive. You will be forgiven.

You witness challenges to your personal code of ethics. You may not agree with the parents, the administration or other teachers. But you will do the only thing a student teacher can do.

You suck it up.

Last Friday, my kids didn't feel like working very hard. In fact, they didn't feel like working at all. This was the last day of our poetry unit. They had been patient. They had listened to Sylvia Plath and then courageously turned to me and said, "Why is she so mad at her father?"

I, in sincere and newfound agreement had concurred, "She truly does seem to be inordinately upset with her father." Then together as a class, we decided that there was truly something wrong with Ms. Plath.

We had survived complex waves of Robinson Jeffers, and made our way through badly translated Spanish poems. Finally, we had returned hungrily to the safe, the dependable, Robert Frost. We had survived "The Poetry Unit."

So, with an hour left in class, I turned them loose, an hour's worth of free work time. "You can read, you can write, just do something."

Some began reading nonstop amid the noise. Some moved to the computers. There was some confusion over who wanted to hear Radiohead or "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" soundtrack with Yo Yo Ma.

Yo Yo Ma won. Different kind of school, isn't it?

Three of my best students pretended to work on their new story assignment. These kids wrote maybe four sentences and read maybe one paragraph in the next hour, and that's a stretch.

And finally, as I glanced around the room, I saw these over-achieving go-getter's had finally relaxed. The entire classroom was abuzz with good-time fellowship chattering.

Oftentimes, we are teaching for output. Oftentimes, we are teaching for expectations. But the only time we will make a difference is when we are teaching for the kids.

Student teachers, we need to go forth and reward ourselves for making it through this sometimes boot camp.

Everyone of us were told in one form or another that eventually we would have to eat dirt to make it through. Most of us ate dirt at some point during this experience. And none of us did it for the pay. Some of us held on for the kids, and some of us just held on.

This job takes courage, and if you've made it this far, dirt-eater, the kids are waiting for you.

Just remember schools aren't training camps for eating dirt. Schools are training camps for kids who can better themselves and society. Schools are the one hope a lost child may have. Be the hope. Be the courage. Be the school.

