NEW MEANING FOR 'TOWN AND GOWN'

UNO shows public spirit

Starting in the Middle Ages, university life has often been marked by the concept of "town and gown." University life, that tradition held, should focus inward. Students and instructors would regard themselves as separate from the local community. Indeed, they would strive to maintain that cultural insulation.

In this country, one of the great advances in American civilization has been the jettisoning of that tradition and the pursuit of a quite different goal — the strengthening of ties connecting universities to the surrounding community.

Nebraska benefits enormously from that approach. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, for example, has pursued that vision, building on UNL's land-grant origins. The University of Nebraska Medical Center deserves commendation for its multifaceted work to bolster health services statewide. In Omaha, Creighton University admirably pursues civic connections under the leadership of the Rev. John Schlegel.

And at UNO, Chancellor John Christensen this week presented an important vision for making his campus's community-focused work even stronger.

As noted here on several occasions, UNO has a commendable record on this score. Indeed, its public service involves help not just for Omaha but also for Nebraska as a whole.

UNO's College of Public Affairs and Community Service, for example, ranks as one of the top programs nationally in its field and delivers an impressive array of help to Nebraskans through training, research and service work.

UNO lends support to organizations such as the Neighborhood Center, which provides impressive support for neighborhood associations in Omaha as well as Council Bluffs.

In his remarks at the 2009 fall convocation on Wednesday, Christensen described his vision by which UNO would raise its civic commitment even higher.

Citing the availability of space on campus as the city's needs increase, Christensen committed UNO to helping the city in ways that are mutually beneficial.

THE PUBLIC PULSE

No more on-the-job fundraising

Every year, the City of Omaha gets involved with the United Way of the Midlands fundraising event.

Firefighters on duty, using city equipment, are scheduled to report to various stations to hear the presentations for all three shifts to raise money. Other on-duty firefighters escort the speakers for the fundraiser in city vehicles to the different locations and help the speakers with the materials.

With the decision of Omaha's legal department against on-the-job fundraising, the city will no longer have firefighters on duty.

Letters to the Editor may be sent to Letterdesk@omahworld-herald.com. Please allow 4-6 weeks for responses.
Preventing Heart Attacks

Smoking-ban data

Millions of Americans are more comfortable since many states enacted smoking bans. Now studies are indicating that the bans are making people healthier.

These findings are directly relevant to Nebraska, given the years of public debate on the issue.

Two independent studies looked at the aftermath of smoking bans in a dozen places in the United States, Canada and Europe. What they found was startling: The bans led to almost immediate, impressive declines in heart attacks, and the longer the bans were in effect, the more heart attacks declined.

Preventing Heart Attacks

Take a Stand to Prevent Suicide

Many kids are tragically committing suicide because of things almost anyone could prevent.

Some kids commit suicide because of bullying. Kids in every school should be taught about how bullying hurts people.

In Blair schools, students learn about bullying and how to stop it. I think all schools should do more to try to stop suicide.

Many people aren't doing enough to prevent suicides, which break many hearts. These people then wish they had done something or even knew there was a problem.

We need to stand up and say no to suicide and stop it once and for all.

Michael Reed, Blair, Neb.
Blair High School student

Best of Luck to Bright Futures

From the standpoint of crime prevention, Building Bright Futures is a great idea, and I commend the people in the program.

It's wonderful that after such a long period of time and so much money donated, day-care programs, health clinics, and other learning opportunities are being offered in numerous schools to low-income students.

I think it's especially important to start kids off early with excellent-quality child care and then keep these same kids in high school, because crime rates and large numbers of high school dropouts are directly related.

Although it is almost impossible to guess how people would've done if they had finished high school, it is probably very likely that they wouldn't have become quite as interested in crime.

So, my hat's off to all in the building Bright Futures program, and I wish all students in the program the best of luck.

Rachel Sjoberg, Omaha

Donate to Help Pets and Owners

How ridiculous to fine someone for not licensing an animal after it has died. I think the main blame should go to the Omaha veterinarian for charging such an exorbitant amount for euthanasia.

Realizing he had a very sad situation, with a young man who didn't have extra money, the veterinarian should have offered a discount to the dog to clean up.