

Fall 1990

Focus on Student Affairs- Fall 1990

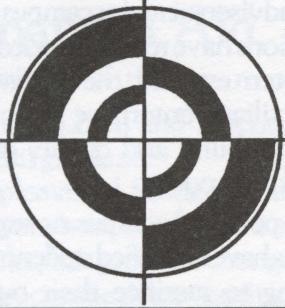
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FOCUS

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Advising Campus Media

by Michael Wilson

The campus newspaper, whether loved or hated, is a significant student organization with the power and the potential to impact on the quality of campus life. The student press is in a unique position within the University community: it enjoys the fiscal and political support of the college administration and student government and yet has the power to investigate, create issues and shape opinions independent of these established authorities.

The courts have held that the student press enjoys protection against government intrusions guaranteed in the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Administrations in recognizing the value of a viable campus press, traditionally have hired advisors with the specific duties of assisting in training the students in the technical and ethical responsibilities of journalism. On campuses with Journalism Schools, the advisors can exercise enormous influence over student editors who usually are seeking careers and/or majoring in the field.

Advisors are in a unique, if not difficult position, having accountability to the administration and to the student journalists. Wearing two hats at once is often uncomfortable. Nationally known College Media Advisors, Inc. has established a universally accepted code of ethics and responsibilities for advisorship. Still, much litigation has

occurred as a direct result of advisors serving two kings, so to speak

The notions that advisors should review all copy prior to publication and that the advisor should act as publisher assuming greater operational controls are two major misconceptions of advisorship. In both cases the courts and the professional advisor organizations have determined these practices are a form of censorship especially for student-run organizations which are not affiliated with an established academic program.

A classic example of the power of the student press and the conflict of advisorship occurred several years ago at Northern Illinois University. The campus newspaper published a story alleging the President made exorbitant expenditures on his residence. The President was embarrassed, and subsequently reassigned or fired the advisor. The advisor then sued to be reinstated. After a Board of Regents inquiry, the advisor was reinstated, the student Press was vindicated and the President was fired.

Student governments have also run into conflict with their own campus press. Student and administration officials, piqued by criticism in the newspaper, have sought to withdraw funding support. The courts have held that such practices are a form of censorship and have struck them down.

See Media, Page 2

Financial Aid: Investing In Human Resources

By J. Marshall Jennings

Student aid programs serve an essential public purpose. They represent an investment in human capital that evidences some risk but generally pays a high dividend in terms of the nation's economic growth and social progress. As witness to this, the G.I. Bill first benefited the returning veterans of World War II. The National Defense Student Loan of 1958 assisted financially poor but academically talented students. The Basic Educational Opportunity Grant, enacted in 1972 focused on the very poor, regardless of the academic skill levels.

The government's role in this process as a broker should be fairly obvious. The Department of Education currently operates eight major programs: two student employment programs (College Work Study and Job Location and Development); three grant programs (Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Pell Grant, and state grants through partial federal funding); and three loan programs (Perkins Loan,

See Financial Aid, Page 3

Media

The student journalists are liable for what they publish, although the universities are not if they don't assume control over the paper's content. Editors of the defunct Northeastern Print campus paper had lawsuits filed against them. All Northeastern editors must subscribe to a Code of Ethics and are warned that in this litigious society, lawyers work on a contingency fee basis which means it is much easier to file a lawsuit than it is to hire a lawyer to defend yourself.

On a commuter campus like Northeastern with no Journalism Department or strong faculty linkages, it is often difficult to recruit students who are willing to donate their time to publish a weekly or bimonthly newspaper. Prior to my arrival, *The Print*, had little comprehensive advisorship from faculty or staff. An audit of the newspaper's finances and editorial content revealed that it was both financially and journalistically bankrupt.

A small clique of political students—largely returning adults—had been entrenched in leadership positions in the newspaper and the media board.

After two former editors were indicted and jailed in connection with the financial irregularities, *The Print* managed to struggle along under the direction of a series of editors who saw in the newspaper an opportunity to put forward their own agendas for the University community. Finally and mercifully *The Print* died.

A new group of students started the *Independent* embracing the concepts of journalism accountability and ethical as well as fiscal integrity. A new media board, composed of students, faculty, civil service and staff, was also being considered by the administration. The students, suspicious of sharing power with faculty and staff, limited the board's role to advisory only.

Initially the students objected to administrative intrusions in the operation of the newspaper. They

didn't want, for instance, the media board to have the power to select or dismiss the editor. As a result of the improved cooperation between the new newspaper staff and the Student Activities Office, the students were able to purchase desk-top publishing equipment, upgrading their production capabilities while realizing some cost savings. The major success of the paper has been in its business operations. Here, the students have excelled in putting their financial house in order—managing the ad sales—resulting in surpluses for the fiscal year '89 and '90.

Now the newspaper, the administration and the University community face a new challenge: whether to institute new policies to foster greater student participation and commitment to media as an integral component of the college community. The next logical step in the development of media and the newspaper in particular is the shedding of the concept of student volunteerism in place of the establishment of the newspaper as an auxiliary enterprise.

Institutions of higher education - Eastern, Western, and Northern Illinois Universities, and the College of DuPage in the Chicago market — have recognized the importance of campus press to the community. As such, they have instituted personnel and compensation policies that would promote, recruit and retain a viable student press organization. Notwithstanding, the absence of a journalism curriculum, these institutions have managed to sustain a campus press organization by establishing a journalism tradition.

Granted, the Eastern, Western and Northern newspaper organizations have budgets in excess of a quarter million dollars enabling them to hire professional media managers to oversee basic operations. But this does not alter the fact that the students receive scholarships and other forms of compensation commensurate with their responsibilities and they still retain daily control and editorial freedom.

Media advisors at major campus press organizations have recommended that Northeastern establish the *Independent* as an auxiliary enterprise to ensure both the stability and quality of the staff and the product.

Higher powered campus newspaper operations have identified students who are willing to sacrifice their outside interests and academic programs to work on the paper. This is easier to accomplish on traditional college campuses than in commuter institutions whose students usually have to manage a job, family and an academic program.

Making the newspaper attractive to students and worthy of their total commitment is essential to establishing a journalism tradition without a journalism curriculum to support it. For example, at Western Illinois University, the editor-in-chief receives full tuition waivers and \$5,400 a year. The editor has a one year term, must maintain a "C" average and is restricted to a maximum of six credit hours per term. The editor is further restricted from other employment and participation in campus activities which may cause a conflict of interest. The restrictions are designed to ensure a total commitment to the job for which the student is compensated in addition to receiving the training, work experience, prestige and potential long-term career benefits.

The challenge facing the University community is not a question of money or shared power: it is a question of vision. It is a question of understanding what it takes to sustain a viable campus press in a major urban market. It is a question of building a journalism tradition by recognizing and endorsing the contributions of a student press to the quality of campus life.

Focus on Student Affairs is a publication of Northeastern Illinois University Division of Student Affairs, concerned with emerging issues and programs impacting on the quality of campus life.

Michael Wilson, Editor

Financial Aid

continued from page 1

Stafford Loan, and Parents Loan for Undergraduate Students/ Supplemental Student Loan). Each program is monitored by a specific set of rules, lest program changes weaken their competitive position. The complexity of these programs is overwhelming. Few policy makers understand student aid in its entirety. On campus, few outside the Financial Aid Office are familiar with program details. The situation is even worse for students and parents. Ideally, students should know how much financial aid they will receive far enough in advance to permit planning regarding the type of education they pursue. However, it seldom works that way. The complexities of the program and the delays that plague the aid process often make it difficult for students to plan for college.

A larger problem than the complexity of the programs is that of the costs. Student aid represents a substantial piece of the budgetary pie: as a result, it has drawn the scrutiny of Congress, which has imposed mandates on the operation of these programs. Initiatives such as verification, which questions the authenticity of information submitted through an application for financial aid; Satisfactory Academic Progress, which stipulates that minimum academic standards be met by students as a condition for their assistance to continue; and Loan Debt Counseling, which requires aid administrators to advise students of the obligation they assume in taking out loans, have been Congress' response, through the Department of Education, to addressing perceived program abuses.

With cost issues as the point of entry, Congress has made its presence felt in the administration of student aid programs. Witness, for example, the renaming of student aid programs after congressional members who have championed the cause of student aid

programs: Basic Educational Opportunity Grant to Pell Grant after Senator Claiborne Pell; National Student Loan (formerly National Defense Student Loan) to Perkins Loan after the late Carl D. Perkins, former chair of the House Education and Labor Committee; and Guaranteed Student Loan after retiring Senator Robert T. Stafford from Vermont, ranking minority member of the Senate Education, Arts, and Humanities Subcommittee. Academic Progress requirements and Debt Counseling are the result of a perception by the public, shareholders in the educational investment, that student aid programs are being abused and/or misused. Consequently, requiring verification is the government's response to insure that students present correct and complete information regarding their filing status. Satisfactory Academic Progress focuses on the schools' responsibility to insure that students make incremental progress toward the completion of a degree or certificate within a prescribed time-frame. Finally, Debt Counseling is an effort to ensure that students realize that part of their financial aid package consists of loans which require repayment.

At Northeastern, at least 30% of our filing population is required to go through the Verification Process. That percentage represents 810 of the 2700 who apply for student aid annually. The most recent academic review process identified approximately 800 who failed to meet minimum academic standards necessary for the continuation of their aid and had to petition for reinstatement. Our efforts in Debt Counseling are on-going to insure that all of the 600 who receive a loan are advised at the disbursement of their check of their responsibility and obligation to repay the loan.

Women's Services

By Jacquie Harper

The Women's Services Office developed a scholarship resource file for students. The undergraduate listing contains more than 65 scholarships. It includes talent scholarships, private donor scholarships, and awards offered by organizations, professional associations or foundations in the Chicago area and nationally. Scholarship information was gathered about awards relating to the needs of women, minorities and returning adults.

The resource file was started in response to returning adult students who need financial assistance but who often do not meet the eligibility requirements of federal and state programs like Pell and ISSC and must look for private scholarship aid. There are a growing number of scholarships for returning students, women and men. Our office has included information on all that are available.

Students should not write off the possibility of winning a scholarship because they think they would not qualify for a need based award. Many scholarships in the resource file recognize academic excellence, talent, the ethnic or minority student or a particular career field. There are many opportunities for scholarship awards.

Faculty and staff have an important role to play in encouraging students to apply, informing them of scholarship opportunities or the availability of information and empowering students to think of themselves as scholarship material. Our students all too often lack the self-confidence to believe they could win a scholarship and also lack the communication skills to present themselves effectively on an application.

Mentorship

By Dr. Margaret Duggar, BOG Fellow

An analysis of the data indicates that the minority mentorship program has achieved its goal of assisting minority students in adjusting to the university experience. Ninety-one percent of students enrolled in the inaugural Partners for Success Program completed the winter term.

Of the 58 students in the program, only four were placed on academic probation at the end of the Winter '89 term. Of the 76 eligible but non-participating students who completed the term, 20 (or 26%) were placed on academic probation.

Flora Llacuna, coordinator of the mentoring program, in the Dean of Students Office, called these results extremely encouraging

"The initial goal was to achieve a retention rate of at least eighty percent, and we have already exceeded that. The next test will be how many students return to school in the fall."

Each of the fifty-eight students who enrolled in the program was assigned to an individual faculty or staff mentor from the eighty faculty/staff who volunteered. In addition to regular meetings between mentors and

students, the program sponsored planning and training sessions for both students and mentors, a holiday reception, and an appreciation luncheon to conclude the year's activities.

At the end of the year's activities, students and mentors completed an evaluation questionnaire. Both expressed satisfaction with the program.

Students commented: "I am able to talk with (my mentor) very well, and she understands what I am going through."; "I'm very delighted with this program."; "I'm very thankful to all of the teachers that take the time to spend with all of us, the students!"; "It was good for me because it allowed me to become friends with a teacher and realize that there are people out there who care about me and my future."

Mentors also commented: "This is an outstanding program, and I am proud to be included."; "It was very valuable because it keeps me in personal touch with the student perspective."; "I have come to realize that students' personal lives can be very challenging."; and "I hope to continue as a mentor next year."

The program will expand to include Asian-Pacific Islanders and American Indians in addition to Black and Latino

students. Coordinators will continue to track the success of the program in increasing retention beyond the freshman year. They and the Advisory Committee consisting of Murrell Duster, Academic Advising and Tutoring; Nan Giblin, Faculty Council on Student Affairs; Ron Glick, Sociology; and Julius Jackson, Student Senate, will review the results of this year's program while planning for the future.

The initial results indicate that the program is extremely effective in smoothing the way for minority students entering academic life. Dr. Melvin C. Terrell, Vice President for Student Affairs, congratulated all involved in the program.

"The success of this program - and indeed the university - is measured in the ability to attract and retain first year students," Dr. Terrell said. "The Division of Student Affairs, in partnership with students, faculty and staff, seeks to impact in a positive way on the quality of campus life. Our mentorship program provides critical support services for students as well as provides an opportunity for faculty and staff to make a personal and professional commitment toward improving campus life."

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