



THE

AFCON

SENTINEL



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A Quarterly of the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska

December 14, 2004

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Purpose:

To promote academic freedom, defined as intellectual freedom in educational and research contexts. This includes freedoms of belief and expression and access to information and ideas.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—Peggy Adair

You shoulda been there.

If you missed the recent AAUP/AFCON conference, you missed a brief, shining moment in time that will forever remain in the memory of all who attended. There was something surreal about the thunderous applause and the standing ovation as three beleaguered defenders of academic freedom accepted the 2004 AFCON Academic Freedom Award.

Their families have suffered, their friendships with colleagues have been strained, and their careers have taken a cruel turn. Yet they stood up, one at a time, and stared fate in the eye, as they told the audience how they got to where they are, and how it could happen to anybody, because not enough people are willing to band together to protect the tenets of academic freedom at the University of Nebraska.

The administration at the University claims to have done nothing wrong; claims to have followed proper procedure for the “unfortunate” removal of tenured faculty. The actions of the administration have been the subject of much debate, gossip, innuendo, and some little bit of media coverage. The debate will go on; and Hugh Genoways, Richard Buhman, and Wes

Sime will move on with their lives. But there is a lesson to be learned here. A lesson in morality.

There was much ado during the recent presidential election about “moral values.” Some say the war in Iraq is a war of moral America versus immoral terrorists; some say the war is an immoral invasion of a sovereign nation. People on both sides of stem cell research view themselves as moral. The divisive issue of abortion is a loaded moral cannon.

How can people sincerely hold opposite judgments about issues of morality? Much research has been done on how people make ethical decisions. Psychologists such as Dr. Lawrence Kohlberg explain differing ethical responses occur when people move through various stages of moral reasoning as they mature. Dr. Kohlberg describes this process as three major stages of development: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional.

People in the pre-conventional group obey authorities only because they want to be rewarded or they want to avoid punishment. Their moral horizon is limited to their own self-interest. This level of morality is common in children, but is also found in some adults.

(Continued to Page 2)

Upcoming Events

AFCON Board Meetings, January 8, February 12, March 12, 2005
Loren Eiseley Library, 1530 Superior, Lincoln, Nebraska; 10 AM

THE PRESIDENT

(Continued from Page 1)

Most adults, according to Kohlberg, are in the conventional level of moral reasoning. Taking the moral high road means either pleasing those close to them, such as parents or peers, or obeying the laws of society. If it is legal, or if it is acceptable to one's close relationships, it is moral.

Persons in the post-conventional level of morality find themselves bound by certain fundamental principles which need to be upheld, whether or not they are popular, or even legal. These are rational principles such as equality and justice; the "inalienable rights" in our Declaration of Independence. If laws or policies violate these fundamental principles of human rights, they are considered immoral and unjust.

Standing up for academic freedom falls into the third category of moral reasoning. It is the moral thing to do, not because it

is the law, or because those in power tell us we must defend it. Standing up for academic freedom is simply the right thing to do.

It can be burdensome and lonely to defend freedom of belief, freedom of expression, and freedom of inquiry. As Hugh Genoways, Wes Sime, and Richard Buhman have so nobly demonstrated, standing up for academic freedom can be particularly painful when you stand alone.

Once upon a time, when I was a little girl, I went grocery shopping with my mother. When we got home, as we were putting the groceries away, my mother discovered somebody had placed a can of peas in our bag by mistake. My mother had not purchased the peas. She immediately loaded me and the can of peas back in the car and drove back to the store to return the item.

Nobody would have known, or even cared, if my mother had kept the peas. And she was a busy mom who went out of her way to return them. But by doing so, she taught me a lesson in morality. You do things not because somebody might catch you, or because the law says you have to. You do things because you should; because it is the right thing to do.

The administration at UNL did things because... well, I can't read their minds. They claim to have followed the "rules." Maybe they did. But sometimes following the rules is not necessarily the right thing to do.

I thank my mother for my sense of morality, and I thank the three recipients of the 2004 AFCON Academic Freedom Award for showing such courage and determination in the face of overwhelming odds. Richard, Wes, and Hugh – you did the right thing.

Summaries of AFCON Board of Directors' Meetings—Dwayne Ball

September 11, 2004—President Peggy Adair, back from her travels, brought the meeting to order at 10:15. Present were Dick Herman (Nebraska Press Association), Jim Bunstock (Nebraska Writers Guild), Chappy Chapuran (Nebraska High School Press Association), Bob Halter (American Association of University Professors--UNL Chapter and Nebraska State Conference), Peggy Adair (President and Legislative Liaison), Cathi McMurtry (Treasurer), Mel Krutz (Nebraska Center for the Book), Clark Kolterman (Nebraska English and Language Arts Council), Barbara Corne-

lius (Webmaster and Nebraska Library Association), and Dave Moshman (President-elect and Policy Coordinator).

The minutes of the July 10 meeting were approved without amendment or dissent.

The Treasurer's report showed a July 10 balance of \$2054.74, income of \$110, and expenses of \$120.98, for a current balance of \$2043.76. Dues have been received this year from 16 organizational members and 27 individual members. The report was approved without dissent.

The President thanked the Board for carrying on in her absence and was as-

ured that the Board had carried on in more ways than one. She noted the recent death of longtime member and supporter Nancy Duncan and the Board agreed, at her suggestion, to recognize Nancy by continuing the membership of Nebraska Story Performances for another year.

Dave reported that the joint conference of AFCON and the UNL AAUP will take place on Saturday morning, November 6, beginning at 10:00 in Lincoln. The conference will be concerned with establishing what happened in the UNL program eliminations and faculty terminations

(Continued to Page 3)

Summaries of AFCON Board of Directors' Meetings

(Continued from Page 2)

of 2003 and with considering how such matters should be handled in the future. There will be a five-person panel consisting of three faculty who were terminated without cause plus the President and President-elect of the UNL Academic Senate.

Peggy reported that the committee organizing AFCON's Banned Book Week activities for 2005 consists of Lynn Thurber (Nebraska State Reading Association), Tim Butz (ACLU Nebraska), Laurie Thomas Lee (UNL Academic Senate), Tom Black (Nebraska State Education Association), and Bob Haller (AAUP). The committee has not been active and needs a Chair. Bob said that as he would not be a slave so he would not be a master.

Doug Patterson will be representing the UNO Faculty Senate (replacing Beth Ritter).

October 9, 2004—Minutes of the September 11, 2004 board meeting were approved unanimously.

The treasury had \$1958.41 in account. As of today, there are 27 individuals and 16 member organizations with paid dues (or excused dues) for 2004. **A p p r o v e d u n a n i m o u s l y .**

Moshman reported that the annual meeting, held in conjunction with the

NE State Conference of the AAUP, will take place on November 6. Theme: faculty terminations due to budget cuts at UNL. The AAUP and AFCON will have slightly different announcements to send to their respective audiences. A motion to approve the AFCON version for distribution passed.

The committee to design the events for Banned Book week, 2005 September currently of Lee (chair), Haller, Black, and Tim Butz, Executive Director of the ACLU of Nebraska. Lee solicited suggestions from AFCON members to make this a memorable event.

Nomination for the Academic Freedom Award recipient(s) were made and approved. Name(s) to be announced at the annual meeting November 6.

A motion to provide a year's free membership in AFCON to the new UNL Student Advocates for Academic Freedom passed unanimously.

November 6, 2004—The Annual Membership Meeting followed a 10:00 program organized by president-elect David Moshman and others, jointly sponsored with the UNL Chapter of the AAUP. The program was titled "Faculty Terminations: 2003. What Really Happened? What Now?" The Panel featured three members of the UNL tenured faculty who were termi-

nated in 2003 as their programs were eliminated, allegedly due to budget cuts: Richard Buhman, Hugh Genoways, and Wesley Sime. Also on the panel were the president of the UNL Academic Senate, Wes Peterson, and the president-elect of the UNL Chapter of the AAUP, Mary Beck. Each of the five panel members spoke for about 6 to 10 minutes on the 2003 UNL faculty terminations. Finally, the newly-appointed Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Barbara Couture, offered a response to the panel discussion.

The AFCON Academic Freedom Award for 2003 was given to the first three panel members (the ones who were terminated as UNL faculty): Buhman, Genoways, and Sime.

Minutes of the November 22, 2003, AFCON annual membership meeting were approved unanimously.

Treasurer reported as of today, there are 27 individuals and 17 member organizations with paid dues (or excused dues) for 2004. Current balance in account is \$2007.78. **A p p r o v e d u n a n i m o u s l y .**

A slate of nominees for 2005 positions was presented by the nominating committee of Adair and Lee. Bob Haller was nominated for president-elect, Cathi McMurtry for treasurer, and Karen Buckley for secretary.

FOR SALE BY AFCON

Send orders to Mel Krutz, 2625 Bluff Road, Seward, NE 68434-9801

T-shirts with a Paul Fell "banned books" design; Sizes M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL; \$15.00. Packaging and postage: \$2.00 each.

Note cards with a Paul Fell design; \$1.50; four for \$5.00. Packaging and postage: \$0.75 per packet.

Reader's Theatre Script of a TANGLED ISSUE: Student Freedom of Expression. \$10.00 buys the book with rights to duplicate the script and produce the play. Packaging and postage: \$2.00 each.

University Reports—by Dwayne Ball

Rhode Island College, Providence (Chronicle of Higher Education, October 4, 2004): Professor Lisa Church was coordinator of the RIC pre-school last February, when two mothers, in conversation, made comments about race and welfare that another mother deemed racially offensive. Dr. Church was not present, but when asked by the offended mother to “discipline” the other mothers, Dr. Church refused on First Amendment grounds, pointing out that it was a private conversation between citizens, not staff. The outraged mother then filed a complaint of “discriminatory behavior” against Dr. Church with the RIC Affirmative Action Office, and a month-long official hearing began at the beginning of the fall semester. The RIC administration made statements to the effect that RIC would not tolerate faculty who allowed a hostile climate to exist on campus, totally ignoring the First Amendment implications of the case. RIC began to receive a great deal of negative publicity for, in effect, threatening to punish Dr. Church for upholding the Constitution. Finally, the RIC faculty, as a body, filed a grievance against their own College for suppressing free speech! The administration of RIC caved and the investigation was terminated with no action against Dr. Church.

Ohio State University, Columbus (F.I.R.E. Newsletter, October 4, 2004): In a now familiar type of policy action, Ohio State created a policy denying the right of student religious organizations to choose officers whose religious convictions matched the stated convictions of the organization, citing religious discrimination. Public relations pressure from F.I.R.E. and a lawsuit filed by the Christian Legal Society have caused Ohio State to reverse its policy.

Texas Tech University, Lubbock (Chronicle of Higher Education, October 4, 2004): The famous “Gazebo case” at Tech has now been decided in favor of free speech. A federal judge ruled that Tech’s policy limiting free speech to a single gazebo on campus was unconstitutional. A law student named Jason Roberts had told the university that he wanted to express the opinion that homosexuality was sinful in places outside the gazebo, which could hold, at most 40 people in a space 20 feet in diameter. The university told Mr. Roberts that such expression was “the expression of a personal belief and thus is something more appropriate for the free-speech area, which is the gazebo area.” Presumably, this meant that a student, staff, or faculty member expressing a personal opinion on, say, the taste of Jonathan apples should also have confined such opinions to the Gazebo. In fact, it appears to this writer that the University’s logic would have demanded that all conversations take place in the Gazebo, which would have become, well, mighty crowded pretty quick.. Judge Sam Cummings of the U.S. District Court in Lubbock made the ruling.

University of Massachusetts, Amherst (F.I.R.E. newsletter of Oct. 14, 2004): UMA has double standards when it comes to

free expression. For example, about a year ago, when Army Ranger and former football star Pat Tillman was killed in Iraq, a student newspaper columnist called him an “idiot” in print and said he had “got what was coming to him” – this on approximately the day of his funeral. When people expressed outrage over her comments, UMA defended her right to say such things. Good for UMA, you say? Well, as long as one expresses the right opinions, UMA is right there to defend you. But, when an after-student-government-election party was held for one candidate, what they did at the party was a no-no. The candidate had been defeated, after being called a racist for opposing the set-aside of a certain number of minority seats in the student government. Nine of his friends in the student government drew a caricature of him in Klu Klux Klan attire on a whiteboard and took pictures of themselves in front of it, and posted them on a website. UMA then came down hard. This was no mere stomping on the grave of an American soldier, oh no! This was offending the sensibilities of the politically correct! All nine students have been charged with racial harassment. UMA Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Michael Gargano told the campus newspaper, “I have the authority to remove these people from office...I could give them 500 hours of community service, have them conduct an open forum discussion; I have a variety of sanctions at my disposal. I’m not ruling out dismissal.” He also said, at a “diversity panel,” “If the Student Government Association doesn’t move on it, I will. Are we clear? Resign!” The matter remains in the hands of the UMA administration.

University of New Hampshire, Durham (F.I.R.E. newsletters, October 28 and November 12, 2004): Student Timothy Garneau decided that the Freshman 15 was a laughing matter, and slow dorm elevators were as well, so he put the two together and posted flyers around his dorm suggesting that women students could avoid gaining weight by taking the stairs. UNH didn’t laugh. He was found guilty of violating policies on affirmative action, harassment, and disorderly conduct, and was sentenced to mandatory counseling and probation. He was also evicted from the dorm and was homeless and living in his car. In New Hampshire. In the winter. After two weeks of negative publicity orchestrated by F.I.R.E., UNH dropped the charges against him and allowed him to move back into his dormitory.

University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa (F.I.R.E. newsletter, November 11, 2004): UA’s Faculty Senate passed a resolution recommending that UA officials “develop clear policies restricting any behavior which demeans or reduces an individual based on group affiliation or personal characteristics, or which promotes hate or discrimination, in any approved University program or activity, and that these policies be incorporated into any contract entered into by the

(Continued to Page 5)

AFCON SPEAKER'S BUREAU (As of December 2004)

Dwayne Ball: "Threats to Academic Freedom at Universities"
adball@alltel.net

Linda Beckstead: "Freedom of Student Press Issues"
BecksteadL@aol.com

Bob Haller: "Free the Students! Why Higher Education Needs a New Movement" and "How Books Can Harm You: Lessons of the Censors"
rhaller1@unl.edu

David Moshman: "Principles of Academic Freedom"
dmoshman1@unl.edu

John Bender and David Moshman: "Student Freedom of Expression/Student Rights"
bender@unl.edu
dmoshman1@unl.edu

Mark Weddleton and Laurie Thomas Lee: "Implications of the USA Patriot Act"
mark@weddleton.com
llee1@unl.edu

Presentation of the Readers' Theatre production of A Tangled Web: Student Freedom of Expression (a cast of adults and students)

ADDRESS FOR THE AFCON WEB SITE

<http://www.AFCONebr.org>

Check it out and learn Who We Are and about Our Activities; read our Constitution; learn how to Join Us; see the where and when of our Meetings; meet our Members and Officers; Study our Publications, Principles, and Statements

University Reports

(Cont. from P. 4)

University regarding participation in formal University programs." This is the same university that charges a conservative professor's group eight times more than it charges other groups for distributing campus mail, and the same university that tried to ban all window displays because a student put a Confederate flag in his dorm window. The outcome of this new assault on free speech remains to be seen.

Metropolitan State College of Denver (Chronicle of Higher Education, November 23, 2004): Professor Oneida J. Meranto has endured a year of grievances filed against her by students accusing her of liberal bias and discrimination. Meranto, who often speaks out on women and minority issues, has been accused by several conservative students of indoctrination and intimidation during lectures, and of grading policies that punish the expression of conservative opinion. Some of the students are associated with David Horowitz's "Academic Bill of Rights" movement. One student who

complained to her by e-mail received a return e-mail saying that she was dropping him from the class. Ms. Meranto, clearly under great stress due to all the complaints, has complained that other faculty, especially those in minority programs, won't support her. The chairman of the Chicano-studies department was quoted as writing: "We had nothing to do with her situation and we want to keep it that way." Meranto has received death threats and demanded that the College protect her. in various ways (such as a parking space close to her building), but so far, the College has refused. However, on August 9, the College president issued a statement: "You are entirely within your legal rights to hold and express views contrary to your students' on Latin American politics, current public issues like the 'student bill of rights,' ... The College cannot and will not presume that your treatment of students reflects ideological bias or prejudice merely because you express your point of view." At the same time, the president wrote that students also had the

same rights of free expression, and that the college requires that she grade students on their academic performance and not their point of view. The president further said he believed she was grading fairly. Ms. Mercanto is at least pleased with that decision.

Brooklyn College, City University of New York (F.I.R.E. newsletter, November 23, 2004): The Brooklyn College student government was preparing to vote on a "Student Bill of Rights," with clauses that "faculty members should not be hired, fired, or denied promotion or tenure because of their political, religious, or social beliefs; that students be included on tenure committees; and that grades should not be based on students' political beliefs." Such academic bills of rights have been recently associated with conservatives such as David Horowitz. On November 19, Brooklyn College officials simply disbanded the student government to keep such a bill from passing – neat trick, eh? They reversed themselves on November 23, after F.I.R.E. generated substantial negative publicity.

UNL Faculty Terminations: 2003

By David Moshman

On November 6, 2004, AFCON and the UNL chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) co-sponsored a conference entitled "UNL Faculty Terminations: 2003--What Really Happened? What Now?" The conference began with presentations by three tenured UNL faculty who were terminated without cause in 2003—Richard Buhman (Industrial Systems Technology), Hugh Genoways (Museum), and Wes Sime (Health and Human Performance)—and continued with presentations by UNL Academic Senate President Wes Peterson and President-elect Mary Beck. After comments by UNL Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Barbara Couture and by members of the audience, AFCON President Peggy Adair presented AFCON's annual Academic Freedom Award to the three terminated faculty in recognition of their efforts to address the academic freedom issues involved in their termination. Below are summaries of the presentations by Richard Buhman and Wes Peterson.

From the Presentation by Professor Richard Buhman:

Good morning. Thank you for the invitation to this event.

The advertised subjects are (1) terminations without cause; (2) age discrimination; (3) forced retirements; (4) coerced waivers of fundamental rights; and (5) secret administrative processes.

First, terminations without cause: The "vertical cut" process avoids the protections built into the post tenure re-

view process. A faculty member cannot defend against charges if the administration makes none. The "vertical cut" process has made review by one's peers or a college committee unnecessary. There is no way an individual whom the administration has selected can earn his or her way back into a tenured position.

Age discrimination: I have read that six of the seven faculty members that lost their tenured positions because of the cuts were of retirement age. That is too high a ratio for me to believe that age discrimination was not a factor in the selection of programs. I do not believe these individuals were not selected.

Forced Retirements: The deadline for the decision to retire was fourteen days after the Chancellor's announcement of the department elimination and seventy-one days before the Academic Planning Committee (APC) hearing. The time for reflection or location of a replacement position was inadequate. The administration timed the announcement at the end of the spring semester, and summer is not a good time for people to arrange for a new position. The final contract had to be signed in October, just after an all-out effort to convince the APC to recommend that they should retain the only Nebraska manufacturing program.

Coerced waivers of fundamental rights to challenge termination: To obtain the phased retirement I had to

sign a document in which I agreed to have no "claim" on the university. The administration did not allow me to have a hearing before a committee of the Academic Senate, though I had released the university from legal responsibility.

Secret administrative processes to eliminate programs: There was no collegial dialogue on selection of programs to be eliminated within the college before or after the announcement. There was no notification of affected personnel before the announcement of the department elimination.

From the Presentation by Wes Peterson, President, UNL Academic Senate:

In response to reductions in state-allocated funds for the 2002-03 fiscal year, the UNL administration adopted a strategy based on what were referred to as vertical cuts in contrast to horizontal cuts (thought by many to be across-the-board cuts). What this meant in reality was that the administration closed three academic departments, a research and extension center and various other "programs" and fired the personnel, including tenured faculty, in these units.

The Academic Senate does not have a direct role in the implementation of decisions such as this. Rather, the Academic Planning Committee is the group that is to be consulted by the Chancellor. As it became apparent that tenured and tenure-track faculty members were being targeted in the budget
(Continued to Page 7)

REQUEST FOR NEWS FOR FUTURE ISSUES

The editor of the AFCON SENTINEL invites all AFCON individual and organizational members to send news about academic freedom issues in Nebraska or editorial comments for inclusion in this newsletter and/or announcements of organizational meetings for the UPCOMING EVENTS column.

Due date for submissions to the **MARCH 18, 2005**, issue is **FEBRUARY 21, 2005**.

Send to Tom Black, editor, 610 West Park, West Point, NE 68788 or wpc6296@cableone.net

UNL Faculty Terminations: 2003

(Continued from Page 6)

cuts, the Senate met with the affected faculty members and testified before the APC in defense of the targeted faculty. The APC deliberated and reacted strongly to the proposed “vertical” cuts. But the APC did not have veto power on these decisions so the Chancellor was not constrained to accept their recommendations.

At the end of the Spring Semester in 2003, a resolution was introduced to the Senate calling for a vote of no confidence in the Chancellor and others. The motion was not declared an emergency motion so it would have been held over the summer until the first meeting of the Senate in September. The Chancellor saw this situation as unacceptable and organized a vote of the Assembly on 1) support for the Chancellor and 2) support for the Chancellor’s strategy of vertical cuts including firing tenured faculty members. Out of 1400 faculty members, 900 voted to support the Chancellor, 100 voted against the Chancellor and 400 did not vote.

The vote of confidence afforded the Chancellor the political capital to pursue vertical cuts pretty much as he wished. Once it became apparent that neither the APC nor the Senate would be able to force a reversal of the decisions, the leadership in the Academic Senate began working to insure that the terminated faculty were treated correctly according to AAUP guidelines. These efforts were not always successful.

At the same time we began to think about what we could learn from the experience. It appears that throughout the process the

UNL administration followed the letter of the AAUP guidelines on terminating tenured faculty although not necessarily the spirit. It is worth noting that the current AAUP president, Roger Bowen, heard things about the procedures here that made him question the decision of his predecessor not to open an investigation into UNL’s practices.

John Wunder, former President of the Academic Senate, asked the APC and the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee (ARRC) to look at the procedures that were followed to determine how UNL procedures could be made more fair. He also suggested the formation of an ad hoc senate committee to examine reduction-in-force procedures. This committee was duly set up and is currently examining these procedures.

We also received recommendations from APC and ARRC concerning tenure, termination letters, and grievance rights. Perhaps the most objectionable aspects of the termination process concerned the distribution of termination letters before final decisions had been made (to get the termination clock going as early as possible). Acceptance of employment or retirement offers meant signing away the right to file a grievance. The APC and ARRC recommended that these practices be ruled out in any new procedures.

Procedures for reductions in force have to be approved by the Senate and Association of Students of the University of Nebraska (ASUN). These procedures were changed under Graham Spanier in the early 1990s. It appears that the earlier procedures would have allowed the APC to block the decision to fire tenured faculty. It is clear that the procedures we are operating under now do not allow any faculty committee to reverse or constrain decisions

taken by the administration.

If we can develop new procedures that do restore some of the faculty’s ability to control reduction-in-force decisions, or if we simply wish to withdraw support for the existing procedures with the expectation that the rules will revert to those in effect before the change in the early 1990s, it will be necessary to change bylaws and other governing documents. And this may be where problems arise. While changes in the procedures have to be approved by the Senate and ASUN, it is not clear that a Senate resolution, for example, would force the administration to make any changes.

It would probably be easier to establish procedures that are more just and humane if we could mobilize the UNL faculty to join in the effort. That is our greatest weakness--if the faculty don’t care, we are not likely to be able to do anything. If the AAUP could turn out 700-800 members to argue for change, we would have a better chance. But the AAUP has only about 60 members. At the beginning of the academic year, 7 seats on the Academic Senate (out of 79) were vacant-- there may be more now. We usually just barely get a quorum (40) and by the end of the Senate meeting most have left. We have had 77 responses to the Committee on Committees’ call for expressions of committee preferences out of a faculty of 1400. And most of these are probably the same ones who always volunteer. It seems that our culture is not one that attaches a lot of weight to collegiality, shared governance, or AAUP values.

The Nebraska Educational Media Association

The Nebraska Educational Media Association was formed in 1969 for the purpose of bringing several library media organizations with similar goals together in one association. The purpose of NEMA is to provide visionary leadership and support for educational library media professionals. The goals identified in the strategic plan are:

- Provide professional development opportunities for NEMA members.
- Build relationships with professionals and organizations to enhance awareness of school library media programs.
- Promote and advocate for quality library media programs.

The organization is an affiliate of the American Association of School Librarians which is a division of the American Library Association.

NEMA is governed by a group of elected officers and board members with representation from across the state. An ad hoc committee of members throughout the state, the Information Power Committee, has been active in providing leadership and training on the topic of the information literacy standards that were published in 1998 in the document *Information Power*. The group received a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Science which funded a variety of staff development activities.

NEMA joins the Nebraska Library Association (NLA) in sponsoring a yearly state conference in the fall. The annual meeting of the organization is held at the conference, and members have the opportunity to attend multiple sessions on a variety of topics. In addition, attendees have the opportunity to visit with a variety of vendors of library-related products.

Professional development activities planned for the 2004-2005 school year include hosting sessions in each of the six regional library system on the topic of planning an advocacy campaign using the theme: "your library." The issue of academic integrity and prevention of plagiarism will be addressed in a systematic way

through articles in the quarterly newsletter, the posting of teaching strategies to the NEMA website, and through presentations at various conferences.

NEMA has also been actively engaged in advocacy efforts with the Nebraska Department of Education. In the fall of 2004, NEMA members participated in focus groups and online surveys designed to gather input as to how NDE can restructure their department to better provide support in the areas of information literacy and technology literacy. NEMA members have also provided input into the regulations governing school library programs and members will participate in hearings when the rule changes are discussed in public. NEMA board members have also met with the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Education to voice the concerns of the organization.

NEMA works actively with other organizations whose interest and purpose are similar. NEMA has liaisons with the following state organizations: State Advisory Council on Libraries; Nebraska Library Commission's Youth Advisory Board; Nebraska Library Association; Nebraska Library Commission; Read Aloud Nebraska; Talking Books and Braille Services; and AFCON.

The current officers of NEMA are President: Gail Formanack (Omaha Public Schools); President-elect: Donna Helvering (Millard Public Schools); Secretary: Jayne Engel Hlavac (Schuyler Public Schools); Treasurer: Mary Reiman (Lincoln Public Schools); Past-president: Deb Grove (Papillion-LaVista Public Schools). Karen Buckley serves as NEMA's liaison to AFCON.

(The Nebraska Educational Media Association is an organizational member of the Academic Freedom Coalition Of Nebraska.—the editor.)

AFCON 2004 in Review:

Membership

- In December, 2003, we had 17 paid organizational member and 24 individual members.
- In November, 2004, we have 16 organizational members and 27 individual members.
- We redesigned our New Member Packet and developed a Prospective Member Packet that is in a ready-to-mail envelope.
- We proposed featuring member organizations in our *Sentinel*. Earlier this year the Nebraska Center for the Book was featured. In December, the Nebraska Educational Media Association will have an article in our newsletter.
- We planned to recruit more students, and were fortunate to recruit an entire student organization, the newly-formed Student Advocates for Academic Freedom, based at UNL.
- We welcomed new Board members, Jim Bunstock representing Nebraska Writers Guild; Chappy Chapuran, NHSPA; Doug Patterson, UNO Faculty Senate, and Anne Cognard, LEA.
- And we lost a dear friend, Nancy Duncan.
- We revised and updated our Speakers Bureau list.
- Our website, maintained by Barbara Cornelius, is another great communication avenue.
- We recruited an excellent Banned Book Committee for 2005, which Laurie Thomas Lee has agreed to chair. Other members are Bob Haller, Tom Black, Tim Butz, and Lynn Thurber (of the NSRA).
- We looked at ways to deal positively with threats to tenure at UNL and elsewhere, culminating in the joint AAUP-AFCON conference and panel discussion held November 6.

Outreach

- NSRA distributed 800 of our AFCON membership brochures this spring.
 - AFCON had information tables at the following events:
 - Summer Writers' Conference at UNL
 - Nebraska Book Festival (Nebraska Center for the Book)
 - NELAC Conference, September
 - Plum Creek Children's Literacy Festival, September
 - NEMA/NLA Conference, October
 - NHSPA Fall Conference, September
 - Laurie Thomas Lee spoke on behalf of AFCON at the Bill of Rights Defense Coalition Rally in Lincoln in July.
 - Peggy Adair presented a workshop on at-risk students at the NEMA/NLA Conference in October.
- (We thank Peggy Adair, President of the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska for preparing this summary of the 2004 organizational year. —the editor)

Activities

- On February 11, 2004, the Omaha World-Herald published an AFCON op-ed piece defending the principles defined by *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District*; an article for which we received much feedback, mostly positive with some negative.
- We continue to monitor the effects of the USA PATRIOT Act.
- We followed legislative bills and took action by testimony or letter when appropriate.
- Tom Black continues our fine newsletter, the *Sentinel*, which is one way we communicate with member organizations.

AFCON

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Mailing
Address
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ACADEMIC FREEDOM COALITION OF NEBRASKA

HELP AFCON PROMOTE ACADEMIC FREEDOM

As a member of AFCON, you can help us

- ◆ support applications of the First Amendment in academic contexts, including elementary and secondary schools, colleges, universities, and libraries.
- ◆ educate Nebraskans about the meaning and value of intellectual freedom, intellectual diversity, mutual respect, open communication, and uninhibited pursuit of knowledge, including the role of these ideals in academic contexts and in democratic self-government.
- ◆ assist students, teachers, librarians, and researchers confronted with censorship, indoctrination, or suppression of ideas.
- ◆ act as liaison among groups in Nebraska that support academic freedom.

MEMBERSHIP (To become a member, send dues, organization or individual name, address, and phone number to Cathi McMurtry, 515 N. Thomas Avenue, Oakland, NE 68045)

Organizational Membership (\$100) entitles the organization to one seat on the AFCON Board and one vote in the election of officers and at the annual meeting, and eligibility for office and chairing standing committees and provides newsletter subscription for the board member to share with the organization's information director and reduced rates to AFCON conferences for its members.

Individual Membership (\$10) provides newsletter subscription, eligibility for office and for chairing standing committees, reduced rates for AFCON conferences, and one vote at annual meetings.

Student Membership (\$5) entitles full-time students to the same privileges as provided by the Individual Membership.

**AFCON ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS, PLEASE DUPLICATE THIS NEWSLETTER FOR YOUR MEMBERS.
INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS, PLEASE PASS THIS NEWSLETTER TO A FRIEND AFTER YOU HAVE READ IT.
ENCOURAGE HIM OR HER TO JOIN AFCON**