



THE

# AFCON

SENTINEL



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A Quarterly of the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska

March 16, 2007

## AFCON OFFICERS

Doug Paterson  
President

Nancy Comer  
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Robert Haller  
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David Moshman  
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Peggy Adair  
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Barbara Cornelius  
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Tom Black  
Newsletter Editor

### 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—Doug Paterson

### Letter from the New President

Greetings to all AFCON members and friends from your new President. For those who know little to nothing about me, I am a long-term and unrepentant progressive, an educator inspired by the traditions of Paulo Freire, and a theatre professor at UNO inspired by the traditions of Augusto Boal and his vision of the Theatre of the Oppressed. Let me add immediately that this theatre tradition is not the theatre of the *depressed*, nor does it seek to *oppress* its audiences. Rather, as in the tradition of Paulo Freire, it strives to create endless opportunities for dialogue – in the classroom, in the community, in the political arena, and in all daily relationships.

I thus hope to bring these dialogical traditions to my activities as President of AFCON for the year 2007.

You may well know AFCON's background, but as refresher, our organization began with a US Supreme Court decision:

"In January 1988, the United States Supreme Court handed down its decision in the case *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*. The decision upheld the right of public high school administrators at Hazelwood East High School in suburban St. Louis, Missouri, to censor stories concerning teen pregnancy and the effects of divorce on children from a school-sponsored student newspaper.

The "Hazelwood" decision was in dramatic contrast to the previous 15 years' decisions of courts across the country that had given student journalists extensive

First Amendment protections. As a result, many students and advisers are concerned about the status of their rights." (<http://content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4721>)

The decision was a significant blow to a 1969 US Supreme Court decision called *Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent Community School District* that affirmed student free expression in public schools.

Indeed AFCON became a coalition in February of 1988 on the heels of Hazelwood. After careful study and deliberate organization, this coalition was formed with the declared purpose of promoting: "academic freedom in Nebraska, defined as intellectual freedom in educational and research contexts. This includes freedoms of belief and expression, and access to information and ideas. In pursuit of this general goal, AFCON shall: (1) support application of the First Amendment in academic contexts, including schools, colleges, universities, and libraries." <http://www.nebrwesleyan.edu/offices/library/Afcon/Constitution/constitution.html>

Given AFCON's cultivating an unusually broad constituency, it has emerged as the only such multi-disciplinary academic freedom advocacy network in the United States.

It would be wrong to say that AFCON has gotten off to a roaring start in 2007 because AFCON doesn't stop roaring. But to meet our declared mission, AFCON has several on-going projects from 2006 and previous years which we continue to pursue. One is to introduce and pass in the Nebraska Unicameral a Student Free Expression Bill. We were not successful in locating a senator who

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## Upcoming Events

AFCON Board Meetings, April 14, May 12, and June 9, 2007  
Loren Eiseley Library, 1530 Superior, Lincoln, Nebraska; 10 AM

## THE PRESIDENT—Doug Paterson

would introduce the bill this year, but with the leadership of board member Peggy Adair have considerably extended our understanding of the possibilities for the future. We will continue to prepare the ground for next year.

Another area of interest is the Civics Nebraska initiative. Bob Haller of the AFCON board is in dialogue with Joe Rowson on this subject. We are also trying to keep abreast of the growing national addiction to standardized tests, measurements, and “accountability” mandates, currently manifested in Senator Ron Raikes LB653. Several of our board members are heading up

this inquiry.

I have suggested we find ways to engage the Nebraska Board of Regents on the issue of Academic Freedom. A recent decision by the UNO Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee determined that decisions regarding a professor’s re-appointment had violated her academic freedom. The BOR, however, dismissed that part of the finding out of hand. Thus some dialogue between the Board of Regents and AFCON might be useful. Currently we are discussing possible strategies. Finally, I want to take some steps toward communicating with educational networks

in neighboring states as to the possibility of helping to form AFCON-like organizations beyond Nebraska. We’ve done such outreach before with not much success, but I would like to see if perhaps the waters are now a little more open.

AFCON continues to be, to my mind, a singularly powerful voice in our state for issues relevant to open education. Please feel free to contact me (dpateron@mail.unomaha.edu), or any of the board members, if you have news of developments we should investigate or suggestions for expanding the liberating effect of academic freedom.

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## Summaries of AFCON Board of Directors’ Meetings—Karen Buckley

**December 2, 2006**—Annual Membership Meeting, 2005-2006.

**Present:** Peggy Adair, Dwayne Ball, Amy Birky, Karen Buckley, Nancy Comer, Bob Haller, Susan Helmink, Dick Herman, Laurie Thomas Lee, Cathi McMurtry, Dave Moshman, Jane Neal, Susan Oles, Doug Paterson.

The AFCON annual membership meeting began with a panel presentation, “Civic Education, Student Rights, and Student Media.” Panelists were Joe Rowson, P-16 member and Civics Nebraska member; Susan Quint, former drama and theatre instructor, Bellevue schools (now a Health teacher); Susan Baird, former journalism teacher, Bellevue schools; Matt Deabler, journalism teacher, Omaha Central, and Molly Mullen, former Central High journalism student and newspaper editor, now a UNL student. Dave Paterson served as moderator, with approximately 25 persons in attendance. Haller presented AFCON Academic Freedom Awards to Deabler, Quint, and Baird.

Haller brought the annual membership business meeting to order at 1 p.m.

**Minutes:** The November 5, 2005, annual membership meeting minutes were approved.

**Treasurer:** The annual treasurer’s report which showed AFCON with a

balance of \$1076.72 as of December 1, 2006, with 46 individual members and 17 member organization was filed. Postage mileage costs have risen, to account for the difference in balance from last to this year’s budget. Discussion was held regarding e-mailing newsletters as a way of reducing expenses. No action taken.

**Nominating committee:** The following slate was presented: president-elect: Nancy Comer; secretary: Karen Buckley; Cathi McMurtry, treasurer. With no further nominations, ballots will be mailed.

**President’s Report:** Haller said that major efforts/accomplishments of the past year were: 1) following and supporting academic freedom issues, particularly those of two of the Academic Freedom award winners, Baird and Quint, and of Michael Baker, Lincoln East social studies teacher; 2) AFCON participating and/or displaying materials at conventions and conferences of member organizations; 3) promoting Student Free Expression legislation in the Unicameral and in guidelines for the State Department of Education for the Civics Initiative Council, a continuing process; and 4) coordinated response to the proposed UNL Diversity Plan, which included editorials in the Daily Nebraskan and Lincoln Journal Star and a presentation to the UNL Faculty Senate. Ball commended Haller on his service to academic freedom and to AFCON

This was followed by applause.

Ball received a message from the ACLU Nebraska executive committee that the group will continue to support AFCON in seeking passage of a Student Free Expression bill. Adair said that Amy Miller, legal director of ACLU Nebraska, has agreed to draft a students’ rights statement.

**New Business:** Amy Birky moved, and Nancy Comer seconded, that organization dues be raised to \$120 and individual dues be raised to \$15, effective with renewals of individual memberships after January 1, 2007, and organizational memberships after January 1, 2008.

**January 13, 2007**—

**Present:** Peggy Adair, Dwayne Ball, Karen Buckley, Nancy Comer, Bob Haller, Laurie Thomas Lee, Cathi McMurtry, Dave Moshman, Susan Oles, Doug Paterson..

**Minutes:** The November 11 board minutes were approved.

**Treasurer’s report:** The treasurer’s report showed a balance of \$826.62, with 46 individual members and 17 organizational members current with dues.

**President’s report:** Paterson distributed copies of the AFCON Constitution and the AFCON Statement on Sexuality and Academic Freedom (available at [www.afcon.org](http://www.afcon.org)). Pamela Owens, whose termination at UNO was upheld at a hearing despite

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## Summaries of AFCON Board of Directors' Meetings (Continued from Page 2)

the finding of two violations of academic freedom., will be invited to an upcoming meeting. Paterson discussed encouraging academic freedom groups to form in other states. Haller said that he is writing an article for *Academe*, AAUP's national publication, encouraging the formation of other groups.

**Policy Coordinator:** Moshman reported that the Eighth Circuit Court has upheld an injunction stopping the Maple Grove School District from banning the approved Gay-Straight Alliance from meeting on campus, citing the "equal access act" for noncurricular activities. Moshman then turned attention to "Brightline Compliance." Moshman requested, and the board approved, a letter from president Paterson expressing AFCON's concern with the Brightline Compliance on-line course on sexual harassment required of UNL administrators and strongly encouraged for all faculty and staff.

**The Student Free Expression Group:** Haller spoke to State Senator Avery about introducing a student free expression bill to the Unicameral.

**Membership reports:** Comer said that the State Reading Association had received complaints about some books on the Golden Sower reading list being inappropriate for the age levels, resulting in a challenge to the Reading Classics competition. The challenge revealed that the organization does not have a policy that would address those concerns; consequently a policy statement will be established.

**New Business:** Adair proposed a presentation about intellectual freedom be made to the Board of Regents, sometime after the current Unicameral session ends in May. More discussion on this will be held at the March or April meeting.

### February 10, 2007—

**Present:** Dwayne Ball, Tom Black, Karen Buckley, Bob Haller, Jim Bunstock, Mel Krutz, Laurie Thomas Lee, Cathi McMurtry, Dave Moshman, Susan Oles, Linda Parker, Doug Paterson; members welcomed Linda Parker as the new co-representative of the Nebraska Library Association.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the November 11 board meeting were approved.

**Treasurer's report:** The treasurer's report showed a balance of \$890.44, with 11 individual members and 2 organizational members current with dues.

**President's report:** Paterson called attention to AFCON's mission statement and the need for planning.

**Newsletter:** The deadline for copy for the March 16 *Sentinel* is February 19.

**Policy Coordinator:** Moshman reported that the new editor of the *Daily Nebraskan* had invited faculty members to contribute articles for the op-ed section. Moshman and Ball have proposed a series of three columns on academic freedom.

**Legislation:** Peggy Adair submitted a written report. The Student Free Expression bill was not introduced this legislative session. Joe Rowson, the chair of The Student Free Expression Group, will not continue as chair of the Civics in Education committee, an advisory committee to the State Board of Education. AFCON's input helped form part of the charge to the State Board of Education that students' right to practice first amendment rights must be included in civics education. AFCON members would like to make a presentation on civics education to the State Board of Education.

**Membership reports:** Haller said that the state conference of the AAUP will be March 31 in Hastings; the theme is academic freedom and current threats.

Tom Black reported the NSEA has

taken a position to monitor LB 653 (the Raikes Bill.) (See new business.)

Ball said that the ACLU will testify in a favor of the Student Free Expression Bill when the bill is introduced.

**New Business/Planning Session:** AFCON received a request from Chris Gallagher in opposing LB 653, Quality Education Accountability Act, a legislative bill introduced by Sen. Ron Raikes. The hearing will be March 5. It was decided that Haller explore this bill and report back to Paterson; they will see if a letter or testimony is warranted.

Lee, Parker and Buckley volunteered to serve on the Banned Books Week committee; AFCON participates in alternate years. Members suggested collaborating again with other groups (such as ACLU Nebraska, NLA, Lincoln City Libraries) and to look for ways to expand the observance beyond Lincoln and Omaha, perhaps through bookstores in other communities and with Public Service Announcements

Board members want to make presentations on academic freedom to the NU Board of Regents. One way might be registering for the five minutes allotted members of the public preceding regular board meetings. Before preceding on this, however, it was decided to see what response there is from the articles on academic freedom to be printed in the *Daily Nebraskan* and to get input from the university faculty senates.

Paterson is still interested in an outreach campaign to encourage other states to form academic freedom coalitions of their own because he believes in the importance of networking to fight threats against academic freedoms. Paterson and Parker will work together to format a plan for this expansion.

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## MAY WE SEND THE *SENTINEL* TO YOU BY E-MAIL????

Anyone who wishes to receive the *Sentinel* via e-mail, should so indicate by sending your request and your e-mail address to Robert Haller at [mshortt@inebraska.com](mailto:mshortt@inebraska.com).

## AFCON SPEAKER'S BUREAU (As of December 2007)

Peggy Adair: "Banned Books, Black Armbands, and School Prayer: The Evolution of Children's First Amendment Rights in America"  
padair@tconl.com

Dwayne Ball: "Threats to Academic Freedom at Universities"  
adball@neb.rr.com

Linda Beckstead: "Freedom of Student Press Issues"  
becksteadlinda@cox.net

Bob Haller: "Civics Education and the Practice of Freedom" and "How Books Can Harm You: Lessons from 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"  
jbender1@unl.edu  
dmoshman1@unl.edu

Laurie Thomas Lee: "Implications of the USA Patriot Act"  
llee1@unl.edu

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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**

### FOR SALE BY AFCON

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

Note cards with a Paul Fell design with the wording "When all Books are Banned, see the Book— \$1.00;" \$1.50 each or a packet of four for \$5.00. Packaging and postage: \$0.75 per packet.

Reader's Theatre Script (a booklet,) entitled TANGLED ISSUE: Student Freedom of Expression. \$10.00 buys the booklet and production rights, including rights to copy. Packaging and postage: \$3.00.

### 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 **MONTH DAY**, 2004, issue is **MONTH DAY**, 2004.

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

## UNIVERSITY REPORTS—Dwayne Ball

My sources for these reports are the Chronicle of Higher Education (CHE) the newsletters of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), and other sources as noted.

### FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Clemson University abandoned, for now, its “free speech zone” policy, under which the university claimed it could censor all speech not expressed in two specific campus areas. A conservative group deliberately violated the policy in order to challenge it. Under public relations pressure from FIRE, Clemson promised to revise its policy and suspended it until revised. There are similar cases of “free speech zones” all over the U.S., notably at West Virginia, Texas Tech, Citrus College, the University of Central Florida, and UNC-Greensboro. (FIRE newsletter of 11/28/2006)

Johns Hopkins University suspended for a year, and imposed other penalties on 18-year-old junior Justin Park for posting a party announcement for his fraternity on Facebook.com. You may be aware that Facebook.com is a website that is operated independently of any university. The party announcement was for a “Halloween in the Hood” party. Some people found this title and theme offensive on the basis of race. The usual kangaroo court was assembled, and Mr. Park was convicted, suspended, and further sentenced to 300 hours of community service, “diversity training,” the reading of 12 selected books, and the writing of a “reflective” essay on each. After public pressure from FIRE regarding rights of free expression, and an appeal by Mr. Park, the sentence was reduced sufficiently to satisfy Mr. Park, who would not release details. (FIRE newsletter 1/8/2007)

A report released by FIRE argues that censorship is rampant at American universities. The report may be found at <http://www.thefire.org/index.php/article/7556.html>.

Michigan State University has a “Student Accountability in Community seminar (SAC)” for students who have engaged in “unacceptable” speech and behavior. This is ideological indoctrination at the student’s expense, says FIRE, for engaging in such behaviors as trivial as slamming a door during an argument or playing a practical joke. FIRE director Greg Lukianoff is quoted as saying, “Michigan State’s SAC program

shows a breathtaking lack of respect for individual dignity and autonomy,” and calls for its total dismantling. “According to the program’s materials, SAC is an ‘early intervention’ for students who use such ‘power-and-control tactics’ as ‘male/white privilege’ and ‘obfuscation,’ which the university cryptically defines as ‘any action of obscuring, concealing, or changing people’s perceptions that result in your advantage and/or another’s disadvantage.’” (FIRE newsletter 12/14/2007)

Robert Redeker, author of several scholarly books and a French high-school philosophy teacher in the small town of Saint-Orens-de-Gameville, published a guest editorial in the widely read French newspaper *Le Figaro*. It was titled, “What Should the Free World Do in the Face of Islamist Intimidation?” It was critical of the brand of Islam that demands restrictions on speech and thought in Europe, and of spineless politicians who give in to such demands. It stated Redeker’s belief that the Quran deals in violence and hatred. The reaction across France was dramatic. While some upheld Redeker’s right of free speech, he was nonetheless vivified by many Frenchmen in the press, subjected to anonymous death threats, given a death sentence on an Islamic website, and had to take his family into hiding, where he apparently remains. (Commentary magazine, January 2007)

Ryan Visconti, a student at Arizona State University - East, and a dormitory Resident Assistant, has been placed on probation because of his public criticism of diversity training sessions that he claims portray Christians as hateful and narrow-minded. He made these claims in an interview with the local newspaper, *The East Valley Tribune* of Mesa, Arizona. The University claims the probation, which directly followed the publication of his criticisms, was due to other personnel issues. (*East Valley Tribune*, 2/2/2007)

San Francisco State University is investigating the College Republicans for stepping on Hezbollah and Hamas flags (copied onto butcher paper) as part of an anti-terrorism demonstration. Unbeknownst to the CR’s, the flags contained the Arabic word for Allah, and a number of students filed complaints of the creation of a “hostile environment.” FIRE has argued with the administration- that the investigation is an attempt to stifle constitutionally protected free expression through intimidation, but the university intends to go through with its investigation and hearing process. (FIRE newsletter of 2/8/2007)

### STUDENT PRESS FREEDOM

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law a bill that forbids censorship of student newspapers by college administrators. This counters the infamous 1988 Hazelwood decision within California. The bill took effect January 1, 2007. (AAUP on-line edition of *Academe*, 1/14/06)

### STUDENT ADMISSION RIGHTS

The U.S. Department of Education will challenge the right of the American Bar Association to impose diversity standards on law schools as part of its accreditation process (CHE 1/9/2007)

The University of Wisconsin’s 26-campus system will now be explicitly considering applicants’ race and sex in admission decisions, despite opponents’ arguments that such consideration violates state law. (CHE 2/12/2007)

Virginia Tech has opened the Dow Jones Journalism program to all races. Previously, the program was closed to all but minorities. (CHE 2/15/2007)

### FACULTY RESEARCH RIGHTS

In November the U.S. Congress passed the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (S 3880), which prohibits and punishes intimidation and physical threats against animal researchers and their families and other intimates. The ACLU expressed concern that the act could be used to stifle free expression protected under the First Amendment. (CHE 11/15/2006)

Bowling Green State University (BGSU) of Ohio doesn’t allow professors to have software on their office computers that can conceal their web-browsing activity. Professor of Visual Communication and Technology Paul Cesarini began using free software called *The Onion Router (TOR)* to conceal his browsing, because, he said, he was teaching it in his classes and ought to know how it worked. He shortly received a polite but firm visit from two members of the information technology office at BGSU, who informed him that his use of the software violated university policy and he was to cease and desist. (CHE 2/9/2007)

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## UNIVERSITY REPORTS

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Ariel Toaff is a professor of medieval and Renaissance history at Israel's Bar-Ilan University. He published a book in Italian, the title of which in English would be "Passovers of Blood:" European Jews sacrificed Christian children and drank

their blood may have some limited basis in fact. On the contrary, the author argues that a careful reading of his work shows the opposite. Nonetheless, the outcry over the 'blood libel' was tremendous, and his university issued a public statement condemning the

publication and stating their expectation that he would "repair the damage he has caused." Toaff withdrew the book from publication and says he intends to revise it. (CHE 2/16/2007)

## "Civic Education, Student Rights, and Student Media."

## AFCON ANNUAL MEETING PANEL DISCUSSION NOTES December 2, 2006

Panelists:

**Joe Rowson**, P-16 member and Civics Nebraska member; **Susan Quint**, former drama and theatre instructor, Bellevue schools (now teaches health); **Susan Baird**, former journalism teacher, Bellevue schools; **Matt Deabler**, journalism teacher, Omaha Central; **Molly Mullen**, former Central High journalism student and newspaper editor, now a student at UNL

**Rowson**—Because of a disconnect between K-12 and colleges in Nebraska, the P-16 task force was created. While there is interest in improving civics education, the National Council of State Legislatures' study showed there is not much knowledge of civics. Through the State Board of Education, the Civics Nebraska Advisory Board has been formed and will be activated 3/1/07.

**Quint**—In Kearney, a teacher wanted to produce the play, "Bang, Bang, You're Dead," a look at the issues behind the Columbine shootings. Production was not allowed.

"Assassins," by premiere US musical playwright Steven Sondheim, which is an historic look at the unmet possibilities when famous people were assassinated, was nixed but allowed to participate as a one-act play in competition, for which Bellevue went to state for the first time ever.

Censorship is happening all over the US, and it's frightening. People who censor have no knowledge on which to make those decisions.

**Baird**—Bellevue schools strongly opposed previous legislative efforts to pass a student free expression bill. Just before the Hazelwood decision, the Bellevue school administration wanted to eliminate all journalism classes, expecting Hazelwood to rule in favor of student free expression. But administrators don't truly understand Hazelwood.

Administrators have all the power, taking the position: "We are the power. We will decide what is appropriate and what is not, because we can." For example, the Bellevue East student newspaper was tabloid-style, but the principal said newspapers are "tall," not "sideways" and forced a change in format before the next issue.

From the petty to the significant: During the One-City-One-School battler, big yellow "One City, One School" bumper stickers were placed in every teacher's mailbox, presumably for them to place on their cars. Teachers are given dictates about issues they cannot then discuss, such as "security measures."

There is a substantial shortage of journalism teachers. Omaha South did not have a journalism teacher as of this October.

The present situation is "hell on kids." The principal demands prior approval of all content of the newspaper. Only one newspaper issue has been printed so far this school year.

Kids need guidance, not censorship. They need to learn how to walk the line., but don't see the value of compromise when there is no compromise from administrators.

Kids don't see the principal's problems. They need an adult's guidance to see the broad picture.

**Deabler**—What I am hearing makes me angry. I am on my third principal. The principal questions my lesson plans. Because OPS guidelines for student newspapers has changed, any article with "heat," the principal decides whether or not it is printed. Thus, the principal runs the joint.

I teach ethics, balance responsibility. I want to make better students; make better humans.

One day, the principal asked, "Are you a journalist or a teacher? You can't be both."

I try to create a real-world environment in an unreal place. In a recent article on the relative safety of Central High School, a student developed a graphic using a gun as part of the graphic. The principal said the graphic was "too real."

In today's environment, people are scared because those in power shut you down instead of shedding light and discussing issues.

**Mullen**—I am bothered at how afraid people are becoming to talk about issues.

In high school, we are told not to talk about certain things, and by college, we just don't talk.

What are you teaching us?

Journalism students at UNL were angry that a journalism student wrote an article about masturbation.

It is terrifying that you can't discuss issues.

I know, coming to college, how to handle difficult issues, because Mr. Deabler taught me how when I was in high school. A lot of college students don't know how to handle difficult issues.

Adults don't want to talk about things students are facing, such as drug use, pregnancy, violence.

Adults don't give students enough credit for being mature enough to write these articles *and* to be able to read these articles.

Students need to discuss what is actually going on.

**Baird**—"We're looking out for kids" is just an excuse.

Administrators fear community backlash. Administrators don't want to be held accountable for fixing problems.

There's a huge blindside in Bellevue. They don't realize how negative other districts feel about Bellevue.

Bellevue believes there are no problems in the community, everyone is a good Christian, every child loves school, and above all, there are no homosexuals in Bellevue.

**Deabler**—We can't have passionate kids any more. I had a kid who gathered a bunch of signatures for a petition, and I had to take them away from her. She had passion – gone

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## AFCON PANEL NOTES (Continued from Page 6)

**Mullen**—We had a whole issue on oxycontin, a kid died from an overdose, and another kid dropped out of school because he was snorting in the bathroom at school, was skipping, was always high. We took a photo of him shooting up. The school board led the fight against the article. Said it was “too real.”

**Quint**—I had a “season plan,” for our productions, which is rare in school, but is “real world” in theatre. It was called “passport to fear,” with passports that could be stamped for attending productions and prizes for attending all productions.

Parents were very supportive of me. The school board told parents that if they mentioned my name or other teachers’ names at the school board meeting, they would be asked to leave.

**Rowson**—What I keep hearing is “fear.”

We need to revisit what we expect as a people from various levels of education.

There is a movement to re-do high schools.

Make curriculum rigorous for all four years; make curriculum connected to real world and jobs

Relationships. What should the education community look like? Should it be full of fear and threats?

Gates Foundation is looking at the issue of re-vamping high schools. Says in part that no high school should be larger than 500 students.

**Quint**—Some people seem to think that “black and white,” where things are absolutely right or absolutely wrong, makes kids “safer.” It provides for only one style of teaching, while students have many styles of learning.

**Teacher in the Audience**—The fear is fear of economics.

It’s a matter of government financing.

The threat to pull money from the schools causes fear.

**Mullen**—Problem with NCLB, it is only

about numbers. They are not talking about relationships between teachers and students. They are not talking about who students are as human beings.

**Dwayne Ball**—Who is afraid of the truth?

**Baird**—When things aren’t going well in the US, public schools take the hit.

The focus needs to be on building human beings.

Bureaucrats are only interested in statistics.

Our fear is that someone on the outside who doesn’t know us and doesn’t know our schools will take action that will harm our schools. So schools try to “stay off the radar.” They don’t want to get labeled as a “bad school.”

**Quint**—I received a call from KPTM to talk with them. The note was in my mailbox. An administrator saw it, took it from me, and said, “I’ll take care of that.”

**Deabler**—For kids to see and get rewarded for what they do, they have to go to another city. Journalism students are not recognized in their own school by the administration.

**Quint**—Absolutely. Kids get much more validation outside of their school district. I took my theatre students to New York to the International Theatre Festival. A playwright was so impressed with my students that he allowed them to do the first production of a play he wrote. We were so excited. We did the play in several venues. No administrator ever came to see the play. When I told an administrator that the playwright was coming to New York to see his play produced by our students, she rolled her eyes.

**Mullen**—The administrators would rather the high school newspaper have NO awards, and be a public relations piece.

Baird

I wish the superintendents and principals could be a captive audience and somebody could speak to them about the meaning of Hazelwood and Tinker. They don’t understand. They don’t understand how much LESS responsibility they would have if they back off from prior review. They would be less culpable.

We need to open up the channels of communication. We need to just talk, with out fear of reprisal.

*It would be great if AFCON could facilitate such a meeting.*

**Haller**—In 1950, during the Korean War, our school principal formed a student-led government that ran everything outside of the classroom. The only thing that was nixed was a Barn Dance, because “kids in blue jeans behave badly.”

Audience member

This is about the status of teachers in the US.

They are not being treated as professionals.

At the University level, there are faculty mechanisms to resolve these issues.

**Mullen**—I was in a government class during the elections, and we were told we couldn’t talk about the elections or politics. That was only for the honors classes.

Quint and Baird

On September 11, 2001, the students were not allowed to use their cell phones. We were not allowed to turn on televisions to find out what was going on. There was a total blackout of communication; meanwhile the President of the United States landed less than a mile away at Offutt, and these kids were worried about their military parents.

“The Chocolate War” was a banned book in Bellevue schools.

There is fear of losing image, and fear of losing money.

**Deabler**—I don’t get the perfect kid or the high-achieving kid. I get the kid who wants to change the world.

**Quint**—Teachers are afraid for their jobs. There are teachers who would be afraid to even attend this AFCON meeting.

**Deabler**—Principals take the easy way out. They rag on teachers, because it’s easy.

**Baird**—Some people are afraid of change.

There is a perception that the community won’t be behind you.

Administrators are in a position of power. They want things their way because they can.

New teachers with great ideas are quickly forced to conform to tradition.

**Deabler**—I try to teach kids to ask, “What if? What is possible?” I try to get them to swing for the fence.

# AFCON

515 North Thomas Avenue  
Oakland, NE 68045.

Mailing  
Address  
Label

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## ACADEMIC FREEDOM COALITION OF NEBRASKA

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### 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, one vote in the election of officers and at the annual meeting, eligibility for office and chairing standing committees, 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**