

Fairbanks Daily News Miner

13 April 1999

Dear Editor:

Your columnists, Dan O'Neill and Fred Pratt, have both talked about problems with funding and retention at the University. I appreciate the attention this issue is getting as a faculty member and an alumnus. Obviously I have some concerns, but I wanted to add a few things from a different perspective.

I'm not sure that retention is as crucial an issue as politicians would like to make it. I'm reminded of a cartoon I saw of folks at a beach talking to a lifeguard. The lifeguard is sitting in his chair reading a book and there's a guy in the ocean obviously floundering. The people talking to the lifeguard are rather disturbed. The quotation is: "We're encouraging people to become involved in their own rescue". This seems to be what the legislature is telling everybody, but particularly the University. If you want to survive, dig out your own money. That certainly seems to be the pattern for defunding the University and forcing support to come from the Feds.

There are a hundred good reasons, including retention, and the laudable types of citizens that emerge from universities, to adequately support a university education. The real question is, is there any reason to NOT support our University? That's the question which the legislature avoids. How about it Legislators? Would any reasonable Alaskan prefer a prison to a quality University?

Rich Sifert