

# **column**

## **Reality is not separate for college, 'real world'**



**By Scott Williams**

Whenever we at The Northern Star discuss our role at NIU, the question always comes up of whether we are viewed as a "real" newspaper or just a "student" newspaper.

The implication is that some people think a newspaper produced by students cannot be classified with "real" publications like The Daily Chronicle.

But we at The Northern Star are not the only group of people on campus subjected to this sort of comparison.

Students are always being asked by NIU teachers, counselors and administrators if they are ready for the "real world."

Therefore, one has to wonder -- if The Northern Star is not a "real" newspaper, NIU students are not "real" people and NIU is not the "real" world -- what is NIU and what the heck are we doing here?

Is NIU sealed off from reality in a big plastic bubble in the middle of a huge cornfield? Or are we all in the Emerald City and NIU President William Monat is actually the Wizard of Oz?

Well, students first should understand why some people might view NIU as something other than the "real world." Life here certainly is different from life

at home. For many students, life at home involves a full-time job, fewer parties and more clean laundry.

But I do not think the differences between life at NIU and life at home are so great that the two are actually separated by reality.

It seems many young people, when choosing a college, insist on going to school away from home because, they say, they want to experience independence from their parents. But maybe they just want to escape the "real world" and come to this euphoric wonderland we call DeKalb.

Students are not the only people who seek refuge in this social and intellectual paradise. I have often heard NIU teachers say they fled industry to go into teaching. (Naturally I immediately amused myself with the thought of grown men and women frantically running down the East-West Tollway from Chicago to DeKalb.)

But perhaps that is the answer. The "real world" is where almost all NIU students ultimately go after graduation -- industry and the job market.

Uh oh ... that must mean that anyone who has not yet fled the "real world" to seek the security of a university is still out there waiting for us.

I know what you're thinking, you naive youngsters. Do they eat fresh college graduates out there? Don't they have a Student Association out there? Don't they have university judicial codes out there?!

Just what, if anything, are we being protected from at NIU? I guess we'll all just have to wait and see when we get out there -- in the "real world."

*Scott Williams is a reporter for The Northern Star.*