

State agriculture conference sets example

By Jay Mulligan

The Nebraska Agricultural Youth Institute, which brought together 180 young Nebraskans in a week-long conference ending today, has become a model for other states.

Randy Klein, an NAYI counselor and UNL student, said Illinois, South Dakota and Minnesota have followed Nebraska's example.

"The goal of NAYI is to keep Nebraska youth in the state and on the farm," Klein said.

Kathy Karnopp, another NAYI counselor and UNL student, said the participants learn about agriculture and the opportunities it has for them.

Young people are selected based on their ideas and concern for agriculture as well as their involvement in it and other activities, Karnopp said.

The program first started in 1967 as a two-week national program. Young men from across the nation came to Nebraska, where they spent a week at Halsey National Forest and a week in Lincoln learning about agriculture.

Karnopp said NAYI has changed since it became a strictly state-wide program in 1972. But, she said, the conference has kept its basic structure.

This year's NAYI, Karnopp said, works with more UNL colleges than it has in the past. More farm

people are participating this year also, she said.

The 1984 NAYI also was designed to get its participants thinking about politics. The conference featured speakers such as Gov. Bob Kerrey; Robert Raun, the director of the state Department of Agriculture; and State Supreme Court Justice Norman Krivosha.

Jana Beckman, a member of the Nebraska Agriculture Youth Council, said this accent on government and politics gets people interested in their state and local governments.

"I enjoyed listening to (motivational speaker) Charlie Plumb," Gary Jagels said. Jagels, an 18-year-

old NAYI delegate from Davenport, said NAYI taught him that "through marketing and persistence the small farm can work."

Delegate Diane Karnopp, an 18-year-old from McCool Junction, said she learned how "to promote agriculture as a youth and share my new knowledge of ag with the people in my community."

Nancy Trumble, a 17-year-old delegate from Papillion, said the conference was more than learning about agriculture.

"I've found meeting people from a variety of backgrounds very interesting and that UNL has more to offer than just a degree," Trumble said.

New Mexico researchers say funny professors are nothing to laugh at

By Mark Davis

According to a study at the University of New Mexico, teachers who joke around in their classes aren't doing their students any favors.

The study found that teachers who use humor are "likely to be perceived with suspicion and hostility" damaging the climate for communication.

But Jack Kay, UNL assistant professor of speech communication, finds the study's conclusions very hard to believe.

Some forms of humor, especially demeaning humor or sexual innuendo, can damage communication in the classroom, Kay said. But appropriate humor is a very effective way of gaining a class' attention, he said.

The study, done by Jean Civiky and Ann Darling, assistant professor and teaching assistant respectively at New Mexico, said that humor in the classroom was damaging, "regardless of the type of humor involved and regardless of the teachers' sex." The study cited humor that was contradictory to society's sexual norms as a major contributor to communication breakdown in the classroom.

The study said, "If a male teacher who is expected to behave in a domineering and aggressive fashion uses playful or silly humor, he is, ineffect, delivering cues which are contradictory to role expectations. Likewise, if the female teacher who is expected to be

nurturing uses aggressive or hostile humor, she too is breaking social norms for expected communication behavior."

The study which was based on the evaluations of 180 undergraduates, concluded that humor in the classroom made the climate, "significantly more defensive than supportive."

However, an informal survey of 20 UNL undergraduates found that about 90 percent of students polled thought that humor in the classroom, regardless of the type of humor or the sex of the teacher, was helpful to classroom communication.

Mike Malone, UNL senior civil engineering major, said, "Humor is humor, I get a kick out of anything that livens up the class." He also said he thought it was okay for teachers to transcend society's roles for men and women.

John Berman, UNL professor of psychology, said he was surprised by the New Mexico study's results that the sex of the teacher could make a difference in communication. Although he said he hadn't seen any research on the subject, he said his own experience was that humor greatly aids communication.

When humor is used, Berman said, sleeping students wake up and there is a more relaxed atmosphere. Humor makes students more willing to participate in the classroom discussions, Berman said.

The study was reported as one of 80 papers prepared for the Tenth International Conference On Improving University Teaching.



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