

Program's status good, but future funds in doubt

By Larry Lutz

Although next year's financing of the University of Mid-America (UMA) still is in doubt, its status with its chief benefactor, the National Institute of Education (NIE), is good, according to a UMA official.

Milan Wall, director of public affairs and information services for UMA, said the board of trustees received a favorable evaluation from NIE, but was told Wednesday financing negotiations for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1 are still under way.

UMA plans and develops courses in an open learning program involving six Midwestern universities. Those universities are Iowa State, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Kansas State. The UMA board of trustees includes the six universities' presidents.

In Nebraska, the delivery system for UMA courses is the State University of Nebraska (SUN). Fifteen courses have been developed for the SUN program so far.

Wall said federal financing delays like UMA's are not unusual. In UMA's care, he said, the delay stems from Congress' failure to authorize the higher education appropriations bill. That means NIE cannot grant any of its \$80 million in program funds until Congress appropriates the money.

\$1.5 million a year

NIE has been granting \$1.5 million annually to UMA since 1974, said UMA expects to receive at least that much again this year once the appropriation is made, he said. Until then, all programs will operate on the same level of financing as last year, he said.

The expected financing increase is based partially on a report from NIE presented to the trustees at their Omaha meeting, he said.

In part, the summary of that report said NIE's general impression of UMA is positive, Wall said.

The team that prepared the report recommended "NIE try to keep alive this potential developmental experiment" and "recommends attention to long-range financial planning."

NIE currently is committed to fund UMA through 1978, Wall said, and "as long as UMA's program continues we expect NIE will continue to help fund it."

More attention asked

One of the team's suggestions was that UMA give more attention to its separation from the loss of influence over the six states' delivery systems, he said.

"While it is important for each state to keep its own identity in the program, UMA must keep some control over the general operation of the program," Wall said. "There has been some confusion about our relations with the (states') delivery system."

In addition, UMA is considering expanding to other universities, he said.

The trustees discussed the possibility of including other Midwestern schools that have expressed interest, he said. Those schools are South Dakota State, North Dakota State, Minnesota and North Dakota Universities.

Protege program allows exploration

Agricultural Economics-Agribusines Club members can meet with area businessmen on a one-to-one basis as part of the Protege Program.

Students who volunteer for the program work with businessmen in one of nine career areas, said club president Mick Sibel. Included are agricultural law, credit finance, agricultural sales, commodity training, farm managers, agribusiness management, natural resources management, state and regulatory agencies, public relations and agricultural communications.

The program is designed to allow students to explore different areas of agriculture, said Maurice Baker, agricultural economics professor.

In the program students are matched with area businessmen at an autumn banquet. Proteges and business-

men then are encouraged to meet at least twice during the semester, said Baker, who also is the club's adviser. "The club gives the students the opportunity and acts as a liaison at the banquet," Sibel said.

Eighty to 90 per cent of the students who sign up for the program contact their businessmen at some point in the semester, he said.

Sibel, who participated in the program for three years, said it helped him see different career fields.

"The personal experience lets you actually see what goes on. You get more out of it than just hearing about it in the classroom," Sibel said.

Baker said the program provides contacts for job interviews, but that is not the program's purpose. The purpose is to explore available career fields and help students decide goals.



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