

After-dark degrees

Non-traditional students graduate despite obstacles

By Shirley Roenfeldt
Staff Reporter

Returning to college or starting for the first time as a non-traditional student can be a frightening experience, but help is available, a UNL official said.

"We serve as a liaison to help non-traditional students overcome barriers either real or psychological, of going to campus," said Deanna Eversoll, director of evening programs and adult learning services in the Division of Continuing Studies. A non-traditional student is defined as a student over 24 years of age enrolled in an undergraduate program.

Adults returning to school or starting college for the first time face problems similar to those of traditional students, she said.

"Finances are a primary concern," Eversoll said. "They have to look at it and say if (they) have to use family money, 'Am I using it in a productive way.'" Eversoll said.

Time management is another big concern for non-traditional students, she said. They wonder how to balance all their roles and if their academic skills are still sharp, Eversoll said.

"How they (non-traditional students) are accepted by traditional students is a fear which dissipates within a semester," she said.

Gateway Program

The evening program serves 800 to 1,000 students every semester. The average student's age is 30, Eversoll said. The evening program is for people who can attend only evening classes, Eversoll said. It is often used as a "gateway program" to go back to school, which leads to taking day classes if schedules permit, she said.

Non-traditional students return to school for various reasons, she said. For some, school is unfinished business. They have seen people with degrees pass them by for promotions. Others just enjoy learning, she said. Some are finishing degrees already started, and others have never attended college, Eversoll said.

The colleges of Business Administration and Arts and Sciences offer seven complete degree programs at night, she said. Classes needed to complete a degree are rotated so students can receive degrees in business administration, management, economics, political science, psychology, sociology and integrated studies by only attending night classes, Eversoll said.

The evening programs department did a needs assessment among non-traditional students to see what areas had the most interest, she said. Then it was presented to the colleges to develop degree programs that can be completed at night, she said.

"We address the needs of the adult population," Eversoll said. "Even people with bachelor or masters degrees need more education to continue their flexibility in the workforce."

Difficulties

Adult male non-traditional students report difficulties in returning to school because of social attitudes, she said. There is more societal support for women to return to school because in the 1970s there was a national push to build support systems for adult women entering college, she said.

Eversoll said a study of the career shifts of 1975 UNL graduates is contacted in 1985 illustrated a need for a continuing process of education. Paying "lip service" to education is not enough, "we need to do it," Eversoll said.

A lot of the apprehension in returning to school is "in their minds and not

in reality, and we hope to help relieve that," Eversoll said.

The department of evening programs received a small grant from the Woods Foundation in Lincoln to develop services to help relieve the fears of return students, she said. The grant was used to develop videotapes of three different sizes of classes from a student's perspective, she said. The videotapes are illustrations of classes and have a prepared quiz at the end to test notetaking skills, Eversoll said. Prospective students can view the tapes to help ease possible fears of entering the classroom, she said.

Friday meetings

A Non-Traditional Student Association (NTSA) meets every Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Nebraska Union, she said. NTSA serves as a network to keep people informed and offer support, Eversoll said. Members usually meet for a sack lunch. Their gathering are open to all non-traditional students and students need not stay for the whole time, Eversoll said.

Academic planning, computer-assisted career exploration, an adult resource library, non-credit skills workshops and off-campus registration are just a few of the other services offered for non-traditional students, she said.

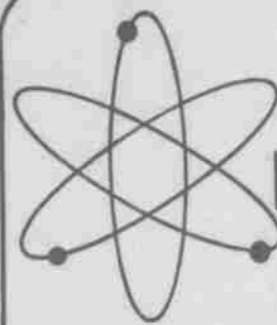
Evening classes are not the only services needed, she said. Students must also be able to drop/add classes and get advising during off-hours, she said, such as Monday and Thursday nights and Saturday mornings.



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Information sessions which will provide details on the HOST positions and the application packets will be held on the dates listed below. Students interested in the HOST positions are urged to attend one of the sessions.

Wednesday Oct. 22 7:00 p.m. Culture Center

Thursday Oct. 23 4:00 p.m. City Union

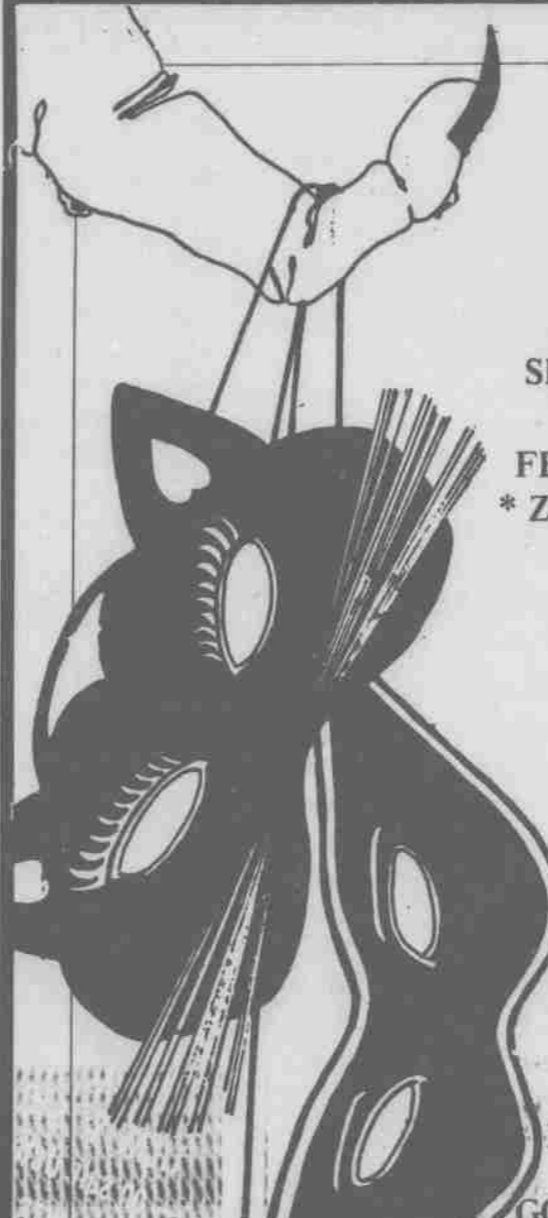
Wednesday Oct. 29 7:00 p.m. Neihardt Blue Room

Thursday Oct. 30 4:00 p.m. Sandoz Blue Room

Tuesday Nov. 4 7:00 p.m. East Campus Union

Wednesday Nov. 5 7:00 p.m. City Union

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