

State Education Program . . .

# Investments For Rehabilitation Bring Nebraska Big Dividends

By John Vincent  
NU School of Journalism

That coed on her way to class looks like any typical young college woman, but she is special. The young man being pushed in a wheelchair is a special student too, as are more than 100 other students of Nebraska University.

They all have at least one thing in common: they are clients of the Nebraska Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitation Services.

Those young men and women, attending college classes, are part of a process called rehabilitation. They all have some disability that qualifies them for state subsidized training.

Rehabilitation is both a process and a philosophy that had its beginning in Nebraska in 1921, according to Fred A. Novak, assistant commissioner of education and director of the division of rehabilitation services.

"The process of rehabilitation is one which transforms an individual from a deprived state to one of useful functioning; a means of bringing a person, in a direct line, to a point where he can utilize his potential," Novak said.

The philosophy behind the process is: that for every dollar invested by society in rehabilitation of an individual, that individual, when rehabilitated, will return \$5.00 in the form of taxes paid and other forms of productivity, he added.

"We have figures to prove that," Novak said, "but there is the humanitarian aspect to consider, as well. A productive person is a better citizen. Rehabilitation makes better Americans. The entire society gains something more than dollars."

### Employment

Novak's division employs 40-45 professional rehabilitation people and 35-40 clerical employees. His budget for fiscal 1968-1969 is \$1.8 million dollars. Nebraska furnishes 25 per cent, and the federal government contributes 75 per cent.

Presently, the division had 3,210 clients in some phase of rehabilitation and 1,280 waiting determination of eligibility, Novak said.

The ultimate end of rehabilitation is to get the client on a job that fits him and that he can do, but the rehabilitation process often is not so simple as that. According to Novak the client must sometimes undergo physical restoration, which may include medical care, artificial limbs and training in their use, physical therapy and/or psychological or psychiatric help.

Clients are sent for schooling or training not only to the University of Nebraska, but to other state colleges, private business schools, the Nebraska Vocational Technical Schools, private rehabilitation agencies such as Goodwill Industries or on the job training.

"Virtually every type of training has been represented," Novak said.

"Often," Novak said, "rehabilitation is concerned not only with the client, but must include his family as well."

He said the family must often be oriented to accepting the handicapped individual

for what he is, for his potential, recognizing and helping him to make the most of his assets.

### Effectiveness

That is what the money is used for, but what about its effectiveness? Is the investment a good one for Nebraska tax-payers? How efficient is the division.

Novak had figures to answer these questions. He said the total outlay for rehabilitation amounts to approximately five cents per person, per month, in cost to Nebraskans.

There is now a study being conducted to obtain more accurate data, Novak said, but he has sampled 100 cases on a random basis and found that the division enjoys 90 per cent success with its clients.

The U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Vocational Rehabilitation Administration has released statistics showing cost correlated with the number of people served, the number of rehabilitations and the size of the counselor staff. Of 54 states and territories, Nebraska ranks 28th in people served, and 30th for number rehabilitated, but 50th in costs.

"I believe we are very efficient," Novak said. Statistics can tell part of the story, but there are other dimensions, human values, which can be best told in case histories.

### Case Histories

Has rehabilitation been successful in terms of people? Unsuccessful cases are not difficult to find, but successful ones, according to Novak, more than offset cases which have been closed "not rehabilitated."

(The Division has a policy that does not permit identification of clients or former clients, but the following cases are authentic.)

One young man, financed and counseled through the University of Nebraska, wrote back to his Division counselor that he has been employed at \$8,000 by an aviation firm, engaged in the U.S. missile program.

Another man, confined to a wheelchair, was provided an education at the University. He is now vice-president of a Lincoln manufacturing concern. He is also active in the employ-the-handicapped movement and helping other handicapped persons through civic activities.

Not all successes are as spectacular, but they are as meaningful and productive to the community. During 1967 a Lincoln cafeteria employed as many as 10 clients who came from a state mental hospital. More than 50 per cent have worked out favorably, both for employer and clients.

Lincoln Goodwill Industries, which contracts to train clients, has placed no less than a dozen of these persons, some of whom were suffering from emotional disorders, epilepsy or mental retardation.

Both officials agreed that

One teenager, retarded and suffering from emotional disturbances, was in training 18 months. The rehabilitation staff discovered she had a flair for fashion and the ability to sew. In addition, she developed considerable skill in meeting the public. She is now employed by a Lincoln department store and, according to her counselor, has a bright future.

As one state counselor put it: "You win a few, you lose a few, but the one you win more than pay you back for the ones you lose."

Nebraska experience, according to Novak, shows that more are won than are lost.

Another counselor who, did not wish to be identified because he voiced what he considered an unprofessional view, said:

"You try to be detached, impartial . . . you see a person who needs help and although he doesn't appeal to you in words, his actions are a plea you can't ignore."

"You can't help but make an emotional investment in every client you have."

"If you fail, the client fails and you experience an emotional hurt. If you and the client succeed, your investment pays dividends."

### Road-Blocks

Statistical and human values, combining to tell a story in terms of finances . . . in terms of people. Those are the processes, philosophies and mechanics of rehabilitation, called "Rehab" by most people involved, but although medical restoration, training and placement may seem simple on the surface, Novak outlined some problems that constitute road-blocks.

Public acceptance of the handicapped is one, Novak said. Often an employer feels he is taking a risk by hiring a handicapped person.

As far as Novak's division goes, it boils down to a matter of no funds, no staff, he said. He would like to be able to serve the estimated 8,000 in Nebraska who are not being served but who could benefit by rehabilitation services.

One of Novak's staff, Rehabilitation Specialist Dale J. Hatch, told of a call from an outstate employer who found his insurance cancelled because a mentally retarded person was employed.

Hatch said the employer wanted to hire the client, was completely satisfied with his work and willing to continue the employment, but was angered at his insurance company.

Other employers have experienced increased insurance rates and cancellation of their insurance because they have employed physically or mentally handicapped — but rehabilitated, persons, according to Hatch.

Both officials agreed that

many employers simply give "lip-service" to hiring the handicapped despite efforts to point out to them that rehabilitated handicapped persons constitute little or no risk when placed on the proper job.

Committees on the national, state and local level have been formed for the purpose of bringing the problems of employment of the handicapped to both government and the public.

Despite that effort by the members of the various committees and other interested persons, acceptance remains as the largest single problem in successful employment of the rehabilitated person, according to Novak and Hatch.

Novak added, however, that if the acceptance problem could be removed, there would still remain many firms that would not hire handicapped people because of increasingly strict physical examinations.

### Optimism

Professional people are optimistic, however, that progress will be made and that rehabilitation has a vital place in modern society.

Novak predicts that his department, in terms of people served, will double by 1975 and triple in the following five years.

Presently there is equal emphasis on rehabilitation of mentally and physically handicapped people, but Novak said there is increasing interest in the mentally handicapped.

This expansion is certain, Novak said, for one reason if for no other.

"The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1965, passed by congress dictates that Nebraska, along with other states, must be serving all the people who need rehabilitation services," by 1975," he said.

If Nebraska fails in attaining that goal, Novak feels that the federal government will take a long, close look at continuing their 75 per cent share of funds for rehabilitation.

"It could be a case of use them or lose them," the director declared.

Novak feels that although there are special agencies to aid the blind, deaf and other handicapped, his division will play a much larger role in those areas in the future.

"Automation has taken away many jobs that have been traditionally filled by handicapped persons and the problem of replacing these people remains," Novak said.

### New Programs

The division is presently operating new programs in conjunction with the Norfolk State Hospital Hastings State Hospital and the Lincoln State Hospital, according to Novak.

These cooperative efforts between the division and the Nebraska Department of Institutions are cited by Novak as evidence of the increasing role of his department and rehabilitation in general in Nebraska.

Division experts are also, or soon will be, at units at the Boy's Training School, Southeast Psychiatric Clinic, Lincoln State Hospital and the Beatrice State Home, Novak said.

The future of rehabilitation, Novak believes, rests with the citizens who must be informed of the value of rehabilitation, and the Unicameral, which holds the purse-strings.

He sees a bright future for rehabilitation to fulfill its promise in Nebraska and called for consolidation of various agencies, to prevent waste of funds and duplication of effort and close scrutiny on the part of the people and elected officials to prevent it.

He also feels that his division should be left in the department of education in the future because the machinery is established and the work is tied in so closely with education.

Novak said his division is able, ready and eager to work with the people of Nebraska to insure that those who can benefit from rehabilitation get the best possible service.

So the next time you observe a young lady or college man on campus, or a stream of students emerging from classes at a private school, state college or vocational-technical school, look again. Some of them may be part of the more than 3,000 clients of Novak's Division of Rehabilitation Services who are being helped to help themselves become better Americans.



## Dreams of an Everyday Student

Sometimes, after a busy day of classes or following a frustrating hour exam, the nicest place to relax is at the columns. Perhaps the most peaceful place on NU's City Campus, the ivy-covered pillars offer pleasant surroundings for a quick nap, a place to read, or a chance to daydream amid the confines of a bustling urban campus.

### Athletic Facilities

Students and faculty are encouraged to utilize the athletic facilities of the University during their stay in Lincoln.

The University tennis courts, the Coliseum pool, the hand-ball courts, and other recreational areas are open to student use.

Patronize Businesses Advertisers in the SUMMER NEBRASKAN

**UNIVERSITY OF NEBR. THEATRE PRESENTS**

3

GREAT PLAYS in REPERTORY

**SERGEANT MUSGRAVE'S DANCE**

by G. B. Stern

TWENTY-FIVE TO DIE, AND THE LOGIC IS WORKED OUT!

July 25, 27 - Aug. 1, 3, 4

L S C

Traditionally sound education with a modern point of view

Nebraska's Oldest and Most Modern Business College with complete Courses Offered in

Private Secretarial  
Executive Secretarial  
Stenographic

Professional Accounting  
Business Administration  
Accounting  
General Business

Approved for Veterans Education

Lincoln School of Commerce

1821 K Street 432-5315 Lincoln, Neb.

EH?

by HENRY LIVING

I'M CALLED TONDELAYO & I BELONG TO MY PEOPLE

July 24 and Aug. 2

Howell Theatre

12th and R Sts.

Box Office

Mon.-Sat. 8-12  
Sun. 2-5

Phone 472-2072 or 472-2073

Tickets \$1.05

Curtain 8:00 P.M.

Air Conditioned

Keepsake Diamonds  
Longines Watches

Try 'em today

McDonald's HAMBURGERS

look for the golden arches... McDonald's

5305 'O' St.
865 No. 27th St.