

Grad social work program Stresses urban participation

by Randy Beam

A more urban-oriented thrust in social work education underlies the opening of a new graduate program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Dr. Theodore Ernst, new director of the Graduate School of Social Work, headquartered on the Lincoln campus, said this new involvement with the Omaha community will help fulfill a school goal to get more involved in typically urban problems.

He assured that this move would not divert emphasis from UNL's graduate program, but instead add another dimension to social work education in Nebraska.

Aside from complementing efforts toward developing an all-University system, Ernst feels it will take the social work school to where the people are.

The school, he explained is committed to dealing with more problems of the type not encountered in rural areas, or even small cities like Lincoln.

Opportunities for working with minority groups, for example, are greater in Omaha than on this campus.

"The main point is we are really trying to serve the people of this state, and that's (Omaha) where they are."

There are no plans to cut back any programs dealing with rural problems.

Any shift of school administrators from UNL to UNO, though not currently anticipated, would not be up to Ernst. Upper level administrators and the Regents would be responsible for that decision.

He noted that such a move would have little effect on social work education in Lincoln. "There will always be graduate social education here and from now on, there will always be graduate social education there (UNO)."

Lincoln's program has 94 full time students; Omaha's part time enrollment is 25.

Ernst indicated that at this time there are no plans to expand either program, although he hopes both will eventually be enlarged. There is the demand, he stated, noting

180 entrance applications were received for only 47 openings.

Ernst would like to see the school's curriculum up-graded in two areas: 1) add a part-time attorney to the faculty to deal with the legal aspects of social work, like tenants' rights and welfare laws; 2) add courses concerning social planning and community organization.

"I think the school needs to strengthen its ability to train people for planning, implementing and managing human services. What I think we do very well, now is to train people to provide services—firing line people who are really needed—but I think we

need to do a better job training people to work at this next level up (planning)."

He feels expanded social work programs could be valuable in three specific fields: 1) training for work in corrections institutions; 2) school system social work dealing with the effect of social problems on education; and 3) utilizing social workers in the field of extension, and generally trying to improve the quality of life in rural areas.

Ernst came to the University from Buffalo, New York, this summer, and is optimistic about the future of graduate social studies at NU.

Williams says 'yes', teaching center exists

The Teaching and Learning Center hasn't found office space yet, but Director Vernon Williams insists the Center exists.

According to psychologist Williams, the Center, in full-time operation as of Sept. 1, was organized to help the faculty develop more effective teaching skills.

The Center will deal in four areas, Williams explained. It will conduct programs with faculty members to generate new ideas and teaching techniques; deal with teacher evaluations, specifically how student criticism can be used. Also, different teaching methods across the nation will be discussed, and programs will highlight special areas of concern to students, such as grading procedures.

Williams described the reaction of the professors he has contacted so far as "positive," although he said he expects some skepticism and reluctance from others.

"I am relatively confident that the majority of faculty members are willing to try something new to improve their teaching methods," he said.

Faculty members are contacted informally both individually and in groups. A recent event was a pilot program

aimed at teaching assistants. Later this week the Center will conduct a program for teachers of large lecture classes.

Williams said teaching council seminars held monthly in past years dealt with the same kinds of things he hopes the new Center will deal with. The seminars provided a platform for UNL teachers to reach each other with new teaching ideas.

Ag scholarships to upperclassmen

Two University of Nebraska upperclassmen have received 1971-72 Glenn and Bertha Lewis Scholarships by the NU College of Agriculture. This year's recipients are Ronald Larsen of Fremont and Dale Hood of Wahoo.

The Lewis Scholarships are awarded annually to upperclassmen on the basis of individual need and college record.

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College of Agriculture senior, Jack Scherer of Stanton is the recipient of the national scholarship awarded by the Soil Conservation Society of America.

This year makes the seventh year for the scholarship program and since its founding, 122 students have received \$56,000 in scholarship funds. The scholarship program encourages qualified students to complete their undergraduate training and pursue a career in conservation.

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