

Students initiate community school



Stover and Warrick... learning by teaching in the Ravenna Town School.

by H.J. Cummins

Two UNL students plan to spend the summer learning-by-teaching in a program they've spent the school year planning, the Ravenna Town School.

But before the town can join them in classes, at least some of them will see the two 1969 Ravenna High School graduates, Kim Stover and Sue Warrick, get married on May 27.

The school is, essentially, a place where anyone can come to learn anything and teach others anything that's in demand, according to Stover.

"I envision the community as a school, looking to itself for an education," he said.

Warrick said the school is "free" in that there is no expense to the students, but that it is not unstructured.

"I don't know how much kids in Ravenna could do independently," she said. "They have to develop an ability and a desire to be aggressive."

Stover, an elementary education major, is in charge of programs for pre-school and elementary school children.

Attendance here, as in every class, is voluntary, Stover stressed. He said he's scheduled his projects so definitely, so students can know what's going to happen on a certain day and decide if they're interested.

Stover said he's planning "one major activity a day," including an art course using a variety of materials; games from chess to baseball; bus tours to museums or dairy farms or some place the students want to see; a "Ravenna culture study," during which students will talk to older townspeople and read about the area in which they live; and straight tutoring.

Warrick, a German major in Teachers College, is in charge of—with help from Stover—the "mini courses" the two will sponsor for junior and senior high students and adults.

Depending on the topic of each, some courses will be in the Ravenna School classrooms, the school's gymnasium, outdoors or "over at our apartment, I suppose," Warrick said.

Course times will also be diverse, she said, because they will have to work around a lot of the students' work schedules.

She listed auto mechanics, macrame, simulation games, guitar, bike trips, knitting and cooking as topics townspeople have already expressed an interest in.

Stover said he wants to try teaching in Ravenna this summer because "I'm a part of that small Nebraska town and, since I'm likely to teach in a town like that, I'd like to learn how to deal with a small community."

"It's also a little bit like I'm trying to convince myself that 'rural is beautiful,'" he said, noting that he sees rural as a "sub-culture" like the blacks in America.

Warrick said she sees this summer more as a testing grounds for some philosophies of education she's been taught at the University.

"I don't think it would really matter where I'd do this," she said. "I'm just interested in learning how idealistic some of those philosophies are."

Her main disagreement with most current education is its "fact orientation," she said. She described her preference as "education of problem-solving, or education that emphasizes learning by experience."

Stover said he's been studying a plan for rural schools being kicked around by some educators who say the schools can be "innovative yet stay small."

It's a plan that may be useful in Ravenna, he said. The population is 1,400 and the public school, which he said consolidated most of the schools in Buffalo County, has 600 students in grade school through high school.

Warrick, also interested in the plan, said she agrees with many educators who say size and money don't necessarily lead to a good school.

"You don't need a lot of machines, just a few new methods," she said.

The town school is being funded by grants from the State Department of Education (Title III), the Ravenna school district, and the University's TTT project in elementary education.

by Carol Strasser

The foreign student often faces cultural shock on arriving at the University. And there are many snags in the UNL system that add to the problems of foreign students, according to an administration report.

Undergraduate admission procedure is complex for foreign students, and the Office of Admissions doesn't have the time nor the expertise to handle all the applications, according to the February report by John Robinson, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

The director of admissions stated in the report that his office can properly handle only about 50 foreign student admissions per year. Yet 67 have been admitted so far for the fall term, said Rowena B. Boykin, foreign student adviser.

Unless someone is hired to deal specifically with admissions, she said, the foreign student adviser will be spending practically all his time with admissions when there are other needs.

Since foreign students can't pre-register, the courses and sections open to them are restricted. The expertise of foreign-educated faculty members hasn't been drawn upon in the registration-advising procedure.

"There is a harmful lack of coordination," continued the report, between the admissions office, foreign student adviser, the English department and academic deans responsible for evaluating transfer credit from foreign universities.

The report recommends that one professional staff member be added to deal with admissions, pre-registration and foreign student advising.

It also suggests that a permanent coordinating committee be established to "provide clear and quick communication between all parts of the University having to do with particular foreign students."

This committee would be enlarged to form an advisory and policy-making body for all University offices which touch on the lives of foreign students.

Boykin agreed there are many areas that can't be covered by one adviser in the foreign student office. She said there is a need for an orientation program, not just in summer, but through first semester. Programs to integrate foreign students into University life and to meet the needs of those students who feel isolated also are needed, she said.

The University isn't getting the maximum benefit from the

presence of foreign students, Boykin said.

The report said foreign students are a means for Americans to learn about different cultures and a challenge for students and faculty to "understand ethnocentrism and the Third World situation."

The University currently has 550 foreign students, 2.6 per cent of the total student body. Sixty per cent are undergraduates and most are from Third World countries. The national average is about 4.5 per cent of the student body.

The report recommends that UNL "make a firm commitment to the education of foreign students."

Although it's assumed that foreign students are financially independent of the University, it's difficult to determine how much financial backing each applicant has, the report said.

Many of the foreign students aren't financially independent, and have need for small emergency loans.

These loans normally require an American co-signer, so the report suggests a sum of money be established to form a back-up source for faculty who co-sign a loan. It also suggests that scholarships and work study posts be provided especially for foreign students.

Of the 550 foreign students at UNL, 400 live off-campus. "This situation is contrary to all recommendations from the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs," the report said, since "both foreign students and American students are severely denied benefits."

Campus housing is too expensive for many foreign students, and food service operations are closed down in the dormitories during semester break although many foreign students can't go home.

The report recommends that, if appropriate, the International House be duplicated or triplicated as soon as possible. There are 37 foreign and 37 American students living in International House on campus.

More married student housing and regular dormitory facilities should be provided during vacations.

It also recommends that a language laboratory and special work in phonetics be provided by the English department in liaison with the speech department.

Ely Meyerson, interim executive dean of Student Affairs, told the Council on Student Life Thursday that his office is working on the recommendations. The Council will decide this week whether to review the Robinson report.

Culture
shocks
foreign
students