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UN is not living up to its own goal of 'total education'

Editor's note: The information for this article was obtained from past issues of the Daily Nebraskan and from former Nebraska Free University (NFU) committee chairmen.

By Dave Madsen

Higher education at the University of Nebraska is not living up to its responsibility and commitment to its own goal of 'total education'.

That was the beginning of a statement addressed to the "University of Nebraska academic community and the people of Nebraska," which created the Nebraska Free University (NFU), Dec. 7, 1966.

The statement said that a partial answer to the educational problems at UNL was the establishment of NFU. One of the problems referred to was that "the established curriculum . . . exhibits a lack of courses that are relevant to the desires and needs of a significant segment of the student body."

The planning stage of NFU began in October 1966, according to officials of the Coordinating Committee for a Free University (CCFU), which organized NFU. That committee now is referred to as the NFU committee of ASUN.

During the planning, CCFU officials estimated that about 100 students would register for the 23 courses offered. When registration was completed, Feb. 10, 1967, 631 students had registered.

Some of the courses offered that first session were theories of Communism, human reproduction and psychedelic drugs.

Nineteen courses were offered when NFU began its second semester in the fall of 1967.

NFU officials said at the time they hoped to provide a program that would decrease the large

number of students who dropped out of NFU first semester.

It was said there was greater interest in the second session than in the first. This may have been the case, however, only 600 students registered, an enrollment loss of 31.

Efforts to reduce the number of drop outs were futile. Almost half of the students enrolled in NFU courses dropped the class.

American ethnic music and sea serpents, ghosts and flying saucers were two courses available.

The spring of 1968 saw NFU taking on "definite goals and a new image." Officials hoped to make NFU "a wedge to change the present formal University structure . . ."

It was said that NFU should advocate a change of regular University courses from basically lecture-style to more of a discussion group format. NFU was based almost entirely on discussion groups.

Although registration dropped slightly (from 600 to 550), the number of courses almost doubled. Members of the NFU committee attributed the decline in registration to the fact that the novelty of NFU was wearing off.

During that semester, academic and administrative faculty had been asked for help in organizing courses. Approximately 1,000 letters were mailed with no response. The most probable cause behind this, the committee members said, was that the faculty was too busy to do anything which did not pay.

Two of the most highly attended courses were applied black magic and the image of woman.

Autumn 1968 was when ASUN first appropriated funds to finance the program. ASUN budgeted \$450 to NFU for the 1968-69 academic year.

During that semester, the NFU committee asked that credit be granted for NFU courses. Committee members said they knew there was small chance that credit would be granted. It wasn't until spring 1972, that the request was granted, and then only for a few courses.

At least 50 courses were available for the record 1,050 persons who registered for NFU fall 1968. Officials said that a large number of the 1,050 were non-students, although an exact count was unavailable.

This was the first session in which established small groups had the opportunity to be recognized as NFU courses. The NFU committee would help such groups find a meeting place, a leader and additional students.

The draft and you and rock music were popular courses that semester.

In spring 1969, NFU took a nose dive. Only eight courses were offered. The chairman of the NFU committee was entirely on his own and said he couldn't do all the work adequately by himself. He said that the small number of classes was a factor in the decreased registration that semester.

Another problem which confronted NFU at