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Money cut results in students' scrimping, rejection of UNL

By Mark Hoffman

A \$750,000 cut in federal funds for UNL's 1973-74 financial aids program caused various student reactions.

Some students saw the cutback as a statistic to be forgotten or filed in the back of their minds.

But students such as Pamela Barta, Jolene Drawbridge and Mary (not her real name) knew the cutback was real when they found they would receive no financial aid this year from UNL.

These students were caught in the "middle-class crunch." According to financial statements colleges ask parents to fill out, the students' parents were able to support them in college.

According to the students, this was not the case. Either their parents could not afford to put them through college, or the students did not want to burden their parents with having to pay their college expenses, the students said.

Pamela Barta, 18, from Omaha, might have been a freshman at UNL this year. She couldn't get financial aid at UNL, however, so she applied to Doane College at Crete where she received aid.

Barta, who wants to go to law school, said Creighton University was her first choice and UNL her second, but that selection depended on "the schools that would give me financial aid."

She sent letters to Creighton, UNL and Doane asking for financial aid. Creighton and Doane officials wrote weekly, explaining what help they could give and talked with her about her financial situation.

UNL officials wrote one letter, saying they could not give her financial aid, she said. She said, "the next time they (UNL) wrote, the letter was a (preregistration) bill."

She explained her situation to Doane College financial aids advisers. Based on her parents' financial statement, the college officials said she didn't need financial aid.

Barta said her father, a meatcutter for an Omaha packing plant, did not have the money to send her through school.

Doane College officials listened and reversed their earlier decision not to give her money by providing her with a grant, a scholarship, work-study program and a loan.

Barta said UNL "didn't consider my situation." Other schools would write back to talk to her about it, she said, but UNL didn't.

"It really turned me against the school (UNL) ... very impersonal, very cold."

Barta was one of about 1,900 students who applied for financial aid at UNL, but did not receive it.

The \$750,000 cutback and the large

number of applicants let the UNL Financial Aids Office help only those with a high financial need, said Jack Ritchie, UNL director of financial aids and scholarships.

About 4,500 to 5,000 students applied for aid for 1973-74. This was about 500 more than for 1972-73, Ritchie said, yet UNL had \$750,000 less to work with this year as compared to last.

He added that a new grant program for freshman, the Basic Economic Opportunity Grant, helped relieve that cutback by adding \$72,000 to their budget. About \$2.7 million in grants, scholarships, work-study programs and loans to students with the highest need this year, Ritchie said.

Need is determined by the parents' ability to pay, as determined by a parents' confidential statement (PCS). Parents of students applying for financial aid are asked to fill out the statement.

The PCS forms are sent to the College Scholarship Service (CSS), a national college service which determines how much of college expenses parents can pay. This is added to the amount of savings a student has, and the total is subtracted from the cost of attending the college to which he is applying.

The remainder is the student's need, but "the federal government is concerned with parents' ability to pay, and not whether they do," Ritchie said.

In some cases parents have their money tied up in farm machinery. Or students will not ask their parents to pay college costs. Either way CSS already has subtracted that ability to pay from the students need.

Mary, a UNL sophomore, said her father would give her about \$100 a year, but she didn't want to take it from him.

Her freshman year, she received aid from a 1-year regent's scholarship and a work-study program. Last summer she learned from the UNL Financial Aids Office that she had lost both.

"I was so shook," Mary said when she found out she would not be getting aid.

Consequently, she is taking fewer class hours to cut down on the tuition bill, watches what she spends and is working at a residence hall cafeteria, she said.

She said she thinks she has enough money for this year and maybe her junior year, but after that, she's not sure.

If she doesn't have enough, she said, "I'll quit. I won't go into hock."

Jolene Drawbridge of Omaha might have been a UNL student, but she couldn't get financial aid. She attends North Park College in Chicago.

Her mother said North Park College had given her financial aid.