

Legislators split on University matters

Analysis by Greg Wees

Many state senators will tell you one of the best friends higher education has in Nebraska is the Unicameral. This year, legislators partially proved that claim—at least on three of five issues directly affecting University life and administration.

The most notable senatorial nod of approval came on budget requests for 1974-75.

NU received the 25% increase in general fund dollars requested by NU President D.B. Varner after senators, with exactly the number of votes needed, overrode Gov. J. James Exon's budget veto. The governor also had recommended a budget boost for the University, but by only 20%.

So NU now will receive \$12.6 million more in state tax dollars, then last year's \$51.2 million. UNL will get an increase from \$30.8 million to \$37.5 million.

"The most significant product of this

budget is that it will permit the University to move aggressively towards completion of its Areas of Excellence plan," Varner said. This is the first year legislators have allocated funds for Areas of Excellence, a 5-year program that financially singles out individual University departments for special improvement.

Varner also praised the 7% to 10% faculty pay increase granted by lawmakers, calling it "a step in the right direction" towards attracting quality professors to the University.

A second change could come on the Board of Regents. According to the bill passed by the Unicameral, up to three students will become nonvoting members of the board if voters accept the necessary constitutional amendment in November's general election.

After sponsor State Sen. Richard Marvel amended the original bill, removing the voting power of the student

regent, state senators passed the measure. Thus, the student regent cannot be as effective as originally intended, but, as Marvel said, the student regent can still be a valuable adviser to the regents.

Eliminating part of the \$51.50 in student fees that full-time students pay every semester was another measure that, for the good of the University, was killed by the Unicameral.

If State Sen. James Dickinson's measure had passed, a number of campus organizations (most notably ASUN, the Daily Nebraskan, the Recreation Dept. and the Nebraska Union) would have had to find other sources of funding and probably would have suffered some damage, according to a UNL comptroller's report. Dickinson contended that if these activities were essential to University life, students would be generous enough to give monetary support voluntarily.

See Analysis, Page 7



Melvin George

Dean George takes SUN host, laments A & S College funding

By Wes Albers

The College of Arts and Sciences is "on the verge of being very excellent in a whole gamut of responsibilities," according to Dean Melvin George, who has assumed the leadership of the State University of Nebraska (SUN).

SUN is a multimedia program offering University credit without attending class.

But the level of funding received will determine how fast that excellence can be achieved, he said Thursday.

"I guess my major disappointment as dean has been the level of funding that has been available," George said. "Faculty salaries have been low, and we haven't always had the funds to implement some of the changes we would like."

George took over as dean of the college in summer 1970. Previously, he was at the University of Missouri where he taught mathematics and served two years as associate dean of the graduate school.

Regarding the SUN program, George said, "My job is to help in the development of a curriculum for the SUN program, seeing that the courses are academically sound," he said.

According to George, the new position presents problems he did not encounter as a dean because the educational medium will be television or newspapers rather than a classroom.

"A teacher in a classroom can adjust a course to the students. With courses prepared for television or newspapers there is no opportunity for shifting gears midway," he said.

George is on leave of absence to direct the SUN program. That expires Dec. 31. George

then plans to return as dean of the college.

George said achieving excellence in the college may mean focusing programs as well as expanding them, because "some departments try to do too much with the programs they have."

"We need to turn our attention now to selectively helping some of the departments that are close to real excellence get over that threshold," he said.

George said the expansion of course offerings coupled with an "increased interest in and awareness of undergraduates" is perhaps the major accomplishment in the college since he became dean.

George said other changes since his arrival have been a revision of group requirements and the creation of the School of Life Sciences out of the Microbiology, Biology and Zoology Departments.

"This is an active, vibrant college," he said. "The faculty is willing to try new things. It's a college that will never get stagnant."

George said the size of the college presented him problems at first, along with his lack of experience as a college dean. The College of Arts and Sciences is UNL's largest college.

"No other college here has the variety of programs we have," he said. "I just try to avoid applying the same kind of judgments to programs that are very different."

George said deans also have the problem of mediating differences between students, faculty and administrators.

"We have to try to reconcile and mediate conflicting interests," he said. "Sometimes it turns out the interests only appear to be conflicting."

Varner: 5-year plan on track despite inflation

By Wes Albers

NU is making progress under its present 5-year plan despite increasing inflation and lower than projected enrollment, according to NU President D. B. Varner.

"The plan is pointing the direction for steady improvement," he said early last week. "I have been pleased at the campuses' response to it."

Varner first announced the plan, "Toward Excellence," in February 1972. The Board of Regents approved it in January 1973.

The plan outlines basic operating assumptions and goals for the University from 1972 through 1977.

Born amid concern that NU's national academic ranking was falling, the 5-year plan's short run goal is to restore NU to the top ranks academically in the Big 8, Varner said.

"The Legislature suggested that our problem was not having any long range set of goals for the University," he said. "We developed this plan to outline what we want to accomplish in the next five years."

The plan's major goals include improving teaching, strengthening graduate education, beginning curricular and organizational review and developing off campus programs along with nontraditional educational opportunities.

Varner said present committee studies, when completed, will represent concrete steps towards coordination of off campus programs, insuring equal educational opportunities, developing intercampus closed circuit television and improving instruction.

Committees are developing proposals for achieving these goals or already have submitted proposals to the regents for consideration, he said.

Varner also pointed to the State University of Nebraska (SUN), the proposed Life Sciences Building and the proposed Performing Arts Center as steps towards meeting the plan's goals.

A feasibility study has been conducted for the Performing Arts Center, and appropriations have been made for construction of the Life Sciences Building. SUN, a multimedia educational project allowing college credit to be earned at home, plans to offer its first courses for next fall, according to SUN provost Melvin George.

"There are still a lot of uncertainties," George said last Thursday. "The funding is uncertain and we have yet to find out what kinds of people will be interested, but I'm optimistic."

Regent Ed Schwartzkopf of Lincoln also said the 5-year plan was moving ahead.

"We may not be moving as fast as we would like, but as long as we're moving ahead I'm enthused," he said Wednesday.

Varner said, "This plan probably won't get us all the way to the top of the Big 8 but it will move us toward that. How well we do depends on what other institutions are doing."

According to Varner, the plan may not reach some of its goals if inflation continues to increase.

"I can't say for sure what goals would suffer. The highest priority, however, will be given to insuring that professors' salaries will be unaffected," he said.

Given the present inflation rate and enrollment trends, annual increases in general fund operating appropriations may have to be as high as 15% to 18% just to maintain present programs, Varner said.

See Plan, Page 3