

Union officials say more \$\$ needed

By Tom Jensen

Despite budget trimming and a reduction in salaries and the number of employees, Nebraska Union officials contend they need more money from student fees for next year. It's the first time since 1968 that the Union has asked for an increase in fees.

The Union now receives \$18 a semester from each full-time student out of the \$51.50 he pays in student fees. But \$9.50 of that \$18 is earmarked to pay bonded indebtedness, and \$2.50 goes into a separate account to pay for new equipment and facilities. The \$6 difference is used to finance Union operations.

"If we (the Union) don't get an increase in fees, we can't face next year," said Allen H. Bennett, Union director. "We'll have to shut down the building and programs."

Inflation, coupled with stabilized UNL enrollment, is the reason the increase has been requested, Bennett said.

"The cost of living has gone up 5% to 6% each of the five years" since the Union last asked for an increase, he said.

"Actually, the \$6 per student has become a fixed income, while costs have been rising," said Bennett.

"Right now we are spending what we are taking in," he said. "We can no longer fund as many programs and we are no longer funding reserves."

The Union had been putting as much as \$50,000 a year into a reserve account, but now all the money in that account has now been used, Bennett said.

"If we ever suffered a loss in a given year, we could cover that loss with reserves on hand," he said. "But now those reserves are gone."

In addition to using its reserves, the Union also has been cutting spending wherever possible to fight spiraling inflation.

"The budget for the Union Program Council really has suffered the last three semesters," Bennett said. "Each program was trimmed as the money became pressured." The council coordinates programs such as foreign and

weekend films, jazz and java and the Art and Record Lending Libraries.

He said because the Union had to come up with money to pay salaries and expenses, programs had to be trimmed.

"The current amount available for program funding after two budget cuts is \$34,500 for City Campus and \$9,000 for East Campus," Bennett said. "We started with an aggregate of about \$66,000 for city campus and \$17,000 for East Campus."

The Union has trimmed its staff as well as its programs in order to counteract rising costs.

"We have one less staff member in the program area, six less full-time employees in the food service, two less custodians and 25 less students who worked part-time, which amounts to about 14 to 15 hours per week positions."

In addition, Bennett said, the Union staff is trying to get by with less office personnel, such as part-time secretaries, clerks and typists.

"We are not running a fat operation, nor are we inefficient," Bennett said. "Our staff and employees average four years of tenure. Now we are nearly as efficient as ever."

Bennett said with spiraling inflation, the Union will have to seek alternatives to the spending cutbacks.

One way, he said, is to generate more income by seeking other business opportunities, such as renting some rooms to be used for conferences.

"We could shut down on Saturday or Sunday or close for a month, or close earlier in the day," he said, noting that each hour the Union is open, more money is spent.

But Bennett said if the Union withdraws from the students, faculty and staff, they in turn will withdraw from the Union, "so we lose added income. It's a self-destructing circle."

"We're going to have to work with the community to find alternatives," he said. "We didn't get to where we are today without the help of the community."



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ASUN agenda

Senate Action Committees meet at 6:30 p.m.

I. Executive Report:

Committee on Religion on Campus Report of upcoming Regents meeting Appointments.

II. Open Forum:

Judy Visty-Chancellor's Commission on Women's Intercollegiate Athletics.

III. Old Business:

IV. New Business:

A. Resolution No. 12-Investigation of bookstore.

B. Resolution No. 13-Endorsing All-University Fund pancake feed.

V. Announcements.

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