

Regents approve UNL ombudsman

The NU Board of Regents approved Col. Dan Babcock as temporary UNL ombudsman in a meeting Friday afternoon in the Nebraska Union. Babcock retired Sept. 1 as professor of aerospace studies in the Air Force ROTC program.

Babcock temporarily assumed the duties of ombudsman Oct. 1, filling the vacancy left by James Suter, who resigned last summer. According to Dave Howlett, member of the ombudsman search committee, a permanent ombudsman will be appointed before second semester.

Babcock's appointment aroused discussion. Regent Ed Schwartzkopf of Lincoln questioned the need for an ombudsman on the Lincoln campus. The ombudsman's \$18,000 salary could be channeled elsewhere, he said.

Not ideal conditions

ASUN President Ron Clingenpeel told the board an ombudsman would be necessary under ideal conditions. But since the university makes mistakes, he said, an ombudsman is needed to air student grievances.

UNL Chancellor James Zumberge agreed. In a large university system, imperfections are inevitable, he said, and students need an ombudsman for "redress of grievances when all else fails."

In other action, the regents approved an additional \$490,000 to improve the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, bringing the agriculture institute's total budget to \$3.3 million.

Duane Acker, vice chancellor of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, originally asked the regents to approve an \$800,000 budget increase to place UNL's agricultural program first among the Big 8 schools in salaries and programs. At Friday's meeting, Acker said Nebraska ranked last among the five surrounding Midwestern universities.

"More realistic approach"

Zumberge then recommended what he called "a more realistic approach." The regents approved Zumberge's cut from the \$800,000 proposal to \$490,000, which would place the agricultural institute salaries third in the Big 8. The \$490,000 budget package would bring institute faculty salaries, now near the bottom of the UNL scale, above all those except law, dentistry and business administration, Zumberge said.

NU President D. B. Varner said these rules would partially repay the agriculture institute for the money and industry that agriculture has brought into Nebraska.



Rod McKuen gives his autograph to students during his visit in the Nebraska Union Sunday.

McKuen: sneakers and 'honesty'

By Harry Baumert

For a guy whose favorite wardrobe includes Adidas tennis shoes and a windbreaker jacket, he looks right at home among Guccis and mink stoles.

Rod McKuen doesn't stand out in a crowd, with his soft sandy voice and thin bearded face. He's usually in the center of it, signing autographs or talking current events. He was in Lincoln this weekend visiting a friend, Secretary of State Allen Beermann making appearances at UNL.

At a garden party at the Beermanns' home, the poet and song writer, who has sold more than 10 million books and 150 million records, stressed communication and the importance of living in the present. He said being a poet carries a lot of responsibility.

"If you're a poet, you're a keeper of the language," he said. "You've got to say things in a straight forward way."

Songs he's written include "Jean" and "Seasons in the Sun," and he's now working on "My Country: 200," a book of prose for the American bicentennial.

McKuen has been accused of writing over-sentimental, "marshmallow" poetry by some, so what is it about his writing that has made his works sell?

"Honesty, I hope," he said.

Some of McKuen's poetry, such as "A Cat Named Sloopy" shows his concern for animals. McKuen donates money for scholarships for pre-veterinary students through "Animal Concern," a foundation he started and supports. He said money from the foundation last year provided for more than 1,300 scholarships throughout the United States.

Dick Fleming, UNL director of public relations, said McKuen gives \$2,500 each year to the University of Nebraska for pre-veterinary scholarships.

Student assistants: students or UNL employes?

By Lynn Silhasek

When are UNL residence hall student assistants (SA's) university employees and when are they students?

Their status will be decided by university lawyers, according to Ken Swerdlow, assistant housing director.

A temporary ruling by housing officials this fall prompted the request for a legal interpretation of SA status, Swerdlow said.

According to the ruling, SAs are not allowed to attend floor keggers, drinking parties sponsored by floors of residence halls, he said. The request for legal advice was made by housing officials who plan to use the advice in making future decisions regarding the SA position, he said.

Swerdlow said he did not know when housing would receive the legal opinion.

According to Swerdlow, SAs are considered part-time housing employees. Their room and board costs in the residence halls are paid for under a contract with housing.

Not responsible for accidents

Swerdlow said the ruling protects SAs, as representatives of the university, from being held responsible for accidents and damages which may occur at a kegger or for the presence of minors. University staff insurance does not cover persons participating.

university function where liquor is present, he said.

The ruling also creates some confusion as to "when a student can take off his SA hat and say I'm one of the boys," Swerdlow said.

Some persons view an SA as an authority figure at all times, Swerdlow said. A housing study last year, however, showed that many SAs actually were working only four hours during a two-week period, he said. To earn the money their housing costs are paid with, SAs are supposed to work 17 hours a week, he said.

Swerdlow said he worked at the University of Wisconsin several years ago, where beer was allowed on campus and where SAs were required to attend campus drinking parties. The SAs acted as supervisors at the parties, according to Swerdlow.

SAs must stay away

"We would like to tell an SA to go to these things," Swerdlow said. "It would be better if the law permitted it (a floor-sponsored drinking party). But since it doesn't, we have to tell the SAs to stay away from it."

Swerdlow said the ruling did not stem from the death of a UNL student last fall who was returning with friends from a floor-sponsored kegger. The car in which the students were riding collided with another vehicle.

Reactions of three SAs to the ruling ranged

from disappointment to an expressed desire for a definition of their status.

Mike Herring, an Abel Hall SA said he could understand housing's viewpoint in wanting to protect the SAs from being liable in case of an accident at a kegger.

But "we should be able to separate our personal lives from the job," he said.

"The university has to decide whether the SAs are full-time or not," said David Howlett, an Abel Hall SA and ASUN second vice president. The ruling "is kind of an admission to me that SAs are full-time people. If they are, they aren't being paid full-time," he said.

Full cooperation

Al Thorson, a Harper Hall SA, said his residence hall gives full cooperation to housing officials. But he said he was disappointed with the ruling because it "only offers protection to us (SAs)."

"You get to know the people on your floor" by attending floor drinking parties, he said. There are other ways to meet people, but a kegger is one of the most popular ways of doing so, he said.

According to Thorson, it is difficult for the SA to have to refuse invitations to keggers and remind people they can't attend because of their position.

"Oh yeah, that's too bad, they say."