

# Student journalists take legislative reporting

By Mary Kay Roth

Twelve UNL journalism students are reporting on legislative activities right along with the old pros during this session of the Unicameral. They are enrolled in a new journalism class, Legislative Reporting, said Neale Copple, director of the School of Journalism.

An \$11,500 grant from the Gannett Newspaper Foundation makes the class possible.

"It's now up to us to try and prove ourselves," Copple said.

The legislative-reporting class, taught by Josie Weber, Jim Patten and Larry Walklin, is structured loosely, Copple said, "so we can play it by ear."

## Twelve students

Eight students are enrolled in the class from the news-editorial sequence and four from broadcasting. The eight news-ed students each will represent a Nebraska newspaper. They will report weekly on legislative issues which concern their newspaper's circulation area.

The broadcasting students will make weekly tapes for radio stations throughout the state.

The students are to visit the city where their newspapers are located, Copple explained, and become acquainted with the concerns of the people. They will then attend the Unicameral sessions and report weekly on events which affect their newspaper's city.

The class will also meet weekly in a seminar and discuss reporting problems they encounter. Speakers such as state senators will attend the class.

## Attend committee meetings

Copple said more specific projects planned for the class are tentative. The instructors hope to have each student attend a specific committee meeting regularly, he said, to recognize the importance of legislative work on that level. At the end of the session, the students will select and report on one important bill their committee has been discussing.

The class is tentatively planning a mid-semester field trip to Des Moines, where they will observe a

two-house legislature. Copple explained that legislative reporters should also be familiar with this type of government, because all state governments, except Nebraska's, are structured around two separate houses.

The class will conclude with a brief overview of national government, when the school will bring in representatives from the federal government.

Specific newspapers were chosen randomly and geographically, Copple said. He said the class tried to "geographically span the state." Beyond that limitation, papers were selected by lottery, Copple said.

Newspapers to be represented are: Wayne Herald, Wayne; Keith County News, Ogallala; Papillion Times, Papillion; York News-Times, York; North Platte Telegraph, North Platte; Oakland Independent & Republican, Oakland; Crawford Tribune, Crawford, and Sidney Telegraph, Sidney.

Radio stations participating are KVHS, Valentine; KSID, Sidney; WJAG, Norfolk, and KWBE, Beatrice.

## Student interns do legislative research

By Dennis Onnen

Two UNL students are involved in a new program helping Legislative committees and senators with research work.

Junior Lonny Meier and senior Donald Norden, both political science majors, were among eight students from Nebraska colleges and universities selected for an internship in the Unicameral. The eight were chosen from about 25 applicants, according to Robert Miewald, interim chairman of the UNL Political Science Dept. and a member of the selection committee.

Miewald said the interns work 40 hours a week and receive six hours of college credit. The interns are paid \$3 an hour by the Legislature. They were chosen by a committee set up by the Nebraska Political Science Assoc.

## Familiarity with government

"We looked for some familiarity with state and local government," he said, "and we tried to give seniors a shot." Grades also were considered, he added.

Meier, assigned to Sen. Leslie Stull of Alliance, said he has been doing research on bills Stull plans to introduce. He said he wants to go to law school and thought the intern program would increase his knowledge about how laws are made.

Norden also plans to go to law school and said his studies of legal issues as an intern should help.

"Some of it's bound to rub off on me," he said.

## Research on Carpenter dispute

He already has done research on former Scottsbluff Sen. Terry Carpenter's disputed write-in campaign for the Legislature. He said the problem in that case is contradicting laws.

Norden is assigned to Sen. James Dickinson of Omaha and Sen. Ralph Kelly of Grand Island.

This year's legislative session runs for 90 days, which means his work may run into June, Norden said.

He recommended the program to anyone interested in government. However, it is restricted to political science majors and minors, he said.

Robert Sittig, UNL associate professor of political science, said the legislative intern program is different from the page program, which began about four years ago. Students interested in a page job must apply directly to the Legislature, he said.

He said the job of page also differs in that it generally involves running errands. Sittig said UNL students working as pages can earn three hours credit by taking a state government reading course.



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