

# Tommerraasen: caring for "3rd largest Nebraska city"

By Gina Hills

Miles Tommerraasen wasn't exactly nominated for the position of UNL's vice chancellor of business and finance. He didn't even apply for the job.

Instead, Tommerraasen said he was "drafted" for the position in 1969.

For this 52-year-old father of three, it was a case of being in the right place at the right time.

He came to UNL in 1964 to teach accounting and finance in the College of Business Administration (CBA).

In 1968 he was advanced to the position of assistant dean and held that position for one year before being "drafted."

In 1969, UNL's president, Joseph Soshnik, "came to me and said that he needed to have someone in the business and finance position who had a doctor's degree, who had been a faculty member and who appreciated what an educational institution was about as opposed to the typical business organization," Tommerraasen said.

And although he said he misses teaching, he also said he likes his administrative position.

"The odd thing is," he said, "in this kind of a job, it seems like while there is a thread that runs through the problems, you get new problems every day that are different than they were before."

Tommerraasen said his job is to represent the chancellor in all areas of fiscal and business operations at UNL.

"Most people know what the vice chancellor for academic affairs does. Most people know what the vice chancellor for student affairs is doing and what's involved in that. All the rest of the operations of the University fall under business and finance," he said.

Specifically, his job breaks down into two parts, the fiscal and the business operation.

Fiscal operations, which are primarily controlled by the comptroller, include accounting, payroll, treasury operations, the budget office, the bursar, handling of cash, collection of bills, payments of accounts, grants and contracts, he said.

The business operations include purchasing, stores, inventory, housekeeping, the police and everything else, he added.

Since UNL "is about the third largest city in the state, we have all the same kinds of problems" that Lincoln and Omaha have, he said.

With about 27,000 people, including students, faculty, and staff, the University has housing, food and police problems, he said. "We've got all the supply and clean-up that would be involved in any big operation," he added.

For example, of the 500 largest food buyers in the world, the University of Nebraska is about 185th, he said. "We're one of the biggest in the world," he added.

"Other state agencies come in and buy food from us primarily because of the good prices that we get for the quantities we're buying," Tommerraasen said.

The University also has an auto pool, with more than 300 vehicles, where repairs can be made and cars can be serviced, he said.

Other University stores also fall under the supervision of Tommerraasen's office. They include the photographic, general, glass, food and scientific stores, he said.

Even the new windows in CBA, Andrews and Teacher's College are approved through the vice chancellor's office, he said.

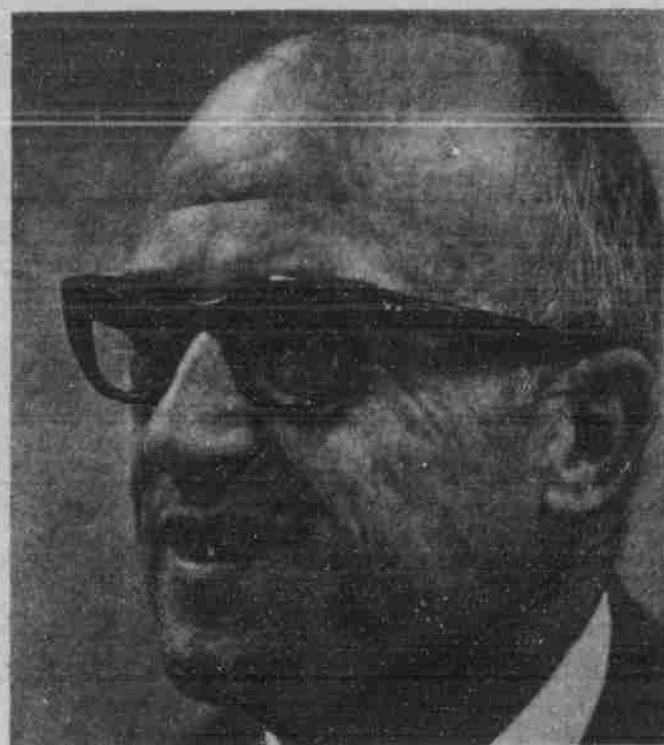
Not only do these windows save energy because they're tighter, but they also make the buildings "blend in with the new library building," he said.

"All of these things are so varied, so diverse and there are so many of them that come under business and finance, that it really is fascinating," Tommerraasen said.

The vice chancellor also has an important role in determining UNL's budget.

"When the budget request is made up, it will be the chancellor and myself who will talk to the system about it," he said. "We come up with the budget for the Lincoln campus."

Tommerraasen added that if the governor's



Miles Tommerraasen, Vice Chancellor for Business and Finance

proposed budget passes, "where we're going to get hurt is in salary increases. What we really would need in terms of getting to the average of other Big eight schools... would be roughly a 15 to 16 per cent salary increase this year," he said.

The governor's budget would give around eight per cent for salary increase, he added. "Lower paid employees will do better on this because the employees making \$6,000 to \$7,000 a year will get a 12 per cent raise. This isn't too bad, but it's not enough to keep up with inflation," he said.

In addition, the governor didn't appropriate enough money to accommodate operating expenses, he said. "This year there're talking about an eight per cent increase... and that still won't give us enough money," he said.

Inflation in chemicals and paper prices for example, has increased as much as 80 per cent, "And we've only gotten three, for and five per cent increases in those accounts," he said.

But the governor is right in saying "If you've got to have a tight budget, then you need to give the University the flexibility to maneuver around in that budget," Tommerraasen said.

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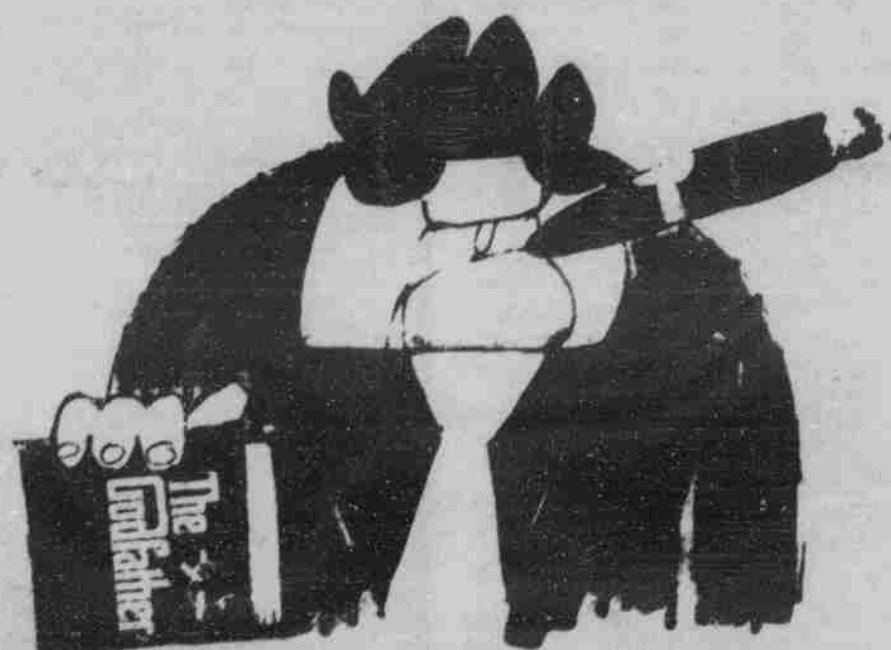
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