

# Migrant students get chance, choice in HEP

By Joyce Vasquez

It used to be that the children of migrant farm workers weren't able to receive a diploma, much less a chance to get an education. Today the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) helps such students complete their education and find opportunities open to them.

HEP at UNL, under the direction of Mike Wortman, is financed by the Labor Department and handled through the Nebraska Human Resource Association. The program began seven years ago and has grown into 15 other HEP offices over the nation. The Lincoln HEP office is in the 501 Building.



Photo by Kevin Higley

Alfredo Gomez, associate recruiting director for UNL's High School Equivalency Program (HEP).

An estimated 35 to 38 students are completing their education through HEP. Students range from 17 to 24 years of age.

The main goal set by the Labor Department is providing General Education Development to migrant students. Along with this goal are the philosophies that students will learn to believe in themselves, see opportunities available, use education as a tool and develop individual talents, but without losing their culture.

#### Recruiting

With the help of migrant agencies, recruiters have been seeking dropouts and informing them about HEP in Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Arizona, Texas, Colorado and Nebraska.

To qualify, the student must be a migrant or seasonal farm worker or a member of a migrant or seasonal farm working family (50 per cent of income must come from farm work). They must be single and between the ages of 17 and 24. Being a school dropout for at least six months and meeting the poverty guidelines of the Labor Department are the final qualifications.

Tests are given to see what the HEP student is interested in and what work level they are at.

Most of the HEP participants stay from two and one-half to three months.

Students are provided transportation, meals and housing at the Abel-Sandoz residence hall. In addition, they receive \$10 a week to pay for soap, laundry and other expenses. Social activities are also planned, such as picnics, dances and roller skating parties.

#### Outside choices

Classes are held Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Science, literature, English, mathematics, reading and social studies are taught. Guest speakers, counselors and representatives from the university explain outside choices they may make after finishing HEP.

When they do complete the program, a three-month follow-up of the student is made.

Alfredo Gomez, associate recruiting director, said the system is very flexible and that "it's never too late" for the students.

"The students are heard and understood, unlike in a class of 50. They are given individual help and attention academically as well as socially. There are no cultural clashes and the close atmosphere is relaxing. We want to give them the idea that they can make it."

#### Four teachers

Four full-time teachers and 10 to 15 university students act as teachers and counselors.

Ron Taylor, one university student involved in the HEP program, works as a residence hall counselor. HEP counselors are chosen through interviews held to determine their ability to communicate with people.

As a dorm counselor Taylor helps with career and grade problems. He estimated he spends 15 to 20 hours a week with each student.

Three students completing their HEP education gave favorable impressions of the program.

#### Teachers were friends

Linda Bateman was a drop out student from the 10th grade. Bateman said that in HEP her teachers were her best friends and she was able to work at her own speed. She plans to be a keypunch operator.

Lupe Leal had gone up to the 11th grade before quitting for 10 months. Leal saw HEP as an easy way of receiving her diploma in an atmosphere where "everyone's friendly." Lupe hopes to further her education and plans a career as a counselor.

Another student, Hector Lozano, had had difficulty getting along with teachers, but in HEP he said he was getting more of an education "without the hassles." Lozano plans on training to be a welder.

Reduced  
air rates  
not offered  
locally

Students who have heard publicity about the no-frills airline programs and have visions of packing a sack lunch and flying home at a reduced rate, are out of luck.

The program, which offers reduced rates for less service, is offered only on flights between Miami and New York and between Miami and the west coast, according to representatives from the companies which initiated the program.

No frills flying, which was approved by the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) and began Monday, offers a 35 per cent reduction from coach rates under certain conditions. Reservations must be made seven days in advance and tickets must be purchased when the reservation is made.

The service runs Monday through Wednesday and is eliminated during July

and August. Customers are not served any food, but beverages may be bought.

The program was suggested by National Airlines to generate new traffic for the airline, according to a National spokesman.

"It's not that our air fares are too high," he said, "but we're in a recession and we have to pry their money away from them."

National has been selling advance tickets under this program for more than a month, with the stipulation that if CAB did not grant approval the money would be refunded or the tickets exchanged.

A passenger survey taken a month ago indicated that several people who purchased these tickets would not have chosen air transportation if not for the

program, according to the spokesman.

He also said the no-frills sections were filled to near-capacity on the first flights Monday.

Four other airlines have received approval from CAB to run similar programs, under such names as "economy excursion fare" and "J class." Representatives from each of these airlines indicated they initiated the program in order to compete with National, and were running flights only in areas where they compete directly with National. None of the airlines anticipate expanding the program to other locations.

The other four airlines which began the program Monday are American Airlines, Eastern Airlines, Continental Airlines and Delta Airlines.

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