

Regents: who governs UN-L?

By Gina Hills

Following a lengthy debate, the NU Board of Regents Saturday approved a 5 per cent plus \$469 salary increase for state employes, as outlined by the Nebraska Legislature in LB588.

Omaha Regent Kermit Hansen said an "across the board increase removes the Board of Regents' governing responsibility." If the regents are bound by LB588, their freedom to reward merits is removed, he said.

Questioned power

The regents also questioned how much power they have in determining salaries and running the University. They asked university attorneys to find an answer, even if a lawsuit is needed.

In the meantime, NU President D.B. Varner suggested that the board take immediate action on LB588 since the fiscal year ends June 30 and the salary increases would be effective July 1.

Closed session held

The board spent more than

two hours in closed session to resolve the problem. Afterwards, Hansen moved that the guidelines of LB588 be followed but said that employes who were to be terminated should not benefit from the pay hike.

The only exceptions would be those employes under contract and those in their terminal year of service, he said.

He also requested that merit be considered even though no funds were provided by the Unicameral for merit pay.

"Selective basis"

Varner suggested that the board consider giving the chancellors and authority to grant merit pay on an "extremely selective basis" if funds become available. He added that they should use no more than one-half of one per cent of the academic salary base for the merit pay.

Varner's suggestion passed after being made into a motion.

Court test suggested

But Regent Robert Simmons of Scottsbluff questioned the wording of LB588. He said the bill should be tested in court because clarification is needed.

Several regents and NU attorney Flavel Wright agreed that the wording only suggested a salary increase to the regents rather than instructing them to increase salaries.

All board members except James Moylan from Omaha accepted Hansen's proposal to have the lawyers seek judicial clarification.

Moylan said such action might create more problems than solve them.

"Appropriate time"

Regent Robert Raun from Minden replied "this is the appropriate time" to determine who has the responsibility and authority over the University, especially "with the bicentennial coming up."

The board also acted on a request by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the

University of Nebraska Medical Center house officers for a checkoff plan for annual association dues. A motion to reject the request passed with only Lincoln Regent Ed Schwartzkopf opposing.

Lawsuit possible

But Varner told the regents he has heard that the board's action on the AAUP request may be contested. He added the possibility of a lawsuit existed.

Saturday the board also faced the problem of rising insurance rates, partially caused by escalating malpractice rates for doctors. In addition, the company now

insuring the University intends to cancel its policy.

Negotiations encouraged

NU Business Officer Glenn Smith said all major insurance companies were encouraged to negotiate with the University for a policy, but only Aetna Life and Casualty have responded.

The University may have to develop its own legal self-insurance plan, he said.

Or, "we could leave ourselves to the mercy of the market," he added.

In the meantime, the present policy will be extended as long as the University actively seeks another one, he said.



Left, N.U. President D.B. Varner; center Lincoln Regent Ed Schwartzkopf; right, Omaha Regent Kermit Hansen.

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