

# HEP: controversy blurs image

(Continued from pg. 7)

"They don't push you. They let you take it as you go," said 18-year-old Mae Terry from Little Rock, Arkansas.

Arkansas native Luther Philips, who was graduated in 1972 and is an unemployed Lincoln resident, said many graduates wish they had taken the program more seriously.

Some students take improper advantage of the program, Edmunds said. "It's a natural reaction from knowing they don't have to pay for anything."

"They (UN-L) students are jealous because we got it easy," Miss Nelson observed.

"HEP students have more recreation time. You know, party, party, party," Philips said.

Students are provided a bus for weekend trips if a dorm counselor drives. Spring trips included concerts and museum visits in Omaha. Next is an outing to "Worlds of Fun" in Kansas City, Mo.

Counselors say they need no special permission to take the bus on trips. They do check out with HEP administrators before leaving, Miss Roach said.

HEP students say some are in the program to have a good time.

"Half come to get their diplomas. The other half comes to party and have a vacation," Miss Nelson said. "They get tired and bored fast. It's a waste of money for the program."

Edmunds said the competition in HEP is probably not as great as in public schools. "It would be to the program's advantage to give longer assignments, more work, more responsibilities."

HEP students often say the time they spend in the program is the happiest time of their life.

The classes and young staff (the oldest of the 11-member staff is 28) have won the ardent approval of students. HEP student Omahan Nich Rocha said his Shakespeare class under teacher Robert Guenzel was so interesting he completed the course and passed the test in a week and a half.

Guenzel is a UN-L graduate who became acquainted with the program through student teaching.

"If all public school teachers were like HEP teachers there wouldn't be any dropouts," Rocha said.

Miss Terry agrees. "In public school, they tell you to look it up. Here, they really explain things."

But HEP administrators fear the accelerated program may prove inadequate scholastic training.

Workman says he feels the time constraints implemented by the U.S. Dept. of Labor will negatively affect the quality of education the students receive.

Last year there were 70 graduates. This year Workman said HEP received a quote—105.

An evaluation team from the department visited HEP in January.

"They said, 'Yeah, you're going good things here'. But they thought we should do them faster," Workman said.

HEP is financed by a grant that is renewed annually.

"At one time, if HEP students said they wanted to go to college, we would keep them quite a bit longer so that we could prepare them well enough to get high scores on their tests," he continued.

Now, as soon as the program's teachers feel a student can pass his GED, they urge him to do so, Workman said.

The GED (General Educational Development) is administered by the Nebraska Dept. of Education and the way students receive their High School

Equivalency Certificate.

Before 1973, HEP was financed by the Office of Economic Opportunity. Since its placement under the Dept. of Labor's direction, HEP administrators say more emphasis is put on numbers.

Students agree with Workman that they can't get as much preparation for college, vocational training or jobs if rushed.

Henry Mata, a HEP graduate who now sells surplus cars for the state, spent nine months in the program. He plans to attend UN-L this fall.

Mata says the emphasis of HEP is now on head count—getting as many through the program as possible, rather than on personal growth.

"How meaningful is a three-four-month program to deal with problems you've been carrying around 13 years?" asked James H. Smith, director of the UN-L Office of Minority Affairs.

Smith also said he foresees problems if HEP students decide to attend college. HEP's accelerated program may result in inadequate mastery of skills or undisciplined study habits, he said.

The Office of Minority Affairs is not connected with the HEP program. It offers academic help to low-income, minority UN-L students.

Only three or four HEP graduates have sought the office's aid, Smith said, adding that students cannot be pushed to seek academic assistance, they must admit their deficiency.

Placement Director John McVay said he encourages students to enter CETA if they want to attend vocational school.

CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act) is a federally financed state program providing training employment. CETA began operations in January 1975 with a \$5 million budget. Manager Dale White said he and his 21-member staff monitor on-the-job training and work experience for the unemployed and underemployed (persons with earnings below the poverty level).

White said HEP students often enter vocational schools with reading and mathematics deficiencies.

One aspect of CETA is subsidized education at Lincoln's Southeast Technical College, Northeast Technical in Norfolk, Central Nebraska Technical in Grand Island and North Platt's Mid Plains Vocational Technical.

CETA pays tuition, plus an allowance of \$2 for each hour spent in class, White said. A transportation allowance of five cents a mile is also provided, he added. And if the student has dependants, he receives up to a \$20 stipend each week, White continued.

Eight HEP graduates entered CETA since its inception and White said he expects more after a contract with HEP is completed. The contract states there is money and classroom space available for HEP graduates, White explained.

Admission into CETA depends on the student's reading ability, he said, but added that acceptance was "pretty easy."

Still, some may have difficulty in those schools which do not provide courses to correct deficiencies, White said.

But Southeast Technical employs a counselor to help CETA students with problems, he added.

Nevertheless, most college and vocational school aspirants did not believe they were at a disadvantage and seemed confident they could overcome any academic obstacles.

"If I can make it here, I can make it there, (nursing school)," Miss Rose said.

McVay said post-graduation education is a new trend. "There were more job-oriented students in 1972."

HEP's Director Workman says that further training beyond high school is essential.

"To really be successful, they (HEP graduates) probably received some kind of skill in addition to what we offer here."

McVay attributes this change to the creation of the placement service and federal assistance available to college-bound students.

Those not attending college before 1973 are eligible for the Basic Economic Opportunity Grant (BEOG) which supplies \$1,050 per year, he continued.

And the College Assistance Migratory Program (CAMP) began in 1973. CAMP pays one year's room and board and tuition for seasonal and migrant farm workers who are below poverty levels.

The four CAMP schools are: Adams State College at Alamosa, Colo.; Pan American University in Edinburg, Tex.; St. Edward's University in Austin, Tex., and San Diego State University at San Diego, Calif.

McVay said schools choose those best qualified, but, because each year about 30 openings are available in each school, being accepted has not been difficult.

"But if students want to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, we try to help them get financial help."

The placement office also helps secure jobs for those wanting to stay in Lincoln. But, according to McVay, job retention is not high.

They quit to start college, go home, or maybe they have "dead end" jobs like a dishwasher so they drift to something else, McVay continued.

He said employers willingly hire HEP graduates: "It's good for their image to hire minorities."

To ease classroom-to-job adjustment, McVay said HEP may buy a house next fall where graduates can live together.

HEP's Project Lincoln program pays up to \$70 of a graduate's apartment rent for two months.

But they must have jobs or attend school, said Placement Specialist Mrs. Adelta Traudt.

"We also try to find jobs and apartments for students who aren't going to make it in HEP."

Mrs. Traudt said she did not think those who elect to drop out of HEP are eligible for Project Lincoln. Thirty to 40 students have received aid since September, she added.

When Luther Philips graduated in 1972 he knew what he wanted to be—a printer.

"I pictured myself standing in front of a press putting out papers and knowing the news before anyone else."

But reality didn't quite fit his imaginings. Philips said he was placed at Boomer's Printing Co., but grew dissatisfied when he discovered odd jobs and clean-up chores would be a two- or three-year assignment before he was promoted to printer.

After he quit, stints at CENGAS, construction work and driving a bus followed.

Now Philips said he will attend UN-L in August.

"I haven't decided what I want to do, but it's not labor."

After living on the UN-L campus as a HEP student, Philips said he has realized all the opportunities available.

"HEP was the best thing that happened to me," he said. "Everyone has dreams but keeps them inside because you don't think you can do it. The teachers make you think you can."