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Varner offers accountability plan

By Dick Pierson

NU President D.B. Varner presented a plan for accountability to the Nebraska Legislature's Appropriations Committee Tuesday in the first of two committee hearings on the university budget for fiscal 1976-77.

The committee asked for such a plan last month after Varner requested greater flexibility for the NU Board of Regents in spending university appropriations.

Varner told the committee that the plan would require four elements: Long-range goals, short-range goals, budgeting and evaluation.

A statement of long-range goals should not deal with quantified matters, but be reduced into short-range objectives to be accomplished in one year budgetary intervals, he said.

Those objectives, Varner said, should concern such issues as size of enrollment, employees and extension staff, faculty-student ratio, faculty salary levels, costs per credit hour at undergraduate and graduate levels and credit hours produced per faculty member.

Other non-quantifiable objectives Varner only used as examples were: Development of a formula to assure equitable university resource allocation, review of curricula to phase out and add programs, identification of specific departments or programs for emphasis and procedures for improving selected graduate program quality.

Merit salary increases

Varner said a commitment should be made for merit salary increases. He suggested specifying faculty members to receive no merit increases and others to receive proportions of available money.

Varner's third element was the NU budget. He suggested that the Appropriations Committee discuss goals and objectives with NU administrators, arrive at consensus and draft a bill containing a specific one-sum appropriation for NU, including legislative intent.

Under the plan, the regents then would allocate those resources, subject to justification, if they depart from legislative intent.

The key to such a process would be that the university could derive its budget from a management plan, he said, and not vice-versa.

The fourth element, evaluation of results, would be easier under this plan, Varner said. He proposed that the first annual budget committee hearing review previous expenditures.

Varner cites advantages

Varner said advantages to his so-called plan of flexibility and accountability include forcing NU to:

- Provide the committee, Legislature and governor with a clear statement of goals and to resolve any differences.
- Give the regents what he called needed flexibility to govern more cost effectively.
- Give regents more budgetary control to fulfill what he termed their constitutional duties as managers of the university.

He also said it would retain legislative and executive responsibility for appropriating and monitoring the use of public money, with external fiscal management auditing.

Varner admitted to Utica Sen. Douglas Bereuter that the plan would be subjective, but said the objective data would be useful in monitoring the university. He said the North Central Accreditors and Areas of Excellence review committees investigate programs' weaknesses and strengths, but admitted those were not foolproof.

Not tuned in

Committee chairman Sen. Richard Marvel of Hastings said the university is evaluated constantly by faculty members and students, but that the senators were not tuned in to their conclusions.

Sen. Glenn Goodrich of Omaha said the Area of Excellence Review Committee for the College of Architecture, which he served on, "dissected" every part of that program.

But Sen. John Savage of Omaha said information like that was not available for every department.

Varner admitted that "raw data is a tricky business," but said that administrators are working on a management information system to provide common denominators.

Salary increase

Sidney Sen. Robert Clark asked Varner what he would do with a five per cent salary increase provision to be distributed on merit.

The committee's higher education appropriations bill, LB690, contains a four per cent salary increase, plus another one per cent to be awarded at the administration's discretion for merit.

Varner replied that he would rather have six per cent increase for all staff and faculty members with another 6.32 per cent for merit.

"It seems we do have a cost of living obligation," he said, and the regents would want to divide a five per cent increase between cost of living and merit raises.

Clark told Varner that he would like to give him 5 per cent as an arbitrary figure, and "let you find out what kind of an administrator you are."

Further hearings before the committee will be conducted on Jan. 28.



Photo by Ted Kirk

An estimated 30 persons attended an hour-long vigil at the Lincoln Federal Bldg. Tuesday noon protesting President Gerald Ford's "State of the Union" request to finance the manned B-1 supersonic nuclear bomber.

The vigil was sponsored by the Nebraskans for Peace and the Lincoln-Omaha War Resisters League.

Centrex crosses campus wires

By Joyletta Woodruff

New telephone numbers, new dialing instructions and a few problems remaining to be ironed out, reflect the status of the recently-implemented UNL communication system—Centrex.

Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Co. (LT&T), which rents the system to UNL, installed telephones in all residence hall rooms last June and the system was to begin operation then. However, computer programming problems delayed operation until Dec. 19, according to Ruth Michalecki, director of UNL's Telephone and Radio Communication Center.

Since the implementation, she said, several problems have arisen which still need to be solved, including dead phone lines, two calls on one line, and phones that do not ring when they should.

LT&T is working around-the-clock to clear up the problems, she said.

She said the university began seven years ago to look for a new system that "could include the dorms, offer flexibility for growth and answer the need for sophisticated communications."

The old system, which UNL purchased in 1959, operated on a manual switchboard, said Ronald Wright, UNL business manager. The system, which originally was constructed before World War II, was impossible to buy parts for, he said.

Centrex operates through an LT&T computer, he said. With its implementation, the entire university, including residence halls, operates on the same major telephone lines.

Under the old system, UNL's monthly telephone rental rate was \$36,000, Wright said. With Centrex, that price now is \$30,000 per month.

When phones were installed in residence halls last June, residents were assigned regular Lincoln telephone numbers, Michalecki said. The mid-year change forced LT&T to issue new phone numbers with the university's 472 prefix.

Before Centrex, persons calling from a phone with the 472 prefix to another phone with the same prefix simply dialed the last four digits of the number. To call a non-university phone, the person first had to dial nine, listen for the dial tone and then dial the seven-digit number.

Persons placing a call from a residence hall phone last semester had to dial the entire seven-digit number for both on and off campus calls.

Dial "2" first

With the Centrex system, to call from a 472-prefixed number to another, the caller must dial two and the number's last four digits. To call a non-university phone from the university, the caller must dial nine, followed by the seven-digit number.

Residence hall phones cannot use the Wide Area Telephone Service (WATS). University employees may use a WATS line to make long-distance business calls, but students are billed for all long-distance service.

A temporary student information number established last semester provides persons with phone numbers of residence hall residents and information concerning university activities, Michalecki said.

She said the service, staffed by work-study employees, will discontinue next year as regular university operators replace the special student information operators.

Telephone numbers of residence hall dwellers are available from the student information number, 472-1234. The 1975-76 Builder's Buzz Book also lists student numbers.

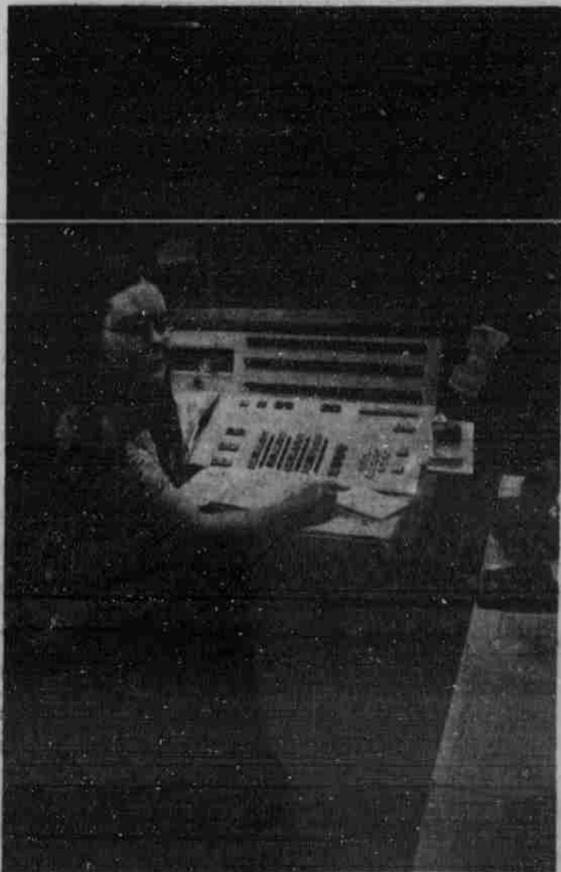


Photo by Steve Boerner

Centrex operator Joyce Dunn