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Photo by Ted Kirk

Nebraska State Sens. (from left) Lealie Stull of Alliance and Glenn Goodrich of Omaha, both members of the Appropriations Committee, discuss the number of votes they have on LB690, the higher education appropriations bill, with NU lobbyist William Swanson.

Higher ed. amendments approved

By Dick Piersol

The Nebraska Legislature Wednesday adopted all of the Appropriations Committee's amendments to its higher education appropriations bill, LB690.

With no opposition, LB690 was advanced to select file. It may be amended further at that stage.

On a vote of 30-11, the senators endorsed Utica Sen. Douglas Bereuter's amendment for \$850,000 to improve UNL undergraduate education. The amendment requires the university to reduce class sizes and to recruit senior classroom faculty members whose workload would be at least 75 per cent undergraduate instruction. It also requires that current faculty members' classroom time shall not decrease, and that teaching assistant classroom time won't increase.

Bereuter argued that an undergraduate education at UNL was, in fact, declining. Evidence of this, he said, was a survey of 13 university departments which showed that one-third of all freshmen 100-level course sections at the university have at least 50 students enrolled. In 21 per cent of these classes, more than 100 students are enrolled, and in 14 per cent of the 100-level courses, more than 150 students are enrolled.

Omaha Sen. John Cavanaugh objected to the Bereuter amendment. He argued that the Legislature had provided \$800,000 and \$922,000 respectively in the past two fiscal years for Areas of Excellence and for improved student-teacher contact. If university administrators had not taken care of undergraduate education with those programs and their own initiative, he said, they should be fired.

Bereuter contended those amounts were piecemeal, and that his amendment would require the NU Board of Regents to account for the program expenditures and their success or failure.

The senators also voted 25-2 to provide \$88,000 for the UNL Office of Minority Affairs. That amendment, sponsor Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha said, was needed in case federal funds are lost.

The amendment requires that should federal funds continue to be available, the general fund appropriation would lapse.

Currently, six of the office's eight staff members are paid by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. That grant will end June 30. The office now is in the process of trying to obtain more federal funds.

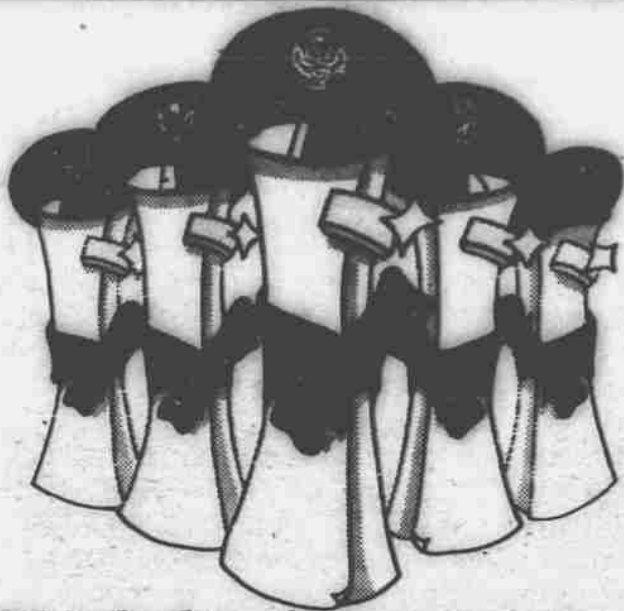
Other amendments approved and added to the appropriations bill were those effectively combining budgetary programs on all campuses. By these, appropriations for programs that include administrative costs, plant operations and the State University of Nebraska would be made to the central administration.

Other appropriations would combine budgetary programs at UNL, the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), the University of Nebraska Medical Center and the Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The result is a form of single-sum budgeting. The regents had asked the Legislature for a single appropriation to the central administration office to be distributed by the board.

Previously, the Legislature has broken down each campus budget into separate appropriations.

The senators did, however, approve an amendment appropriating and specifying a \$919,546 tax fund increase to the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources for a computerized agriculture information network, areas of excellence, agriculture experiment stations and the extension division.



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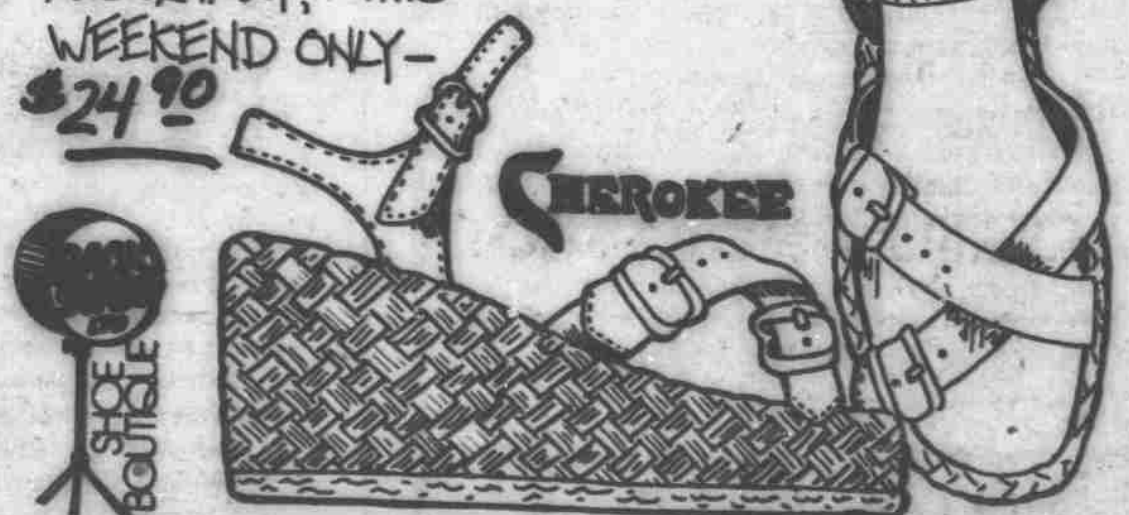
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