

Baier searches for stability, one central authority

By Mary Jo Howe

Three bosses in two years was too much for one UNL administrator so he's moving on.

John (Jack) Baier, acting dean of student development at UNL, will be the new assistant vice president of student affairs at Texas Tech in Lubbock, Tex. this fall.

Baier served two years at UNL, the first as associate dean of student development and the second as the acting dean. He also taught part-time in the Psychology Dept. as an assistant professor.

Higher pay, a better position and a more stable administration are reasons for moving to Texas, Baier said.

Baier said the major problem he saw at UNL was its administrative instability because there are so many administrators in "acting positions."

Baier said he had never seen so many people in acting roles until he came to UNL.

Unstable environment

"It makes it so hard to plan beyond one year when you don't know if you're even going to be here," Baier said. "Such an unstable environment is not good for retaining forward-planning, goal-oriented people."

Baier said he thinks one reason for the administration's instability is its inability to recognize the talent that already is here.

"The administration will conduct a year-long national search, looking for that one Utopian person to fill a position," Baier said, "and then they end up by appointing a person who was already here."

To point out some of the problems he has encountered, Baier mentioned he has had three bosses (vice

chancellors of student affairs) during the two years he has been at UNL.

Carpenter without hammer

"With so many people coming and going, it is impossible to look ahead and find support among the people around you," he said. "I feel like a carpenter without a hammer."

Two years ago Baier came to UNL with hopes he could do something to improve the policies and programs that already were here—"to make a Chevrolet into a Cadillac," he said.

But those hopes were strangled with budget cuts, paper work and getting to know new bosses, Baier said.

One major project Baier had hoped to implement at UNL was the Student Development Transcript. This is an advising program designed to humanize the educational process and develop the total student, Baier said.

Under the program, each undergraduate would be assigned to a non-academic adviser, one of the staff members in the Student Affairs Dept. The student would meet with this adviser once a semester and a record of the student's non-academic development would be kept.

"It's an attempt to let the student know he is more than just a grade point average," Baier said.

The transcript could be used for job applications, to let the employer see what students really are like—what organizations they have been members of, how they have developed culturally and morally and what leadership qualities they have developed, Baier said.

Survey conducted

Last fall, Baier conducted a survey of several hundred

parents and students about the programs. He now is tabulating the results and it looks like the vote is running about 75% in favor of the program, Baier said.

He conducted a national survey of advisers at other schools about a year ago and received enthusiastic support, he said.

"Sure, the program is breaking new ground," Baier said.

"Administrators in large universities don't seem to feel there is much use in trying to get to know the students because there are so many."

But with 16,000 undergraduates and 250 Student Affairs staff members, each staff member need be assigned about 75 students per semester, Baier said.

"And that would break down to about four hours a week spent talking to students," he added. "It would be a great experience for both the students and the staff."

Baier had planned to start a pilot program with 200 students next year, but the move to Texas will halt that. He plans to implement the program there but also hopes that his successor will continue the plan here.

His successor will be Jayne Wade Anderson, now coordinator for fraternities, sororities, and cooperatives.

"The move to Texas was a tough decision to make," Baier said. "There is so much good at this university; the students are so concerned with their education and their state. Lincoln is a great place to live and bring up children," he added.

Baier said one decisive factor in the move was the great similarities between Lubbock and Lincoln, and Texas Tech and UNL.

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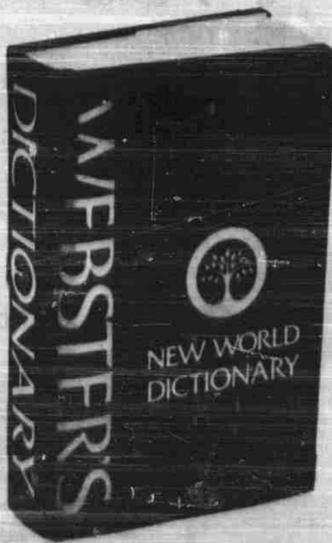
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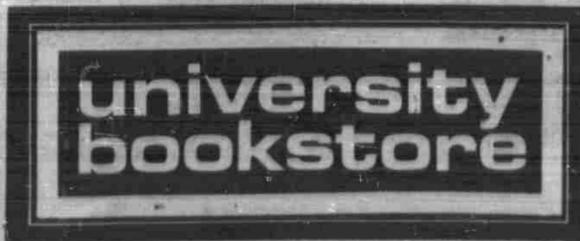
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