

Regents tap cash reserve fund for salary increases

By Rod Murphy

The NU faculty will get 8 percent pay raises next year, the NU Board of Regents decided Saturday, but since the money is to come from cash reserves, the money may not be available in future years.

The board approved spending about \$2 million from self-generated cash funds to raise salaries.

William Erskine, executive vice president for administration, said the cash fund was not needed for operating costs this year.

Regent Kermit Wagner of Schuyler, noted that once the cash reserve is spent there are no funds to replace it.

"When it's gone it's gone," Wagner said. "This will have to be carefully explained to the Legislature."

Kermit Hansen of Omaha echoed Wagner's concern. "Don't be upset by some of the people who look at the budget and say, 'you didn't begin to hurt yourself.' We did," he said.

If the increased salaries are to be maintained next year, the Legislature must approve more money for the university.

If the Legislature does not make the increases, it could mean smaller faculty increases or no increase in the future, said Regent Robert Raun of Minden.

Regent James Moylan of Omaha agreed to try it as an experiment but said the move should not be a precedent.

Erskine admitted the action contained "an element of risk."

NU President Ronald Roskens said "we must realize there will be sacrifices," but said it was the only way to treat the issue.

The university will have to operate under a "lean budget," he said. "It's not just words, it's there, or as the case may be, it's not there."

Regent Robert Simmons of Scottsbluff said the board was "going awfully fast without knowing what we are doing."

The regents passed the proposal with Simmons the only member voting no.

The move would increase faculty salaries 8 percent, about half of which would be granted for merit.

Non-teaching personnel would receive an average of 6.5 percent.

The regents originally requested that the Legislature allocate enough money for a 9 percent salary increase for faculty members and 7 percent for other staff members.

The measure also provided a \$1.50 per credit hour tuition increase.

William Petrowski, University of Nebraska at Omaha faculty senate member, said UNO has more administrators per faculty member than UNL and recommended some administrators be eliminated to help increase faculty salaries.

UNO Chancellor Del Weber said the UNO administrative staff is "lean." But he said Petrowski's charge was something to be looked at department by department.

Petrowski said UNO faculty eligible for merit increases were giving "more for less," since the faculty pay raises have not kept up with the rate of inflation.

In other action Saturday, the board approved serving wine at Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery at the May 5 Nebraska Art Association's 90th anniversary party.

The item, placed on the agenda as an emergency measure, carried with Regent Robert Prokop of Wilbur stressing that it was only a one-time basis.

Moylan and Robert Koeft at Grand Island voted against the request and Raun abstained.

Wagner, among those voting yes, said he did so in the hope that it would "open other avenues," on the question.

The board also approved the formation of a major in Textiles, Clothing and Design.

Board Chairman Ed Schwartzkopf of Lincoln noted that the program was popular and growing.

The board also decided to reject an offer by the Department of Roads to purchase right-of-way access through the North Platte Ag Experimental Station. They also rejected all bids for toilet renovations received April 4 for Memorial Stadium.

The regents tabled until May any action that would redistribute student fees.

Under the proposal for consideration is a Fund A allocation of \$133,375 and Fund B allocation of \$2,678,460.



Photo by Ted Kirk

Iranian students protest

Iranian and American students joined Friday to protest the "fascist regime of the shah" and U.S. oversight by lack of media publicity. Story page 3.

UNL professor tries to lick chain letter origin mystery

By Deb Shanahan

A UNL instructor actively is seeking what most people (and the Post Office) consider a nuisance and what he calls "an interesting phenomenon of American culture—the chain letter."

Roger Welsch, associate professor of English and anthropology, started collecting chain letters 15 years ago after receiving one.

A chain letter is sent to several persons with a request that the receiver send copies of it to all persons listed. The receiver is asked to drop the first name from the list and add his to the bottom.

Welsch said the origin of the chain letter still is a mystery, although he found an article suggesting they may have started in Denver during the 1930s. Welsch said he suspects chain letters were a fad during the Depression but were around long before that.

"The Denver letters were dime chain letters. You sent a dime to the first person on the list, dropped their name, then added yours. In the end you got something like \$18, which was a lot of money in those days," he said.

This type of letter is like a pyramid, he said where a small amount of something is put out, and after a period of time, the person accumulates a large amount. These usually involve big money—with cash, whiskey or bonds exchanged—and make up about 10 percent of the chain letters sent and received in the United States, he said.

"I interviewed a woman once who answered a chain letter, and after two weeks had enough money for a trip to South America. When she came back, she bought

a car with the money that had been sent while she was on her trip," Welsch said. He added that this type of letter uses the mails for lottery, which is illegal.

A second kind of chain letter which constitutes another 10 percent of the total are those which deal with minor considerations, Welsch said. He cited prayers, recipes and post cards as common items exchanged.

Another 5 percent are chain letters that tells housewives to send their husbands to the bored housewife at the top of the list. It threatens that if she breaks the chain, she will get her "old man" back.

A fourth kind, a Dutch letter, is interesting, Welsch said, because essentially one letter makes up about 70 percent of all chain letters sent and received.

Welsch said he has 43 of these letters, and although each differs slightly, they all share certain common elements.

For example, all say they were started in the Netherlands and have been around the world at least once, according to Welsch.

The letter tells the receiver to pass on the chain and promises that within a certain time period the person will receive

good luck, money or something else he wants, Welsch said. It also warns that if the chain is broken, something bad will happen.

"The statement 'This is no joke' always appears, and Don Elliot is always the name of the guy who lost his job or died because he broke the chain," Welsch said.

This fourth kind of chain letter presents another problem—the legality of passing such letters along, Welsch said.

"Any chain letter with a threat involved is illegal. In the Dutch letter there is the implied threat of bad luck. No one knows if this makes them illegal—the post office won't tackle the question, and I'm not a lawyer," he said.

This may be one reason he has had difficulty collecting chain letters, Welsch said.

"People don't like to admit they sent them on. Almost every one I get has a note attached that starts out 'I heard you were interested in chain letters, so I took this out of the wastebasket . . .'" he said.

The denial is only one way people react to chain letters, according to Welsch.

"Some people are outraged. Others object vigorously on religious grounds. They consider them non-Christian; I suppose because of the superstition," he said.

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