

UNL decision-making splits Legislature, regents

By Rex Henderson

Two institutions decide the future of the University of Nebraska. The NU Board of Regents holds the constitutional power to govern, but the Nebraska Legislature holds the purse strings.

More than half the NU operating budget comes from the state general fund. Critical decisions, such as the size of faculty salary increase and the construction and renovation of campus buildings, are influenced and sometimes determined by the Legislature.

The two bodies, both created by the Nebraska constitution, have been working together since 1869.

Robert Prokop

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Additional requirements are needed to be determined.

Q: How do you feel about a voting student regent?

A: . . . I am opposed to a voting student regent. I have been opposed to even having a student regent, period. Because one, the student does not represent the entire community. He represents the 5 to 10 percent of those that are more interested in the political aspect of the university and student government.

I don't think we ought to have a non-voting person sitting on the board. I think that is ex-officio type of representation and I think this type of thing does create a problem. I think the people of the state of Nebraska ought to have the right to vote on this type of issue, namely, "shall we have a voting student regent or shall we have a student regent on the board at all."

Again, I think the representation of students could easily be handled without having a regental position for only one person. I have heard an awful lot of people come out of that experience and say "I learned an awful lot." But really, what have they contributed in the space of one year? Because, you will find that most people take one year to 18 months to find out how things operate.

By the time a student regent is even close to that aspect, he is gone and off the board. I really think the anticipation of effectiveness has not been what it was supposed to be.

Q: Which of your constituents do you listen to more—students or their parents?

A: . . . I actually listen to the people in my district. I think that I get a wide range of views and parents and students are only a small part of my district. Of some 210,000 people in my district, I would say there are no more than 10,000 parents and students. So they represent an extreme minority in the overall picture of the district.

Q: How much contact do you have with UNL, especially students and faculty, between monthly regents' meetings?

A: . . . Let me say that the average correspondence to my office runs about 75 to 100 letters a week. Of that probably 20 to 25 letters come from the UNL campus or from UNL administrative people.

On campus, it varies. Sometimes I'm there once a week, sometimes not and sometimes as high as three times.

I would say that my contact is probably a great deal higher than any board member, but that is an exception.

Q: What do you think students are interested in now on campus?

A: . . . I think their major priority ought to get the best type of education possible. If that is not their priority, then they shouldn't be on campus. The students are there basically to obtain advancement in the educational field and preparation for their future career. If they're not there for that, then I don't think their priorities mean much at all.

Q: How would you evaluate your performance on the board?

A: I don't think a person can evaluate himself. I think it's egotistical for anyone to say that he has done some things and hasn't done others, or what he is proud of and what is isn't.

While NU may not get all it wants from the Legislature (NU appropriation requests were cut by nearly \$7 million this year), relationship between the two bodies generally is cooperative.

The need for a cooperative relationship between the bodies was summarized by Sen. Frank Lewis of Bellevue.

"We provide the money for the place," he said.

Most of the conflict between the regents and the Legislature centers on who makes decisions, Lewis said.

Two decisions in state government in the past year have attempted to clarify who makes those decisions.

The Nebraska Supreme Court ruled that the regents have final responsibility and

authority over NU.

That decision had little real effect, according to Sen. Jerome Warner of Waverly. All it means is that there is less detail in the appropriations bill than before the ruling.

The Appropriations Committee, which Warner chairs, scrutinizes the appropriation requests just as carefully, he said.

The passage of LB756, the so-called "role and mission bill," also affects the relationship between the Legislature and NU.

Warner says the bill's effect still is uncertain.

The retiring vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Doug Bereuter of Utica, says the bill should smooth any friction between the Legislature and the regents.

Kermit Wagner

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between monthly regents meetings?

A: I have a lot of contact. I have student contact, perhaps very little parent contact. I hardly think a day goes by that I'm not contacted by the administrators as to certain problems and certain projections that the administration is either accomplishing or undertaking.

Q: What do you think the students are interested in now on campus?

A: I'm sure that students are interested in a quality education. They're concerned about the possibility of jobs after they graduate, they are concerned about the potential of securing positions—especially in the field they are developing or at least the subsequent major.

Q: How would you evaluate your performance on the board. What are you proud of? What do you wish you had done differently?

A: I've been a regent now for approximately eight years. When the University of Omaha was absorbed into the university system, the concept of one university was developed. Along with that, steps were inaugurated to have the program excel in education. I've seen the projections and I've seen the accomplishments. The regent policy has been to fund and perhaps assist all departments that have not only cooperated, but demonstrated and displayed . . . quality programs. I think in this manner we will achieve excellence in education.

What I wish I had done differently is a very controversial issue. I hope that sometime we can build a new 100,000 unit stadium here on the Lincoln campus or adjacent to the Lincoln campus. I believe that if it was properly explained and properly shown, it could be financed in a short period of time. Maybe we could enrich the lives of the athletic fans that we have and allow them to attend football games at the university.

I hope that I can continue in developing the policy of triggering excellence in quality education.

Ed Schwartzkopf

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meetings?

A: Living in Lincoln I have considerable contact with the university. I would say this contact is almost on a daily basis; I have almost a continuous contact with the university or the university system.

Q: What do you think students are most interested in now on campus?

A: It's obvious they don't have a great interest and concern about student government. I hope this is indicative that the students are saying that they know they're on campus and they want to get the most for their educational dollar; that they want to get prepared for the next thing they are going to be doing in life after graduation.

Q: How would you evaluate your performance as a regent? What are you proud of and what do you wish you had done differently?

A: It is always difficult for an individual to evaluate their own performance. I think that's done better by the public that we represent. The real key is how well we served all the groups we represent. I hope that I could say that during the time that I was on the board that we really have moved education ahead and improved the quality of instruction at NU.

James Moylan

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Q: How much contact do you have with UNL, especially students and faculty, between monthly regents meetings?

A: It would be considerable, in the form of correspondence, telephone calls, conversations with faculty members. It is quite a demanding job and we do receive considerable correspondence on matters.

Q: What do you think students are interested in now on campus?

A: I think things have changed . . . I have been on the board seven and one-half years. I have seen quite a change since I first went on in the early '70s, between then and now, among the people. It seems to me that the student attitude is different than it was eight years ago. They are more calm, more interested in obtaining a good, sound education and are looking a little more into the future. Not only their future, but the future of the university and state and the country as a whole than I think they were back seven or eight years ago. I am kind of glad to see it headed in that direction.

Q: How would you evaluate your performance on the board? What are you proud of and what do you wish you had done differently?

A: There are several areas. I think one is selecting leadership and administrators and then relying on their judgement to select the other personnel which make the university function. At the present time I think we have as good a president and chancellors as you will find any place in the country.

I think in order to operate a university of this size you have to have good, capable leadership, and I certainly feel we do. And that has been a result of the board of regents' action.

Offhand, I can't think of anything we would have or could have done differently. It's been a growing institution since I've been there and it's taken a lot of personnel. The only thing that we have not done that I would like to see done is a more adequate faculty evaluation program. This has been discussed over the years and I think we could enhance the value of the university with a good, sound, adequate faculty evaluation.

Robert Koefoot

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last (regents) meeting is that the great majority of students are greatly concerned about the abolishment of mandatory student fees for the speakers program.

The new student regent is concerned about student regents voting . . . I expect this to become an issue in the future.

Q: How would you evaluate your performance on the board?

A: I can't evaluate my own performance . . . I wouldn't try to do that. I am an individual that likes to promote and be involved with constructive things, not destructive things. There have been many accomplishments . . . The construction of the new lab building — and all of the construction on the campuses — is included in these (accomplishments).

I think the educational atmosphere at the university has improved remarkably over the past few years.

"The regents should be pleased," Bereuter said, as the bill should result in less competition between the colleges and NU for state funds.

But official contacts between the board and the Legislature are not the only channels. Personal contact with senators and regents also affect the university.

A Legislator's objections can sometimes directly effect university policy.

A year ago the University of Nebraska at Omaha sent information to students on paying bills with credit cards along with tuition statements. Included in the information was a list of Omaha banks where students could apply for the cards.

Sen. Sam Cullan of Hemingford immediately objected to the practices, saying it constituted advertisement for specific Omaha businesses. The practice was discontinued the following semester.

Kermit Hansen

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furthermore, I think they are entitled to make mistakes, so long as those mistakes aren't self-destructive.

Q: How do you feel about a voting student regent? What are the chances the Nebraska voter will approve a voting student regent?

A: No (the student regent should not have a vote). It would be a pure conflict of interests. Because he is a student who is, in effect, then taking the role of his own boss.

I think it's a possibility (that voters would elect a student to the board), but I'll say frankly that it's unlikely at this point . . . I think the student would have to determine if he wants to be a student or a regent.

Q: Which of your constituents do you listen more to— students or their parents?

A: Unless I really know that it was parent or child (addressing a given issue), then I don't think that it would change my normal view, which is "who wrote what, and what were they trying to convey to me?" So I would try to weigh them equally.

Q: How much contact do you have with UNL, especially students and faculty, between monthly regents meetings?

A: It really depends upon issues that are involved. I don't have anything in the way of . . . ongoing, continuing relationships with the student advisory group. I have probably more contact with the faculty members than I really do with students . . . only when something really excites (students) or makes them mad do I hear from students.

By the same token, from time to time I really do try and seek out what the student attitude is with kind of a one-man poll of stopping six, eight, 10, 12 students as I roam around the campus.

Q: What do you think the students are interested in now on campus?

A: I think there's a carry-over on this matter of the speaker issue. I think that students are always interested in either the planned or the potential increase in tuition. I think the whole matter of fee distribution is a concern of students.

Q: How would you evaluate your performance on the board? What are you proud of, what do you wish you had done differently?

A: I would hope that my performance has been . . . I'll say above average. It's an area in which I've really tried to provide the best from my own experience and background helping the university be the best it can.

As to what I am proud of: I guess number one would be finding men of the caliber of both (former NU President) Woody Varner and (current NU President) Ron Roskens to serve as the chief executives of the system.

What would I do differently, or what would I have my regrets about? I guess it's that trying to get public recognition of the value of excellence — some call it quality education — is difficult. In fact it's almost maddening. I've used the expression, "If ever we get the ceremony of honors day . . . of the same basis as we do in filling the stadium for many football games, then I'd feel that that would be the ultimate . . ."