

Priorities needed when budgets are cut

The University of Nebraska will apparently get off easy when the Legislature brings its special session to a close. Two bills being considered would affect the university by limiting to a five percent increase the total amount of money the Legislature could appropriate to all state agencies.

But, according to the attorney general's office, because the University gets money from sources other than tax dollars—student fees, tuition, etc.—the use of these monies would not be subject to limitations.

This also means that the University could accept federal funds for research and other projects—\$16.6 million last year.

But while the University may get off easier than some were expecting, budget cuts are bound to continue. As one official put it, "If they're going to limit the state, they're sure not going to let the University get away scott free." Nor should they.

The University, as it has been attempting, should become even more alert to the places where the budget can be trimmed. An example of a wise decision was the decision last spring to

eliminate some rarely used services at the Student Health Center.

And even more important, the University should become aware of where the budget should not be trimmed. An example of a mistake in this area was the suggestion earlier this spring that Regent's tuition and some other scholarships be eliminated to decrease operating costs.

In short, the University needs to set some priorities—and the maintaining of academic excellence should be placed high on the list.

Letters policy

The Summer Nebraskan will publish letters to the editor and guest editorials. The editor will decide which letters are published and reserves the right to condense submissions. Timeliness and clarity of writing will be considered.

All letters must be signed.

Letters should be received by the Summer Nebraska Monday prior to the date of desired publication.



If we build enough of these things, maybe they'll name one after us.

New stadium build-up torn down

It seems that news of Proposition 13, the California constitutional amendment which slashes local government spending by 60 percent has not yet reached Regents Hall.

On May 21 Regents Robert Prokop of Papillion and Kermit Wagner of Schuyler suggested that UN-L build a new 25 million dollar football stadium somewhere between Omaha and Lincoln and have the Legislature finance it through a five-cent tax on a package of cigarettes.

No action was taken on their idea—plans for a new stadium sprout and die like weeds every year—but the fact that they even thought of making such a proposal raises interesting questions.

letter

First, why spend 25 million dollars on a building few want and fewer need?

Yes, there are Nebraskans who can't get tickets, but as Memorial Stadium is already the sixth largest stadium in the United States, their plans for a yet bigger arena is toying dangerously with the law of supply and demand.

What happens if Nebraska suffers a mediocre season? Will Nebraskans support a team that has no chance at a bowl game?

In the past, they have not. In the 40s and 50s

the stadium often sat half empty. Indeed, last year's plan to show home games live on a Spor's Complex video screen was abandoned because of poor attendance.

But even if a new stadium made good business sense, is now the right time to build? The University budget is already strained to the breaking point. Teachers' salaries at UN-L are the second lowest in the Big Eight; student tuition is the second highest. Even so, the College of Business Administration refused to admit over 2000 students last year because it lacked the funds to hire enough professors. Why spend money on recreation when students are being denied an education?

But while UN-L's budget has been tight in the past, it will soon become tighter as the taxpayers' revolt takes effect. In Nebraska, a petition drive to enact a constitutional amendment limiting government spending is well under way; the Unicameral special session was conducted under massive public pressure to approve such a bill.

So we have a most interesting situation: Taxpayers clamor for a limit on spending and a reduction of taxes. Legislators are biting their fingernails over how education and other essential services can be saved. And Prokop and Wagner are concerned about getting money for nothing more essential than another football field.

On whose support then, do they base their proposal? Not on the wishes of the students who have always opposed any new stadium or

stadium addition as unnecessary and uneconomical. Indeed, in past years, Board members have denied student requests on alcohol, visitation and funding of speakers programs on the grounds that the Board represents the interests and opinions of the taxpayers, not the students.

Yet Prokop and Wagner are flatly ignoring those same interests and opinions; their call for another 25 million in higher taxes starkly contrasts with the wishes of their constituents for lower taxes.

Thus comes the most important question of all: Are Prokop and Wagner proposing a new stadium because constituents want it—although they obviously don't want to pay for it—or because they want it? Are they representing districts or themselves.

And if the answer is themselves, then what about other issues? How often have individual regents ignored the popular will in favor of their own beliefs? How many times have student requests and students' rights been denied on grounds that a regent merely represented his district, when in fact he represented only himself? And how often have regents camouflaged their own personal prejudices and beliefs behind a self-centered veil of public opinion?

Just ask the nearest non-political speaker.

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