

Problems with Parents' Weekend hurt UNL's 'report card' attempt

With the noose of government spending limits slowly slipping around UNL's budgetary neck, there is cause for alarm. Stiff budget cuts may become harsh reality unless Nebraskans can be convinced that their tax dollars are put to good use at UNL.

It will not be an easy task. University officials, however, are indirectly meeting the challenge with Parents' Weekend, a two-day spring extravaganza of social, athletic and academic events.

michael gibson

The idea originated with Chancellor Roy Young and is receiving full faculty and staff support. For example, UPC's Talks and Topics Committee was told last April that there was too little time to place a message about their speaker's program on this fall's tuition statement.

Planning incomplete

Organization for the event is truly impressive with a 10 person committee coordinating the efforts of nine colleges, the Nebraska Unions, alumni, living units, athletic department, parents and students.

Yet despite the organizational charts, a few minor items have been overlooked.

First, how much will it cost? The Chancellor's office will pay for printing and mailing costs, but most expenses will be borne by those groups requested to stage events. This pushes those costs away from central administration while diffusing the budget so no one can be sure of its exact size.

Second, who's going to come? Parents' Weekend is

set for April 27 and 28, the weekend before dead week. That is also the weekend for Cornstock (which drew 8,000 people last year) and for the residence halls' Spring Things.

Not only is it a weekend for students to rest up for final exams, it also is the time most students finish their term papers and catch up on long-neglected reading assignments.

But a "Report to the Stockholders" (as Parents' Weekend has been labeled) is such an excellent idea that it should be expanded. The administration's effort to show parents what type of education their offspring are receiving is laudable, especially with a small modification.

ASUN failed in an attempt to do that last year, but with the administration's interest in showing parents how well tuition money is spent, this year there should be no trouble at all.

Show-and-tell time

Printing costs—a major ASUN stumbling block—could be easily added to the expenses for invitations and programs, while, with 22 people on the Arts and Science Parent's Weekend committee alone, there should be no lack of manpower.

At the same time, of course, parents should be told how well students are performing. What "Report to the Stockholders" would be complete without a return-on-investment statement — how many students graduated last year and how many found good jobs? And, what report would be complete without a review of employee (i.e. faculty and staff) performance?

The challenge is clear. Will Parents' Weekend be a full report of the university's ability to help educate and develop the minds of students, or will it be just another elementary exercise in show-and-tell?

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