

# Student regents say their main role is to serve students

By Shelley Smith

**Editor's note:** This is an in-depth article of Nebraska's three student regents, who attend NU Board of Regents meetings but are not allowed to vote.

Even though they live in different environments and represent different constituents, the three student regents said their interest in supporting students' rights has created a bond between them.

Ken Marienau, student body president at UNL, Paul Hoffman, student body president at UNO, and Rod Andersen, student body president at the Medical Center, agreed that their main role as student body presidents and student regents is to represent all students in the university and their best interests.

Marienau, a 22-year-old senior finance major, said he felt the role as student body president and student regent is "a very natural correlation."

"The insight given to me as a student regent has helped in formulating policy as a student government leader," he said.

Both he and Hoffman agreed that at times the two roles tend to conflict when the regents go into closed session each month.

"This is where they discuss sensitive, personal legal matters. Sometimes the subjects begin to wander past these perimeters. I feel the students have a right to know what's going on, and I can't tell them," Marienau explained.

#### Easier to discuss

He said that as a regent he found that it was easier to discuss certain matters when he knew they would not be publicized.

However, Andersen, a second year medical student, said he felt that topics discussed in executive session are eventually brought out during the meetings.

"I don't know of any instance that an issue in executive session hasn't come out

in open session," he said.

As a student body president and student regent, Hoffman, a 21-year-old banking and finance major, said it has broadened his understanding of management and "the real world."

"People tend to say that students are in never never land. The board of regents reflects reality," he said.

However, Marienau said he felt the regents are out of contact with the students' needs. He said he felt they tended to view students and parents of students as a small part of their constituency.

Andersen said he felt the regents responsibility is not to serve the students. He said they should keep the students in mind, but their main purpose should be to serve the state.

#### Much confusion

There is a lot of confusion on the board as to what exactly their role is, according to Marienau, and he emphasized that they should define that role.

"Some board members feel they should act solely on the recommendations from campus administrators even when they have limited knowledge on proposals. Others say that every contract and internal conflict should be approved by the board," he said.

Hoffman said he felt the board of regents is only as good as the information received and the time put in to consider that information.

"This voting regent board has performed in the best interests of the state of Nebraska," he said.

Andersen said he felt the students have been given "a fair shake" on decisions, even though some of the decisions have been unpopular.

All three said they were disappointed when mandatory student fee funding of speakers was taken away.

Marienau said he was disturbed about the situation and added that "it is actually forcing us to get on our knees and beg for pennies."

#### For three years

The volunteer funding program will work for about three years at UNL, according to Marienau because of current emphasis placed on speakers. However, Hoffman said it has already failed at UNO.

"We tried it this year and raised \$12—two of which was mine," he said.

Marienau said he felt the mandatory funding would still be in effect if the student regents had voting power.

Currently, the student regents are allowed to voice their opinions and provide input into issues but are not allowed to vote.

Hoffman and Andersen agreed that it should stay that way, however, Marienau emphatically objected.

Hoffman and Andersen said it would be a duplication of representation if student regents had voting power.

"The full district in Omaha elected regent Hansen, the students at the medical center elected me. But, some of those students also voted for Hansen. So if both of us had voting power it would duplicate representation," Andersen said.

Hoffman said he felt that voting power wasn't as important as some people are making it to be. He said the power of persuasion is much more important in getting points across.

However, Marienau said the student regents' effectiveness is limited by not being able to vote.

"The student regents are only three non-voting members of the board of regents. This limits the credibility of proposals we bring up and the amount of student impact," he said.

All three agreed that if they did have voting power the mandatory speaker fee would still be in effect.

"And the board would be cautious to raising costs, and would have to empathize with the students to avoid jeopardizing their own proposals," Marienau added.

All agreed that relations with other board members was "very good." They praised the board for being "sincere, honest individuals."

However, Marienau said he didn't feel the board was made of representatives of the population of Nebraska, but "representatives of the political power of Nebraska," and said he sometimes finds it hard to agree with.

## 'No changes planned' next year for overloaded residence halls

By Barb Richardson

Despite housing shortages this year, the Office of University Housing has not made any changes in next year's contract policy, according to Housing Director Douglas Zatechka.

Zatechka said that having people in temporary housing as late as December is a problem but changes have not yet been considered.

"Currently, we're working with the University Research Office to find out the projected UNL population figures for 1979-85," Zatechka said.

"After the data is compiled we will evaluate our facilities and determine if we need to modify the halls to increase the occupancy, or if we need to close parts of the dorms to decrease the occupancy.

"Normally a 100 percent occupancy is 5,169 students and this means that to every bed there is a student," Zatechka said. He added that the office accepted 127 men over the male limit and 127 women over the female limit.

#### Lounge alternative

Currently, 24 women are located in temporary housing according to Zatechka. He added that most of them are located in floor lounges.

Zatechka said there is an alternative to temporary housing in the lounges.

"If students living in the large corner rooms are willing to take on a person from the lounge, that person may move into the

corner room and all three people will get a 99 cent a day rebate on their housing payments," he said.

Zatechka added that there are benefits to this plan. First, the floor is able to use its lounge for its original purpose. Secondly, the privacy of the person in temporary housing increases.

When rooms do become available, Zatechka said, housing tries to assign those in temporary onto the floor they are currently on.

#### Turn down applications

"This is difficult and some people don't get located on the same floor. So, we then try to locate the people in the same dorm or complex."

One of the possible alternatives for decreasing the dorm population is turning away contracts.

"We can turn away upper classmen but we can't turn away freshmen," Zatechka said. Even if the housing office can turn away contracts, Zatechka said he doesn't like to.

There is one benefit to full or over occupancy, according to Zatechka.

"Full occupancy generates additional income that in turn decreases dorm fees. Over occupancy decreases dorm fees even further," he said. "The financial advantage becomes a detriment for the students who are forced to live in temporary housing."

If changes are made in the housing contracts, it will be decided by late January, Zatechka said.

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