

## Study shows classroom size is not significant to learning

By Cindy Coglianese

In three documented reports by university professors, the size of college classrooms has no significance on learning among college students.

A report on the comparison of cognitive and attitudinal outcomes on teaching methods conducted by faculty members of Virginia Polytechnical Institute and Virginia State University stated that while there appears to be no difference in the grades of students in classrooms of different sizes, there is a better student attitudinal outcome among those in smaller classrooms.

Larry Weber and Thomas Hunt said in their report that there are advantages in both large and small group methods of teaching. Their findings included that large group activity mixed with small group interaction would be a possible alternative to the traditional form of teaching in small classes.

Their investigation has also revealed that student dissatisfaction came from the time scheduling of the classes. Many of the classes were scheduled during evening hours which interfered with other activities.

### Teaching dissatisfaction

In another report, Shirley Moore, associate professor of psychology at Eastern Illinois University, said experiments with large group situations in her department have proved that students were not dissatisfied with the large group settings but with the way those large groups were taught.

She also stated in her report that she felt comforted that a student would receive the same grade in a large group setting as in a class of regular size.

Victor Baumann, a professor at Arizona State University, found in his research that he could work well with larger enrollments when students were permitted to assume responsibility for their own learning. He

said less supervision, and less lecturing permitted more time for him to work directly with students.

In the report by Weber and Hunt, students were divided into two groups, one group was a traditional setting of 38 students who met three times a week for fifty minutes.

### Experimental group

The second group, the experimental group, had 90 students, met twice weekly for fifty minutes and also met in small groups of about 15 at various times of the week.

Weber and Hunt found that there were no significant differences between the two groups.

Weber and Hunt found that 81 percent of the first group of students favored their method of instruction while 91 percent of the students in the experimental group favored their instruction. The significant figure showed in the time schedule facet with 100 percent of the students in the first group approving the time schedule under which they operated. Only 55 percent of the students under the experimental classroom approved of their time schedule.

Booth found in her report that while students did not mind the large classroom setting, they did pay particular attention to the way the class was taught.

She said various visual aids and methods of lecturing were used to make her large classes interesting and that the size had no effect on learning.

Bauman, in his report, agreed with the other professors that the method of instruction was more important to students in knowledge retention than the size of a classroom. The report stated that much of the learning can be conducted outside the classroom through other sources, such as supplemental readings.

He also said students who were asked to evaluate the small and large classroom settings were favorable to both.



Photo by Ted Kirk

Big Eight referee Stopz Thaplae offered to shoot opposing coaches for HOP coach Tom Isboring but a newly intituted gun control law estopped the contract. For moe, see the *Daily Stopaskan* joke issue, page 11.



Photo by Mark Billingsley

Regent Robert Prokop

## Prokop berates passive, prestige-seeking regents

By L. Kent Wolgamott

**Editor's note:** This is the final article in a series of profiles on the eight members of the NU Board of Regents.

There are two types of regents, according to Robert Prokop of Wilbur: prestige regents and working regents.

He said prestige regents are those members who do not question programs and proposals presented to them, but accept them at face value.

"As a student, I would want a passive regent. Passive regents are easier to influence, and pressure.

"As (regent) Bob Simmons said: 'It is easier to have the board under their control,'" Prokop said.

Businessmen and newspapers also benefit from prestige regents who take their opinions and not question them, he added.

Working regents, Prokop said, "attempt to find whatever answers are available, by looking over all the material about the subject, wanting the facts and asking questions."

Prokop said he was reluctant to classify himself as a working regent. But he said, "I do the work."

"My philosophy is inherent in my scientific background. I look for the truth and search it out to find the final proper answer," said the NU College of Medicine graduate.

But, he said, sometimes the final answer is not clear and some intermediate solution must be found.

Prokop, who was elected to the NU board of Regents in 1970 and was re-elected in 1976, said regents have four responsibilities.

"The primary responsibility is to repre-

sent the people of the district from which you were elected.

"The second role you have is to set policy for the University of Nebraska." He said setting policy requires the regents to be well informed and to gather enough information to make "reliable decisions for the people you represent."

He said the third function of the regents is "making sure the policies are administered properly."

"Some say this is a gray area." But, he said the regents must consider their "responsibility for any state funds spent and see they are wisely and accountably used."

Finally, Prokop said the regents have a "Strong accountability to the state, the Unicameral and to the people who pay taxes to support a properly functioning product."

The regents have been primarily dealing with university business and not with educational quality produced at the university, he said.

But, he said, he hopes that role will change to obtaining productivity in education, which he said is the most important part of the university.

Prokop said it was difficult to estimate the time he spends working as a regent, but he said he once spent 60 to 70 hours working on a rural health study and 150 to 200 hours researching stadium expansion, which he said he opposes for economic reasons.

He said he answers all letters he receives, which range from 10 to 150 a week.

But Prokop said much of his time is spent on clerical work which could be done by others if regents were provided with administrative assistants.

The 4-year-old regent lists his home as

Wilbur and is in that southeast Nebraska community on weekends and during his free time, he said.

During the week, he said, he is on business in the Papillion area and in the University of Nebraska Medical Center library in Omaha "a great deal."

He said he uses the library in research for his medical-legal practice in forensic pathology.

"It would be doubly difficult for me to stay in the state if we didn't have the regional pathology library in Omaha," Prokop said.

Prokop, who received his bachelors, masters and a doctorate degree from the university and graduated from the University of Nebraska College of Medicine, said he has a practice in outstate Nebraska in which he takes the place of local physicians when they leave their home area. He also is on retainer across the United States in his forensic practice.

Prokop had criticism for ASUN and the *Daily Nebraskan*.

He said the purpose of student government is to represent the students, but the past record at UNL made him wonder if ASUN was truly representative of students.

He pointed out the low voter turnout in ASUN elections, which he said was an obvious reason to question ASUN's representativeness. He said the leadership quality of ASUN is "not one I would consider exemplary" compared with leadership in the past.

He said the student government has gotten involved in certain UNL business affairs and auxiliary enterprises which

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