

Higher education caliber object of Newell's concern

By Rocky Strunk

OMAHA—A need for quality rather than quantity in Nebraska's higher education system is what prompted a legislative resolution calling for a "super" board of regents, according to State Sen. Dave Newell of Omaha, who introduced the resolution.

"By coordinating higher education on a statewide level, duplication of services would be eliminated and there would be better use of tax dollars," Newell told the Constitutional Revision and Recreation Committee Monday.

Newell's resolution is for a constitutional amendment that would establish a board of regents appointed by the governor and approved by the Legislature.

The "super" board would have statewide control of higher education, replacing the state college Board of Trustees and the six boards of governors that oversee the state's technical community colleges.

THE NU BOARD OF REGENTS, which is elected, also would be eliminated under the resolution.

"It is a very frustrating situation when people complain to me about high taxes when we (state senators) don't have more influence on higher education spending," Newell said.

According to Newell's figures, Nebraska ranks in the upper third of all states per capita on higher education spending.

SEN. GERALD KOCH of Ralston asked Newell whether that expense was created by the geography of Nebraska, but Newell contended most of the spending came from unnecessary duplication of college services.

"It's a question of whether Nebraskans want quality or quantity in their higher education," Newell said. "We can't have community colleges in every town over 1,000 population. There should be priorities set as to services, location and quality of higher education in Nebraska."

Newell also said a "super" board of regents would take a look at several community colleges which may need their growth slowed or sections of the same course cut for more efficiency.

KOCH QUESTIONED whether a "super" board would take away appropriations from other state educational institutions.

"An appointed board would look at cost effectiveness and public service of higher education in Nebraska and football wouldn't play in their decision at all," said Newell.

Sen. Walter George of Blair requested information on higher education systems in other states, such as North Carolina, which has had statewide coordination for 15 years.

ALTHOUGH INFORMATION from other states has not been obtained, George said some kind of study should be conducted to determine whether an appointed board would be better than an elected board.

Newell said after the hearing that public opinion has changed toward support of statewide coordination of higher education and that he has been surprised at the lack of opposition toward his resolution.

"THE MOST DIFFICULT thing to do will be to get the 30 votes in the Legislature required to pass a constitutional amendment," Newell said. "I know if it gets on the ballot that it will pass."

The lack of NU regents at Kearney's hearing last week and the one in Omaha Monday didn't surprise Newell.

"I think that they are afraid of the image of taking over since it has been called a 'super' board of regents," Newell said. He added that one NU regent had indicated he would testify for the resolution Monday, but that he had called in the morning and canceled.

Regent Ed Schwartzkopf and student regent Bud Cuca had told the Daily Nebraskan that they would try to attend the hearing.

Schwartzkopf said, however, that he opposed the concept of appointed regents.

If a bill is introduced to establish the statewide board, and if it passed the Legislature, a vote by the public would be required to establish the body.

Committee to ask for more influence

The Nebraska Post-Secondary Coordinating Commission may go to the Legislature to get more power over public colleges and universities.

At Friday's meeting, the commission, which has only advisory powers, discussed asking the Legislature for the power to approve future programs and delete unneeded programs in Nebraska's universities and colleges.

William Fuller, executive director of the commission, said that too many unneeded programs and courses are still on the books.

"We in higher education have not done the job of cleaning out programs," Fuller said. The commission would not be a "super board," Fuller emphasized, since the commission would not have budgetary powers.

Recently, the possibility of having one governing body over all of Nebraska's colleges and has been discussed. The NU Board of Regents governs NU and the Board of Trustees of Nebraska State Colleges govern state colleges.

The commission will decide in October whether it will ask the Legislature for more power.

This is not a sudden move, according to George Miller, the commission's president. Discussion of such legislation has been going on since last winter.



Photo by Tom Gesner

"Hey Mom, I don't wanna go!" That was probably the battlecry of this and many other small children who were sent off to school Monday. Lincoln Public Schools opened Monday marking the end of summer.

Tuition increase proponents say quality costs money

By Diane Andersen

Supporters of a proposed 1980-81 tuition increase say that unless students are willing to support the 10 percent increase, educational quality at NU will go down.

In July, the NU Board of Regents approved a budget request for next year asking for a 15 percent increase in state support. The request includes a 10 percent rise in undergraduate tuition, 20 percent for pharmacy and dentistry students, and 25 percent for medical students.

The request will be submitted to the Legislature Sept. 15.

Student Regent Richard Kennedy, representative for the University of Nebraska Medical Center, said he supports the proposed increases "because of inflation."

"If the students aren't willing to put in their share, along with the two tax lids just passed (in Omaha and Nebraska City) it's going to be really tough to get anything out of the Legislature next year," Kennedy said.

KENNEDY SAID he thinks some programs will have to be drastically cut or all

programs slightly cut if the budget request is accepted.

He said that the large increase for medical students is needed because federal funds have been cut. The funds partially subsidized medical education at NU, according to Kennedy.

Kennedy said the problem of a doctors' shortage in rural Nebraska was dealt with several years ago by changing from a three-year to a four-year degree program.

"This year the majority of freshman medical students will be on a four-year program," Kennedy said.

I DON'T THINK a 25 percent increase will price anyone out of a medical education if they really want one," he said, but added that it would be harder for him to finish medical school with the higher tuition rate.

Kennedy said he hopes the faculty gets the 10 percent salary increase the regents are requesting in their proposal.

"ANY FACULTY MEMBER IS going to go where he can get the best salary and

supportive personnel," he said. "Ten percent would boost morale considerably."

NU Vice President William Erskine, who also supports the proposed increases, blamed them on "the extraordinarily high level of inflation" in the last few years.

He said maintenance and equipment have received less attention in the last few years, and the university has been on the "borderline on decreasing quality."

ERSKINE SAID dollar amounts after inflation show a slight reduction in tuition in the last few years. Tuition, as a proportion of per capita income in Nebraska, has also decreased.

In 1979-80, NU was third in the Big Eight in tuition and fees paid by students. Erskine said that in 1971-72 tuition was 38.7 percent of the amount of state support the university received. In 1979-80, that percentage was 19.9.

Erskine also said that, "historically, the university has not been competitive in the area of faculty salaries."

Staff and salary increases at NU have barely kept up with inflation and the Legis-

lature's recommendations are a big influence on regents' decisions on salary increases, he said.

"There were years we got substantial increases from the state," Erskine said. "The mood of the nation now is to restrict growth and public funds."

Both Kennedy and Erskine expressed doubts that the Legislature will give NU the full 15 percent being asked.

ERSKINE SAID THE 10 PERCENT tuition increase is "a big one for the students to swallow" but anything less would have had short-range effects on faculty and, in the long run, would lessen NU's ability to provide a quality education.

Erskine said the formal request budget will be submitted in September and the governor and his analysts will start going over it.

Next spring, the Legislature will hold a public hearing at which NU President Ronald Roskens and others will testify and answer budget questions.

The Legislature will make the final decision on how much money to give to NU.