

Independence poses aid problems

By Alice Hrnicek

A student is forced to become financially independent because his parents have not provided at least half his support but have claimed him as an income tax deduction.

After living with his parents during the last year, a student marries and believes this automatically qualifies him as financially independent.

With a dependent status throughout his undergraduate studies, a student beginning graduate classes believes that he can be considered independent.

There are the most common situations that occur when dealing with student financial independence, according to Don Aripoli, director of the Financial Aids' Office.

However, none of the students mentioned above are legally independent, Aripoli said. Federal guidelines state that independence is achieved by a process not by choice.

BEFORE A STUDENT is financially independent, he must not have lived at home for more than two consecutive weeks for one year, the director said. In addition, his parents must not have given him more than \$750 or claimed him as an income tax deduction during the same year.

Aripoli reported that the office is confronted regularly with students who wish to claim independence but cannot do so validly.

In a number of instances, dependence is better because it qualifies students for basic grants, he said.

"Sometimes they say they're independent but they're not. They are actually trying to shift the burden from their parents to the school," he said.

The most touchy situation arises when a student who does not wish to be self-reliant receives less than the legally prescribed income from parents who write him off as a tax deduction, Aripoli noted.

"This is a violation of tax law, of improper reporting

Architect talks start

The 1979-80 College of Architecture's lecture series starts today at 4 p.m. at Sheldon Art Gallery.

The series named in memory of a former UNL Architecture graduate, "The Hyde Speaker Series," will be started by Lawrence Anderson, dean emeritus, Architecture and Planning, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The Hyde Series will study the question of professional accountability in the architecture profession.

Today's lecture will be on professional accountability in history.

Anderson will talk about the status of architects prior to the 15th century and the development of consultant client relationships during the Renaissance. More recent topics including the new roles of government in combating poverty and preserving the environment will be discussed.

on a tax claim," Robert Lange of Student Legal Services, said. The lawyer said that the conflict occurs regularly and puts the student in a dilemma.

ALTHOUGH THERE MAY be no unlawful intent by the parents, Lange said he found it hard to understand how educated adults could be unaware of the law.

"A lot of this goes undetected by the Internal Revenue Service," he claimed. "They don't have the manpower to scrutinize each family or a reason to suspect them."

Mary Munson, a taxpayer service specialist with the Internal Revenue Service, said that the tax consequences in such a case differ from the legal consequences. If discovered, the parents who make the claim without lawful intent will be assessed the additional tax due plus interest and a penalty fee, she stated.

But if the parents are proved to have acted deliberately, the case is sent to the criminal investigation division of the IRS as fraud, she added.

Lange said that the number of reported cases is low because it would usually involve the students turning in their parents.

Financial aid may be awarded to students caught in the middle, Aripoli said. "We can't call them independent, but it a highly selective number of usually extenuating cases, we can assist dependent students."

CHANGES MAY NEED to be made in the criteria for awarding financial aid to accommodate such cases, Lange said.

"Any student can borrow up to \$2500 under the Federally Insured Loan Program," he stated. But he emphasized that he does not encourage students to apply for the guaranteed money. "Even though the loans are available, it's not always good for a student to go into debt."

Aripoli said he believes the issue of independent students comes down to who will fund the university and who benefits. "If the government says they will fund us, the issue of independence is not questioned. The question when the burden is on the family is when do we step in."

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