

Questions, exceptions characterize policy

By Alice Hrnicek

The ambiguity in UNL's alcohol-policy and its effect on students has prompted administrators to consider its revision.

The Code of Conduct formulated by the NU Board of Regents states: "The illegal possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages at university-sponsored or approved events, in university living units (residence halls, fraternities, sororities or cooperatives), on university property, or in buildings used by the university for its educational programs shall constitute misconduct. Any student or student organization that violates this rule will be subject to university disciplinary action."

Alcohol may be used, however, by any recognized student organization, campus living unit, fraternity, sorority or cooperative in an event that is registered with and approved by the Office of Campus Activities and Programs, according to Sarah Boatman, director of the office.

But the event cannot be held on university property, and the group is responsible for ensuring that no minor drinks alcohol there, she said. The activity must be insured and comply with state laws on the sale of liquor, she said.

"IT'S A DIFFICULT policy to try to enforce," Boatman said.

Student-planned events involving alcohol include dinner banquets, plays and informal afternoon parties, said Glen Maloney, Campus Activities Program consultant.

Holding the event at a licensed establishment ensures that it's legal, Boatman said.

Maloney said the establishment owner is responsible for carding patrons and selling drinks.

If alcohol is given away at parties, a sale might be implied. This part of the alcohol policy needs clarification, he said.

Last year the CAP office approved an activity in the home of an adviser where wine was served. The organization was responsible for controlling underage drinking, he said.

Maloney noted that most organizations steer away from applying for parties with alcohol.

Boatman said groups sometimes register events without alcohol, but have it at parties before or after.

"We don't like that," she said. "We want the student organizations to work closely with us. The fuzziness of the policy makes this difficult, she said, because groups often are uncertain of what is allowed.

CLARIFICATION IS needed in the areas of staff control of students, the use of student organization funds for alcohol and the difference in policies for private and registered parties.

A request for legal clarification of the policy has been submitted to NU attorney Richard Wood by a task force consisting of Boatman, Maloney, Dick McKinnon, assistant director for residential education, Elaine Green, complex program director for Cather-Pound-Neihardt and Dave DeCoster, dean of students.

Boatman said the result of the clarification, expected by the end of November, will be drafted into policy and presented first to student judicial boards, then to the university chancellor for approval.

"We recognize student organizations have events which involve alcohol," she said. "I would rather have our office recognize that and work with student organizations." If that cannot be done legally, she said, "we're in trouble."

JANE BAACK, assistant to the dean of students, said the alcohol policy is too restrictive.

"Some staff and almost all students feel the alcohol policy is inappropriate and that college students do drink," she said. "They think it's better to have alcohol on campus."

But the rules must be enforced, and that leads to further ambiguities.

Greek houses do not have people to enforce the policies such as the student assistants who can keep a check on residence hall students, Baack noted. Because of these differences she questioned equally enforcing rules in both housing systems.

"Yet we're expected to enforce that (the alcohol policy) and so are they (the students)," she said. "Students find it difficult to enforce rules that they don't believe in."

Added to their disagreement with bans on liquor,

Baack said many students are unaware of the exact alcohol policy and the judicial system used to enforce it.

Recent cases of fraternity and sorority social probation, which bans them from organized social activities, indicate students are unaware of the system and do not read policies in the UNL Student Handbook, she said.

BAACK SAID, the handbook explains the judicial system which she feels protects students.

"We do guarantee students due process," she said. The University Judicial Board, which handles cases that may involve suspension from the university, recently changed from five faculty members and four students ratio to five students and four faculty members.

The Panhellenic and Interfraternity Council judicial boards, which handle such cases for sororities and fraternities, are made up of all students.

Separate boards for each type of living unit creates fairness, Baack said. The boards are chosen by the students in each section.

"We try to delegate authority from this office to where it (a violation) occurred," she said. "We think that's helpful because students who live in that area are responsible for working with the judicial system."

MIKE PHILLIPS, Interfraternity Council president, agreed that the alcohol policy needs revision and that students should be more aware of it.

"It's common knowledge that there is alcohol on campus," he said.

"The university has an obligation to protect new students. If alcohol were legal on campus, there would be more drinking by freshman students.

But he said he was concerned that forcing students to go off campus for parties could create more alcohol-related accidents.

"Steps should be taken so people don't have to go 20 or 30 miles," he said. "I'd rather see some legal drinking on campus or more places around town where they could have parties."

Drinking in Greek houses and other on-campus living units has gone unnoticed in the past, he said.

"The reason the university has come down is because the houses have never been so blatant in the past," he said.



Staff counseling center exists in stalled plans

By Gail Stork

No guidelines govern what happens to a UNL employee with an alcohol problem, and some question whether the university needs a policy. Regardless, a proposal for a university counseling center exists, mired somewhere in a subcommittee of a committee of a university board. The problem would, it is said, help university employees on all three campuses with problems ranging from alcohol to debt.

Most large agencies have alcoholism programs for their staffs, but NU has to either fire employees who are incapacitated by alcohol or tolerate their ineffective work, said Paul Olson. The UNL Faculty Senate member's concerned about providing something between those extremes.

He said he is interested because there are problems on campus which could be helped by counseling.

"One can manage to show up at class, but not be very effective," Olson said. The university has nothing to offer these employees, he said.

Olson said he helped instigate a resolution by a three-campus fringe benefit committee to propose an employee assistance program. That was spring 1978.

AS OF OCT. 23, the proposal was as far as a proposed survey to determine the need for such a service, according to Rodney Oberle, UNO personnel director.

UNL Personnel Director Roy Loudon called the progress "ponderously slow," and attributed it to possible obstacles of low money and priority for the program.

He said university policy on staff alcoholism is not a written guideline. Employees with drinking problems are reported or turn themselves in to Oberle, the Ombudsman, the University Health Center, department chairmen, foremen . . . There are no official figures on alcoholism among NU staff members.

Loudon said he personally handles three or four cases a year. Oberle said it's more like one.

Drinking problems are referred to assistance programs in the community because

no treatment is available on campus, Loudon said.

The employees are paid during treatment time if they have enough sick leave to cover the days missed, or they can use vacation time. If those options are exhausted they are fired, according to Loudon.

TEACHERS WITH tenure pose a special tangle. One UNL instructor was "totally incapacitated" by alcoholism and, after more than a year, ended up on long-term disability, Loudon said.

Personal conflict emerged when the teacher didn't want to resign for treatment. Loudon said it was a difficult situation because his position was guaranteed by his tenure.

Loudon cited the uncertainty of the individual's response and the subjective nature of decisions about who needs treatment as reasons for the tenuousness of the assistance program.

Olson agreed the university could not force treatment but he maintained that help should be available and well-publicized

to encourage staff to voluntarily seek assistance. It is time no central referral or reporting system for alcoholics exists at UNL, but such a coordinating body would be illegal, spy-like and certainly not conducive to an atmosphere of self-help, Olson said.

He stressed the need for counseling by first-class personnel who are more sophisticated than the teachers and administrators there for help. Federal funding was his answer for financing the assistance program.

Oberle cautioned that federal funds would eventually run out, and the university would be responsible for supporting the program later.

Loudon said the idea was in the "nice to do" category of university priorities. It's hard enough to finance teaching and research, he said.

Olson described himself as an interested bystander who thinks the university ought to do something about this problem. But he resigned himself to the program's slow progress.

"This is a big institution and a lot of things fall in wells," he said.