

Dean: administrators not upset by justices' visit

By Rose Fitzpatrick

Some first year law students said the Nebraska Supreme Court session at the UNL College of Law Wednesday was a good learning experience but the Court's visit caused some hard feelings in the administration, according to a member of the Student Bar Association.

SBA member Allen Browning said that this year the Supreme Court was invited to Creighton University in Omaha and justices decided also to have a session at the UNL College of Law.

Browning said an administrator told SBA members the problem was that the Court did not ask the administration. The justices also did not ask the administration what day it might choose for the session or how the faculty might like to set it up.

The Court called the dean and said they were planning to set up the session a certain way on March 5, Browning

said.

Administration upset

Browning said he was glad to see them (the justices) come to UNL but added that the administration was upset that it could not negotiate.

John Strong, dean of the UNL Law College, said the administration was not extremely upset.

"They (the Supreme Court) pretty much specified the time and conditions," Strong said, but he said he does not take any offense.

"They offered to come and we accepted," he said.

Strong said the session of the Court fulfilled all expectations. The primary value of the session was to allow the students to observe the mechanics of the workings of the court first-hand.

Different styles

Students were able to see different styles of practicing attorneys and there was some value in the subject matter of the cases heard, Strong said.

The "Court tried to pick cases of interest to students,"

Strong said.

Law student Herschel Shapiro said it was a learning experience. Students in the law college are not often exposed to real court situations and this was a good substitute for classes, he said.

Alvin Pahlke, also a law student, said the Court's session was a good learning experience because students had an opportunity to see the Court procedures.

A lot of fun

"I like it. It's a lot of fun," said Richard Kohn, about the Court's visit. Kohn said the session showed the realities of appellant advocacy. It showed the give-and-take of the judicial process and what it is like to argue before the justices, he said.

"This is the real McCoy," said student Chris Horacek. He said students are never sure what real court situations entail. The session reaffirms that their classes are pertinent, he said.

Horacek said it was good to see what the justices concentrated on so that students could concentrate on what the justices did not.

State high court faces UNL student protestors

About 20 students wore black armbands to the Nebraska Supreme Court Session at the UNL College of Law Wednesday, to protest the death penalty.

"We feel the death penalty is being enforced in an arbitrary and unjust fashion," said first-year law student Debbie Farrall.

Farrall said the protestors wanted to express their "concern and opposition while the Supreme Court was in session because they recently set dates of execution for three persons on death row," she said. However, Tuesday the court granted a stay of execution to one of the three, she said.

Farrall said the students protesting the death penalty sent a letter to the justices to tell them they planned to wear black armbands.

Laura Beard, another law student protesting the death penalty, said the group's main objective is to make the justices and the public aware that some Nebraskans are opposed to capital punishment.

Beard said the students favor a legislative bill sponsored by Omaha Sen. Ernest Chambers that proposes a 30-year sentence with no parole as an alternative to the death penalty.

She said students opposed to the death penalty understand there are statutory restraints on judges when they decide to use the death penalty, and that is why the group favors changing the statutes.



The Nebraska Supreme Court judges were visited by about 20 students wearing black armbands Wednesday. The students were silently protesting the death penalty, which they say is arbitrary. Photo by Mitch Hrdlicka

