

NU, state colleges may form state student group

By Patti Gallagher

In an effort to "keep the momentum" of enthusiasm for a state student association going, the Government Liason Committee has scheduled a meeting to form a Nebraska association at 7 p.m. Thursday in the Alumni House.

SSA is a group that works for the issues and interests common to all students in the state. A Nebraska association would be composed of members from all three NU campuses and all four state colleges.

The "momentum" was started last week when Doug Tuthill, president of the United States Student Association visited UNL, according to Nette Nelson, GLC chairperson.

Tuthill reported to the ASUN Senate last week that the enthusiasm for an SSA was great at UNL, and he advised the senators to begin organizing one.

Nelson said GLC already has contacted the other college campuses, and most of them responded favorably to the idea. GLC received a letter last week from the UNO Student Government Association advocating the idea. Peru State College voted earlier this year to form a state student association.

Nelson said she hopes SSA can have its first statewide meeting by early December.

GLC has invited every student organization and any interested students to attend the Thursday meeting. Nelson said a core committee will be elected to take charge of UNL's state association.

Strength in numbers

While at UNL, Tuthill talked about some of the accomplishments of other associations. Working basically from a "strength in numbers" theory, he said the key to accomplishing any goal is in organizing as many students as possible to work for one cause.

Nelson echoed that concept, saying students should not be afraid to use their power constructively.

The USSA has lobbied successfully for education assistance legislation in Washington, Tuthill said. They also have opposed draft registration because it does not include a deferment for college students.

Nelson said that after a state organization is formed and is operating, efforts may be made to join the national group.

Nebraska is one of only six states in the country that does not have an SSA," she said.

Nelson said many campus and city officials are supportive of the SSA. GLC members recently spoke with the governor, the Lincoln mayor and state senators, all of whom "are excited that the students are ready to be involved in their present, as well as their futures."

The legislators have indicated that "they could do a lot more for us if we get out there and talk to the people of Nebraska," she said.

Enlighten citizens

State senators would be more willing to support pro-university legislation—if students made Nebraska citizens aware of that legislation and why it is important for them.

Last week, Tuthill told ASUN that although students know why a farmer in western Nebraska should support an increased NU budget, that farmer may not know. The job of a state association is to go out and tell him, he said.

Some people have been worried that UNL interests would dominate a state association and not give equal representation to the state colleges, Nelson said. But in broad issues such as equal access to quality education, all schools are equal, she said.

When a school such as Peru State, with an enrollment of 900 students votes to form an SSA, it shows that "big schools and little schools do have some similarities."

A question of continuity—staying active from one semester to the next and one SSA to the next—also has been raised, Nelson said. But in dealing with "issues in which students can rally around for 50 years," Nelson predicts,

the groups can stay strong.

When an SSA is organized and a budget is set, a paid full-time director and lobbyist can be hired. In the USSA, full-time staff members have been able to provide that continuity and keep the group organized, Nelson said.

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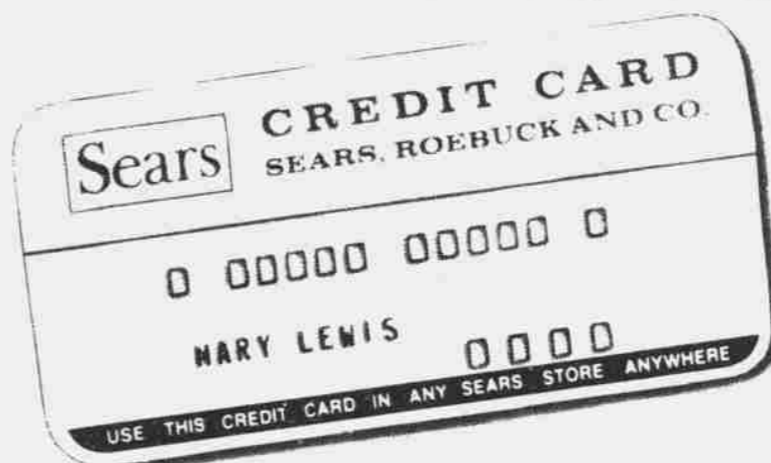
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