

Wessels defends salaries for ASUN presidents

By Mary Louise Knapp

ASUN President Renee Wessels Monday accused the regents of ducking the issue in proposing that her salary be eliminated.

"If the Regents want to keep ASUN presidents from being paid, they can, but they should not do it by hiding behind the back of the constitution."

At Saturday's NU Board of Regents meeting, Regent Kermit Hansen of Omaha proposed that the salary for ASUN presidents be eliminated.

Hansen's proposal states that according to the state constitution, regents may receive reimbursement only for expenses. Therefore, the salaries of student presidents, who also serve as student regents, might be unconstitutional.

Wessels said her duties as ASUN president and student regent are entirely different.

Her ASUN responsibilities include overseeing all ASUN activities, meeting with administrators to convey student opinions, assisting in appointment of all university committees and boards, leading the student lobbying efforts and drawing up and presenting the ASUN budget.

Wessels said a broad interpretation is placed on the duties of the student regent.

She said her biggest responsibilities as student regent are to keep informed about the actions of the Board of Regents and to attend all meetings of committees in addition to the monthly board meetings. She also meets with UNL's central administration on issues to be presented to the regents.

Wessels said student presidents deserve some financial compensation for the large amount of time they spend on the job.

"I spend at least 60 hours a week with ASUN," she said. "A lot of times my days begin at 7:30 a.m. and last until midnight."

Students who run for ASUN president are not just trying to make money, she said. Sometimes they must make financial sacrifices if elected, she added.

"I earn \$1,180 per year, which adds up to \$40 a week," she said. "I made over twice that amount before I ran for office."

Wessels said that if presidential salaries were eliminated, only wealthy students would be able to serve.

ASUN presidents have been paid since 1968, she said. The state constitution was amended in 1974 to require the student president to act as student regent for his or her campus. During the next three years, presidential

salaries were not increased, she said, and no additional funds for student regents were provided.

Under UNL bylaws, ASUN has the right to decide how it will spend its own funds, she said.

Since these funds come from student fees, the students should decide whether or not they want to pay the ASUN president with fee money, she said. The question will appear on the March 4 ASUN election ballot.

Wessels said she agrees with the regents' statements that the position of ASUN president is an honor.

"The position is an honor, yes," she said, "but it is also a very time-consuming and demanding responsibility. Other regents have outside employment, so why shouldn't the student regent have the same right?"

NU attorney Richard Wood said in a written opinion delivered to the regents that "... this constitutional prohibition does not, in my opinion, extend to compensation received by a student body president for performance of duties as student body president which are totally unrelated to service on the Board of Regents.

Wessels said she has suggested that the board seek legal advice on the legality of the salaries. ASUN also will investigate salary legality and constitutionality before the next regents' meeting Feb. 21.

'Respect Life Week' proclaimed by Gov. Thone

By Suzanne Sayed

Gov. Charles Thone said he has "steadfastly taken a pro-life stand, even when the idea wasn't so popular."

"Never did I waver on this issue," Thone said as he signed a proclamation in his office Friday that designates the week of Jan. 18 through 24 as "Respect Life Week" in Nebraska.

The signing, which took place at 11:30 a.m. in a room full of anti-abortion supporters, marked the beginning of a full week of Right-to-Life activities.

"Our most important goal," said Shirley Lang, president of Lincoln Right-to-Life, "is to make people aware of abortion issues and what the pro-life groups are trying to do."

Lang said many pro-choice people "simply don't understand the issues." They often disregard or can't accept what they hear.

She said "Respect Life Week" will encourage people to study the problem, and to understand that "abortion is truly taking an innocent life to solve social problems."

Lang said abortion is only the beginning of society's "justification of the killing of innocent people." It will go farther than this, she said.

As a "strong supporter of the right to

choose," Sen. Shirley Marsh of Lincoln said, "Outlawing abortion does not stop abortions. It only stops legal and safe abortions."

Marsh said many times the pro-life movement is misunderstood.

"As the mother of six children, I believe that life is very precious," she said. "I could be called pro-life in that respect."

Speaking of the Right-to-Life movement, she said, "I don't call it pro-life, I call it anti-choice."

Marsh said that by passing legislation to make abortion illegal, the government is interfering.

A bill recently introduced in the Nebraska Legislature by Sens. Don Dworak of Columbus, Bernice Labeledz and Marge Higgins of Omaha, would exclude all state employees from obtaining free abortions through their health insurance programs.

Marsh, who opposes the bill, said if it were put to a vote of the people, many of whom are pro-choice, the bill probably would not pass.

"It would show the public's true feelings," Marsh said.

However, Lang said she was "very optimistic" about the passage of the bill.

"Most of the senators are pro-life," she said. "But of course we will lobby in favor of the bill."

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Photo by Mark Billingsley

Doug Novak, president of UNL Students for Life, thanks Gov. Charles Thone Friday for the proclamation Thone signed declaring Jan. 18 through 24 "Respect Life Week" in Nebraska.

Non-traditional students juggle jobs, kids, school

By Betsy Miller

They take a full load of courses, they are older than most students in their classes and sometimes they have to stay up all night before an exam caring for a sick child.

The students, 25 years or older, are called non-traditional students, and if their lives sound rough, that is because they are, according to some members of the UNL Non-Traditional Students Association.

Jim Krueger, a member of the association, said the university does little to ease their problems.

"We feel very, very out of place," he said.

UNL makes more allowances for part-time night students, Krueger said, but "nobody is helping people like us."

The university is supposed to give credit to non-traditional students based on their work experience Krueger said, but so far, he hasn't heard of it being done.

Doug Neitzel, assistant director of admissions and advising, said there is no such requirement.

"It is up to each individual department

whether to grant credit," he said.

However, Neitzel said other universities do a better job with their older students.

Neitzel said he has researched the treatment of non-traditional students in Big 10 schools and "they are leaps and bounds ahead of UNL."

New phenomenon for UNL

Neitzel said, though, that UNL administrators have not had to cope with large numbers of older students in the past.

"This is a relatively new phenomenon for Lincoln," he said. "I guess we haven't adjusted to it."

Although non-traditional students are accorded few privileges not given to other students, the older students often are allowed to waive ACT or SAT tests, Neitzel said.

Dianne Caporaso, acting president of the association, said another problem facing non-traditional students is the lack of day-care facilities for the students' children.

Caporaso said non-traditional students also should have some priority in class selection. She said that unlike traditional students, non-traditional students must

get classes at specific times, such as early morning, in order to schedule a job. Non-traditional students need to work because often they are solely responsible for putting themselves through school, she said.

Caporaso, 30, is a divorced mother of three majoring in university studies. After graduation, she hopes to get a job in personnel.

Children adjust

Her children, aged 12, 8 and 4, have adjusted to her being away at school during the day, she said.

Krueger, 29, is in his third year of school and is a life sciences major. He attended college at Wichita State for two years before getting married and going to work in a manufacturing plant.

"I got tired of a dead-end type of job," explaining why he went back to school.

Krueger works as a bartender to support himself. He also has a teaching assistantship.

Both Caporaso and Krueger said the university is not interested in helping non-traditional students.

They said their association is helpful

because it gives them a chance to talk to people in the same predicament.

The association has petitioned the Campus Activities and Programs Office for a charter and designation as an official university group, Krueger said.

He said there are about 10 active members, but 75-80 people have expressed interest in joining.

The group meets every Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for lunch in the Union, Krueger said. The group also is planning a chili feed Wednesday for members.

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