

daily nebraskan



Photo by Dave Bentz

Ronald Roskens, NU president, testifies Tuesday at an appropriations committee meeting of the Legislature.

Councilman predicts wheel tax increase, stricter enforcement

By Eric Peterson

Lincoln City Council member Mike Steinman discussed proposed wheel tax changes, the Northeast Radial and student involvement in Lincoln politics at an informational breakfast Nov. 3. The breakfast was sponsored by ASUN's Government Liaison Committee and the College of Business Administration Advisory Board.

Steinman is a UNL associate professor of political science.

He said the proposed increase of the wheel tax from \$8 to \$12 and its extension to students who drive to work was originally the idea of City Council members Eric Youngberg and Bill Danley.

"The concern is that we'll have less money for road improvements in the future," he said. Few people opposed the changes when the members proposed them, he added.

"It was mainly a question of who was using the roads. It wasn't meant to single out any group."

ASUN Senate President Rick Mockler said some people felt the present tax wasn't being enforced, and asked if the proposed changes would strengthen enforcement.

Sticker attracts tickets

Steinman said the sticker the wheel taxpayer will have to put in the left rear car window will aid enforcement. "When a police officer sees a car without a sticker in a particular lot for a number of weeks, the conclusions are pretty obvious," he said.

Steinman said he expects some changes in the current wheel tax.

"I think it will pass, frankly," he said.

However, the specific details of the ordinance may be affected by testimony at a public hearing on the wheel tax proposals at 1:30 p.m. Nov. 9 at the County-City Building, Steinman said.

Past student involvement in the now-defunct Northeast Radial proposal was appropriate, Steinman said.

"In considering the university situation, I think the 16th and 17th street area is something we have to be careful of," he said.

Balance problems with needs

The city is interested in balancing transportation problems with university needs, but the radial plan was not an appropriate solution, he said.

"The radial plan was voted down all over town," he said. "Only about five precincts voted in favor of it." Developers who build houses on the edge of town drew up the plan to make suburban areas more accessible, he said.

Alternatives to the Northeast Radial will have to be carefully considered, he said.

"I think we want to think a little bit more about the nature of the problem and not build a 'Son of Radial' — like a lot of people are apprehensive of. The Northeast Radial was 1950s planning. It's a different era now."

Alternatives to automobile traffic should be encouraged, he said.

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Roskens: Budget cut would hurt

By Kathy Stokebrand

A 3 percent reduction of all state agency operating budgets would be especially painful to the university because it would come late in the fiscal year and the university is a "people-intensive organization," NU President Ronald Roskens testified before the Nebraska Legislature's Appropriations Committee Tuesday morning.

The Legislature, meeting in a special session called by Gov. Charles Thone, has been asked to trim about \$25 million from state appropriations for fiscal year 1981-82.

Absorbing 50 percent

The university is asked to absorb nearly 50 percent of the total reductions in all state agency operating budgets, Roskens said. However, the university uses only about 20 percent of the state general funds appropriated to non-capital items, he said.

The university would respond to a \$4.3 million cut by delaying or not filling faculty and staff vacancies, Roskens said. Non-personnel operating expenses, such as instructional materials, would be reduced, too.

Money that may be saved through energy-saving efforts or mild weather this winter would not be used to promote further energy conservation on campus, Roskens said. Building repair and maintenance also will be delayed, he said. Any savings from less energy use and deferred building maintenance would be used to finance deficits in other programs, he said.

Although the university has some non-budgeted additional income because enrollment increased 2.5 percent this fall, the increased revenues from tuition will be put back into academic services to compensate for the extra students, Roskens said. The tuition from the additional students totals \$1.7 million, he said.

Nearly 82 percent of the university budget — except that in the revolving fund and that for the University Hospital at the NU Medical Center in Omaha pays wages and benefits, Roskens said.

"At this late stage (in the fiscal year), it would be difficult to do anything else but spread the misery equally," Roskens said. However, the university can't spread cuts evenly because so much of its budget pays wages and benefits, he said.

The campus chancellors already have been asked to reduce full-time equivalent employees by 2 percent during fiscal year 1981-82, Roskens said. Ideally, these reductions would have been made in staff positions first, and the money saved would have been used to increase other salaries, he said.

Restrict admissions

If the \$4.3 million cut is passed, Roskens said, he anticipates more admission restrictions for colleges such as engineering and technology, business administration and possibly agriculture. Students will have more difficulty getting into classes. In the current semester, 1,200 students were unable to get some classes they wanted, he said.

Third school joins SSA ratified on Omaha campus

By Ward W. Triplett III

Students at UNO voted overwhelmingly last Thursday to join Peru State College and UNL in the newly-formed State Student Association.

UNO Student President and Regent Florene Langford said the 467-148 vote should help unify UNO, UNL and state colleges.

"The more schools we have with us, the stronger our base will be," Langford said.

"I'm going along with the old saying that strength comes in numbers," she said.

The SSA, a state wide lobbying group, consisted of only Peru State and UNL before the UNO vote. By joining the association, student fees at UNO will increase by 50 cents a semester.

Getting UNO to join was a major step for the SSA, according to one of UNL's SSA organizers, Deb Chapelle.

"It would have been quite a blow if they hadn't (joined)," Chapelle said. "But I don't think that would have been the end of it. I think we would have regrouped, found out what went wrong, and tried it again."

Langford said the organizers of the SSA push at UNO never considered losing the election.

"We didn't look at it from that perspective," Langford said. "I thought that the attitude prevalent on most college campuses nowadays would push through anything that would further the student voice."

That attitude, Langford said, is an awareness that cuts in student financial aids and other student-related items would make things tougher. It is time for students to begin working together throughout the state, she said.

"Our major concern was that of the margin of victory," Langford said. "We wanted to be sure it was an overwhelming win."

UNL's top two SSA representatives, ASUN Senate President Rick Mockler and Government Liaison Committee chairperson Nette Nelson, were both in Kearney

ciates more admission restrictions for colleges such as engineering and technology, business administration and possibly agriculture. Students will have more difficulty getting into classes. In the current semester, 1,200 students were unable to get some classes they wanted, he said.

The university was revitalized by the 13 percent increase in state money the Legislature appropriated for it in the last legislative session, Roskens said. But the proposed reduction would make the university lose the ground it had gained when compared with colleges comparable in size, he said. This is the first year since 1977 that the percentage increase in appropriations was more than the inflation rate, Roskens said in a letter to Sen. Jerome Warner of Waverly, chairman of the committee.

Also testifying for the university were ASUN President Rick Mockler and Robert Narveson, an English professor and president of the UNL chapter of the American Association of University professors.

The impact of budget reductions may not be overcome for years, Mockler said. Some expenditures, such as central construction, can be delayed for a year but others can't, he said.

The "human element" suffers most from budget reductions, Mockler said. Classes become so large that the quality of teacher-student interaction worsens and the quality of education suffers, he said.

Narveson said the system designed to handle unexpected shortfalls like the budget deficit is being circumvented. The State Board of Equalization should raise taxes rather than force the Legislature to cut programs worked out through the regular legislative process, he said.

Prioritize budget

Some priorities need to be set in the legislative process to determine what should be reduced when a situation such as the budget deficit occurs, he said. Operating budgets should have higher priority than capital construction, he said.

"There are other options than changing the direction established at the beginning of the year," Narveson said. Faculty member shortages are an unfortunate reality at UNL, Narveson said. Forty sections of English classes for second semester are filled but have no teachers, he said.

Decreasing the amount of money for library acquisitions can be more costly in the long run. The cost of a book increases if it isn't bought when it comes on the market, he said. If travel money, which allows instructors to deliver papers on their studies, is cut, the reputation of the instructors and the university could suffer, he said.

Tuesday to talk to Kearney State student leaders and representatives about the SSA.

"All state-funded universities are eligible to be in the SSA," Chapelle said.

"But I don't think it will be a follow-the-leader type of thing," she said. "Nebraska state colleges are fairly diverse, and I don't think one will join just because another did."

Langford, who was elected to a second term as UNO student regent in the same election, said UNO will probably begin to take full part in the SSA in the fall of 1982.

"In the meantime we'll be laying the groundwork for it, like electing officials," Langford said. "We'll also be keeping abreast of any issues that come up on the UNL or any state college campus."

With the exception of Chadron State, all of the other state colleges have shown a positive interest in the SSA, Langford said.

"I can't see anything but a positive attitude coming from the other schools," she said. "At UNO, we're all very happy, and pleased to be a part of the SSA."

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