

Merit system without salary fund raise debated

By Mary Louise Knapp

A proposal to base salaries for NU staff members on merit received mixed reactions from regents and faculty members.

At the Jan. 17 meeting of the NU Board of Regents, Regent Robert Simmons of Scottsbluff asked NU President Ronald Roskens and the three campus chancellors to prepare a report with a plan to distribute salary money based totally on merit.

Simmons made the suggestion after Roskens said the university will probably not get more than the 5 percent increase Gov. Charles Thone recommended for all state employees.

Thone had proposed a 6.3 percent budget increase for the university. The regents had asked for a 19.8 percent increase.

Simmons said in an interview Tuesday that the university has actually been operating on a merit system for paying its faculty for quite some time, but the system has never really been designated as such.

"Theoretically, we have operated on a merit system for quite some time," Simmons said. "Everyone talks about it, but no one believes it."

If the merit system is put into effect, distribution of the proposed 5 percent salary increase would be unequal, Simmons said.

"Some might get none at all, some might get 10 percent," he said.

Regent Kermit Hansen of Omaha said he strongly believes in the merit system.

"As far as I am concerned, the merit system on the whole is better than across-the-board increases in salary," he said.

The subjectivity of the merit system is one of its maj-

or problems, he said.

"I have never been in any organization where they (employees) were 100 percent satisfied with merit," he said. "The employees may not agree with their bosses about the amount of increase in salary."

Larry Walklin, president of the UNL Faculty Senate, expressed disappointment with the 5 percent proposal for university staff salary increases.

"We hope the faculty will get more than that," he said. Walklin said the idea of the merit system loses its effectiveness if salaries are raised by just a few percent.

The proposed 5 percent increase in salaries is not enough to keep the university competitive with other schools of comparable size, he said.

Roskens, in a prepared statement, said higher salaries than would be given to university employees by the 5 percent increase are necessary to make the merit system more meaningful.

"When discussing salary increases based on merit, it is

important to define the word 'merit.' I believe that any salary received is based on merit."

"I recognize that some persons consider a salary increase as meritorious only if it exceeds the so-called average, or satisfactory, level."

"Not all employees of the university achieve the same level of job performance, and that is why I oppose a general, across-the-board salary increase. It leaves no room for above average increases for the above average performer."

"Two important matters must be taken into consideration. First, when salaries are low by comparison, as our faculty salaries are in many instances, the university has an obligation to consider base salaries before applying merit."

"Second, it is more meaningful to reward outstanding job performances when you receive monies to fund 10 to 12 percent increases rather than five percent increases. We requested funds to support higher salaries than it appears we will receive for 1982-83."

Black students to voice concerns

By Ward W. Triplett III

Black students attending any of the Big Eight schools will have a chance to hear how students in the other seven live during the fourth annual conference on Black Student Government in Ames, Iowa, Feb. 19 through 21.

Nebraska will probably send 20 to 30 delegates to the conference, which consists of a series of workshops, lectures and meetings intended to define the problems black students face on a predominately white campus. The conference's theme is "Survival Strategies for the '80s."

"Black students risk losing face with their culture when they go to a university like Nebraska," said Monte Lue, regional coordinator for UNL's Afrikan Peoples' Union. "Blacks don't get a chance to interact with other black students very often because there are so few of us here," he said. "Some students can get discouraged easily, and pack their bags and go home."

Helping keep up the morale of discouraged students is one major goal of the conference, according to Darnell Miller, president of Iowa State's Black Student Union.

"A big thing about this is to get people together," Miller said. By discussing similar situations, students can possibly arrive at some way to help each other out, he said.

Some of the workshops scheduled include "Combating the Real World," and "Creative Thinking." The key-

note speakers will be sociologist Dr. Nathan Hare, who will discuss black relationships, and former Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson. Miller said about 300 to 400 people are expected to attend.

Miller said another important part of the conference is the quarterly meeting of the Big Eight Council, a group composed of three black-students from each school. Eugene Tolston, president of APU, Charlene Maxey and Cynthia Gooch represent UNL. Yvette Jardin, also a UNL student, is the conference's Parliamentarian.

The council is the ruling body of the conference and keeps the schools in contact with each other throughout the year, according to the chairperson for this year's council, UNL's Doreen Charles.


Charles said that the conference is also an opportunity for blacks to make the personal and business contacts that their individual institutions cannot offer, due to the low number of black professors and community leaders.


"Blacks also lack campus political power," Charles said. "Holding this conference allows us to bring together the different schools to discuss how we can better go about getting the things we want," she said.

Nebraska has a disadvantage unshared by any of the other schools, as it is the only one that does not receive an annual budget from the university for black related activities. This is partly because UNL has the lowest number of black students, 350, compared to 800 at Oklahoma, and 560 at Iowa State.


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