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Legislators preparing to offset student aid cuts

By Deb Kollars

"Up in the air," "It's anybody's guess," "No one knows for sure," were the vague words state officials used to describe the future of student financial aid in Nebraska at a public hearing of the Legislature's Education Committee last week.

But they have to be vague, they said. Until Congress acts on certain proposals and bills, states won't know how much federal funding of student aid to count on.

However, at least one UNL administrator, Don Aripoli, director of Scholarships and Financial Aids, said the state should not wait, but rather act now in planning for state-supported financial aid to post-secondary students.

The purpose of the hearing was to discuss an interim study of financial aid

to post-secondary students in Nebraska. According to LR241, the Education Committee was to investigate the proposed changes in federal student aid programs, the impact of these changes on Nebraska students and the possibility of setting up state-supported financial aid programs. Student and administrative representatives from post-secondary schools across the state attended the hearing.

Ralston Sen. Gerald Koch, chairman of the Education Committee, sponsored the resolution. At the hearing, Koch said that although he is unsure at this point what the state's role in providing financial assistance will be, he wants to be certain that any program would be equitable, fair and readily available to all post-secondary students. Any state program also should be consistent or reliable, year after

year.

Role defined

William Fuller, executive director of the state Coordinating Commission for Post-Secondary Education, said that by December, the commission will be ready to make recommendations regarding the state's role in providing financial aid to students. By then, Congress will have acted on certain bills, elections will be finished, and Nebraska's fiscal condition can be evaluated better.

Fuller pointed out that Nebraska post-secondary students received some \$97 million from federal grant and loan programs in 1981-82. Total tuition and fees income from all Nebraska post-secondary schools in 1981-82 totaled \$93 million.

Part of that \$97 million from grants and loan goes for living expenses.

"These figures show that the impact of the federal programs is huge," he said. "If anything happens, as has been implied by President Reagan's proposals, Nebraska students are really going to feel the cuts."

Students affected

Aripoli agreed that students are going to be feeling the federal cuts. But he stressed that rather than waiting to see what exactly these federal cuts will be, Nebraska officials should be preparing now to take partial responsibility for student aid.

"We need to be pro-active, not reactive," Aripoli said. "We need to assume that something (cuts in federal funding) will happen, and we need to proceed now in order to be ready with state programs when the time comes," he said.

Some of Aripoli's suggestions included:

- Establishing a state work-study program similar to that in Colorado.
- Appropriating the funds to a state

grant program already in existence.

- Setting up a state scholarship program with merit as one of the criteria for the award.

- Organizing a state-funded loan program similar to the National Direct Student Loan program with interest rates of about 5 percent.

There are two major "what ifs" in Congress regarding cuts to student aid, Aripoli said.

First, he said, there's still the question of how much federal money will be available for the 1982-83 year.

On Aug. 28, Reagan vetoed a supplementary appropriations bill, which included providing \$140 million to Pell Grants and \$77 million to Supplemental Grants. These additions would bring the levels of the grants back up to the 1981-82 federal funding levels.

Action expected

Congress is expected this week to try to override the President's veto. Recent reports indicate, however, that the override has little chance of passing.

Therefore, Aripoli said, while there will be federal aid for the present school year, the amount will be lower than in 1981-82 unless Congress overrides the veto.

The other "what if" concerns Reagan's recommendation to cut nearly 50 percent of the federal funding for student aid in 1983-84.

When Congress acts on these proposals next spring, members probably will "temper" the recommended cuts, he said. But some cuts will go through, and the state needs to be prepared to take over some of the responsibility.

If the Legislature acts in the spring to set up state-supported aid programs, the state should be ready and able to take up the slack from federal cuts for the 1983-84 school year, Aripoli said.

Recommended aid allocations

	1981-82 allocations	Reagan's recommendations for 1983-84
Pell Grants	\$2.3 billion	\$1.4 billion
Supplemental grants	\$270 million	\$0
College Work Study	\$350 million	\$398 million
National Direct Student Loans	\$186 million	\$0
State Student Incentive Grants	\$77 million	\$0

Fager leaves UNL Student Court; Wedekind maintains 'no-salary' stand

By Eric Peterson

ASUN President Dan Wedekind announced Jennifer Fager's resignation from the UNL Student Court at an ASUN Senate meeting Wednesday night. Fager, who resigned Sept. 3, mentioned "other preferred interests" as the reason for her resignation.

Fager was in a long dispute with the court relating to conflicting testimony she gave over student campaign posters. The court asked that she be removed from ASUN's Electoral Commission. Fager's counter-suit against the court lasted into this semester, when her term on the court was to start.

Reacting to a recent Daily Nebraskan editorial, Wedekind said ASUN Second Vice President Bob Fitzgerald's refusal to accept an executive salary is not intended to urge the NU Board of Regents to change the situation. Fitzgerald has refused to take pay for his work with ASUN because the ASUN president is unpaid.

The regents took away the top salary starting this year, citing a constitutional provision that university regents cannot be paid. The regents refused to distinguish between the duties of a student regent and an ASUN president, since the same person performs both

functions — an interpretation the regents' own lawyer did not confirm, Wedekind noted.

Wedekind said he has formulated several suggestions he will take to the administration for proposing the next UNL budget. He said the budget should reflect the true needs of the university rather than attempt to second guess the Legislature.

Wedekind said ASUN will continue efforts made through the summer to prevent students from shouldering an unfair portion of university costs through tuition increases. He reiterated that a tuition increase would be fair only in relation to a corresponding increase in legislative funding.

Wedekind also asserted that consideration of tuition costs should include laboratory fees and other student fees. He insisted that existing programs, especially instructional areas of the budget, should receive priority above all others, such as new programs or administration costs.

Wedekind pointed out that individual colleges should receive budget adjustments which consider cost increases unaffected by enrollments. For example, Wedekind noted, engineering and business faculty salaries have been forced up by market shortages without the college enrollments changing.

Residency requirements face revision

The NU Board of Regents will decide at its meeting Friday whether to approve proposed changes in tuition residency requirements.

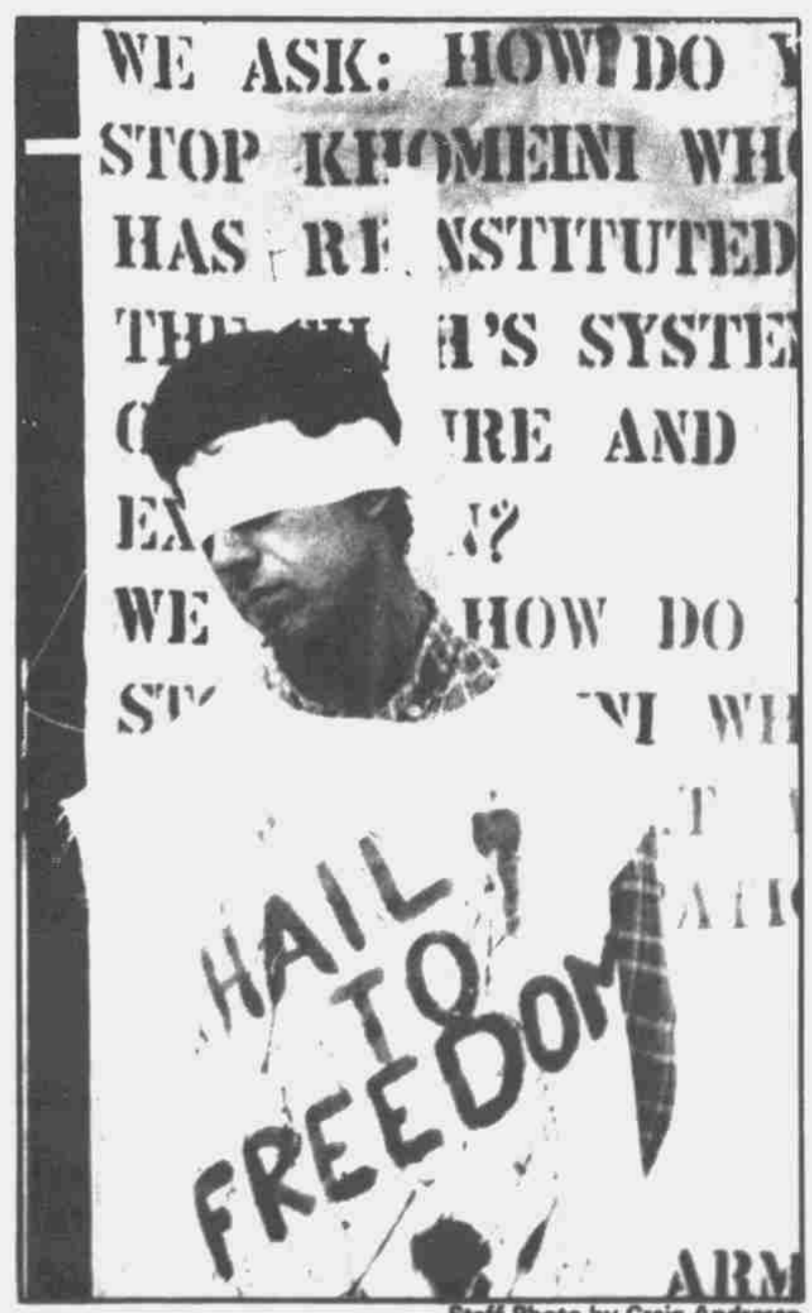
The meeting will begin with subcommittee reports at 8 a.m. Friday at Regents Hall, 3835 Holdrege St. A public hearing on the proposed changes is scheduled during the formal meeting, which will begin at 11 a.m.

Some major changes in the residency requirements are the shortening of the minimum residence period for out-of-state students from two years to 180 days, and to grant immediate resident status to university, state college and technical community college staff members.

These changes are in line with statute changes made by the Legislature at the university's request during the last session.

The board also will decide whether to approve the 1983-84 operating budget request, not including salary and fringe benefit increases. The operating budget request guidelines were approved at the board's July meeting.

Also at the meeting, UNL Chancellor Martin Masengale will recommend spending up to \$970,570 for improvements in the Nebraska and East unions, university housing and the University Health Center. The money will come from the Replacement Fund of the Student Fees and Facilities Revenue Bonds.



Staff Photo by Craig Andressen

A student member of the Moslem Iranian Student Society — Lincoln chapter, is shown outside the Nebraska Union Wednesday afternoon participating in an anti-Khomeini demonstration. An MISS spokesperson said the event was to show an example of situations that are actually occurring on the streets of Iran. The event also commemorated the 18th anniversary of the founding of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, a parent branch of MISS.