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Projected shortfall \$55 million

By Pat Higgins

Nebraska faces a revenue shortfall of between \$50 million and \$55 million this fiscal year. Don Leuenberger, state tax commissioner, said Tuesday. He was reporting to a joint meeting of the Revenue and Appropriations committees of the Legislature.

Sen. Jerome Warner of Waverly, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, requested last week that Leuenberger give a report on the revenue shortfall.

"My own personal feeling, as Sen. Warner well knows, is that we're facing between \$50 million and \$55 million shortfall," Leuenberger said.

Gov. Charles Thone long has maintained that the revenue shortfall would be \$30 million.

Leuenberger had a report on projected revenues that included an optimistic view that anticipates a 3 percent growth in the economy. This was derived from reports from Data Resources Inc. A report anticipating a no-growth economy was developed from Chase Econometrics.

Leuenberger said that it would be prudent to expect little growth in the state's economy during the rest of the fiscal year. Agriculture prices will take longer to recover than the rest of the economy, he said.

The effect on Nebraska of the federal budget's deficit of between \$150 billion and \$200 billion is not yet known, he said. The national economy is supposed to

pull out of the recession gradually, at a rate of no more than 4 percent.

However, the Bureau of Business Research at UNL projects a growth rate in Nebraska of only half the national rate. This is because of depressed commodities market, particularly for grain.

"We have to use a realistic set of projections for the course of the fiscal year," Leuenberger said.

The figures that Leuenberger used in his projections assume that the state income tax rate will be raised from the current 17 percent up to 19 percent on Jan. 1 to make up for the federal income tax cut. If the income tax rate is not raised to 19 percent, the state will be short another \$12 million, he projected.

The state has collected approximately \$28 million less in the first four months of the 1982-83 fiscal year, 10 percent below projections.

In October alone, the state collected \$13.9 less in taxes than projected, Leuenberger said. About \$5 million in taxes that were due the last day of October will be counted as November receipts, he said.

The state senators will analyze Leuenberger's projections and question him in detail today. Sen. Don Dworak of Columbus said the problem appears to be more severe than a cash flow problem.

"This is a real budget problem," Dworak said.

"The State Board of Equalization will meet Monday to deal with the tax rates.



Staff Photo by Craig Anderson

The end may be near for this resident of Bevan's Turkey Farm located southeast of Waverly. Just 15 days remain before Thanksgiving, and this turkey may be gracing someone's dinner table.



Photo courtesy of Howard Ottoson
Howard Ottoson

Ottoson supported for provost position

NU President Ronald Roskens announced Friday that he will recommend that the NU Board of Regents approve Howard W. Ottoson as the university's executive vice president and provost.

Roskens said that Ottoson also will serve as dean of Graduate Studies.

Ottoson has been filling the role of interim executive vice president and provost since February. One of his first duties as provost has been to lead in developing the new admissions policy.

Ottoson, 62, joined the university faculty in 1950 as an assistant professor in the department of agricultural economics, which he chaired from 1956 to 1966.

As executive vice president, Ottoson will be dealing with academic and internal affairs of the university.

Roskens said the position makes Ottoson second in command at NU. He also will work closely with campus chancellors and academic officers on the three university campuses.

In addition to his service at the university, Ottoson has written articles for several agricultural journals and is a member of numerous national academic honorary associations.

Environmental health program might be dropped

By Jim Anderson

The College of Arts and Sciences' Curriculum Committee will decide this year the fate of the environmental health program, a major dropped by the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation earlier this semester.

The major, the study of how man's actions affect the environment, doesn't come under the jurisdiction of any particular department. It previously was administered by the Teachers College through the school.

During the past five years, the school has discontinued five classes necessary for the major. This spring the Teachers College and the school decided that, because of the low number of students in the program, it would be cut from the Teachers College curriculum and the College of Arts and Sciences would be encouraged to offer the major.

The Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee has been studying the major for the past three months in an attempt to decide whether to take it on.

John Moran, acting associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said that though he isn't yet ready to say the program is doomed, he has questions about it that need to be answered.

In a letter dated Oct. 20 to the Environmental Health Area Studies Committee, Moran said questions were

raised at the curriculum committee's September meeting concerning the program's small number of students, courses that have been dropped by the school, the insufficient number of faculty specialists and resources and the overall strength of the program.

The letter suggested the integrated studies program as an alternative for students who wish to study environmental health.

Interest decreasing

The major was established at UNL in 1971, Moran said, when there was quite a bit of interest in the subject. He said there isn't as much interest in it now, as shown by the fact that there are only about four students currently enrolled in the program.

But Del Weed, head of UNL's Division of Environmental Safety, said there is support for the program.

"A legitimate need for this program has been demonstrated," Weed said. "There is student interest there. The university just has to show students that there is such a major and the interest will perpetuate itself."

Weed said people have come to expect a clean, quality environment today. Environmental programs have started to catch up with this expectation, he said, so the area isn't being emphasized as much as it has been in the past.

However, the need to maintain such programs still exists, he said.

"The jobs are still out there," Weed said. He said private industry, large hospitals and consulting firms are among the areas graduates find jobs in, though he said tax-supported jobs in the field have dwindled because of the economy and the current administration.

Pressures for resources

Moran said that the fact that there are so few majors in the program should be weighed against the enormous pressures from other areas of study for resources, before a decision is made as to whether the major will continue.

He said he invites input from students and faculty members who support the program. So far, he said, he has been concerned at the lack of people willing to come forward and defend it.

"We have a hard selling job ahead of us with the curriculum committee," Weed said. "The bottom line is that the university is fulfilling a need."

Weed said environmental health is a changing profession. Graduates with at least 30 hours of natural science credits can find jobs in the field, but Weed said those with the major would get priority from agencies that want qualified employees.