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Housing costs, food quality, cuts concern students

By Vicki Ruhga

Housing costs, university budget cuts and food quality are the three main concerns of UNL residence hall students, according to an independent cross-sectional survey of 505 UNL students questioned between Nov. 4 and 16.

Harper Hall resident Dave Edwards, who organized the survey, said it is not a scientific reflection of all UNL residence hall students. It is a random test sample of 10 percent of the total number of residents of each hall.

Although the survey was done independently of the Residence Hall Association and the UNL Department of Housing, four of the seven people helping with the survey were RHA members. Edwards is also an RHA representative.

George Phillips, RHA treasurer and survey taker, said the survey was done to establish a criteria of issues RHA can address and also to show that students are not apathetic to RHA.

"It was not done to embarrass the organization, but rather to help RHA improve," Edwards said.

Edwards said the idea for the survey actually began in Harper Hall when Linda Keifer, Phillips and he were sitting around complaining about RHA. UNL students Richard Gifford and RHA members Tish Mockler, Marianne Reynolds and Bob Wolz shared concern about RHA and offered to help with the survey.

The survey was taken on a floor-to-floor basis, and surveyors tried to speak with 10 percent of the people

on each floor, Edwards said.

Although it is close to a floor-by-floor survey, he said, the pollers did not reach several floors because of the time element.

The survey also was taken with an open-door policy, he said. It was based on a random number of people whose doors were open and who would talk to surveyors, he said.

The cost of housing was a major concern of 81 percent of UNL residence hall students, and 71 percent listed food quality as a major concern.

Edwards said the Food For Thought forums were started as a result of this survey. The forums are town hall type meetings where Douglas Zatechka, director of housing, and Anne Dumper, university food service dietitian, will speak and answer questions.

Forums will be today at 4:30 p.m. in the Selleck dining room, Wednesday at 4:15 p.m. in the Abel-Sandoz snack bar and Thursday at 4:30 p.m. in the Harper-Schramm-Smith back dining room, Edwards said.

University budget cuts were also a major concern of 80 percent of the students, and 70 percent said parking was a major concern.

Other concerns mentioned were vandalism, 60 percent; privacy, 56 percent; insect control, 53 percent; and alcohol policy, 48 percent.

Edwards said some students wanted the alcohol policy enforced more strictly while others felt the policy should be liberalized.

Excessive noise was not considered a problem for

most residence hall students, Edwards said.

Although 81 percent of the students surveyed knew what RHA is, only 28 percent thought that RHA was improving the quality of residence hall life, he said.

Edwards said he believes this is because of a communication problem between RHA and the residents. He said 86 percent of the students surveyed thought that RHA should increase communications with hall residents.

As a result of this, Edwards said, RHA will post minutes in the glass case bulletin boards of each residence hall complex. He said he hopes to eventually distribute RHA newsletters on a room-by-room basis, much like the ASUN Senate does.

Only 27 percent of the students favored salaries for RHA officers. Edwards said he thinks this was because they did not know what duties the officers performed for their salaries.

Students also wanted RHA to continue to have FINK Week, 80 percent; manage refrigerator sales, 83 percent; and participate in the rate study committee, which looks at increases in housing costs, 88 percent.

Edwards says students listed a variety of comments on the survey, such as:

- Make more parking space available.
- Explain RHA's purpose publicly.
- Re-evaluate alcohol policy.
- Maintain quiet hours.
- Establish a vandalism control group.
- More social and sport activities.
- Advertise RHA.



Luther Standin Bear probably was not writing about the Nebraska Sandhills, above, when he wrote "My People, the Sioux," but the excerpt, left, is fitting just the same.

'To us it was tame'

We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, and winding streams with tangled growth, as "wild." Only to the white man was nature a "wilderness" and only to him was the land "infested" with "wild" animals and "savage" people. To us it was tame.

-From "My People the Sioux"
by Luther Standing Bear

Staff Photo by Jerry McBride

University developing new agribusiness program

By Bill Allen

UNL soon could be the only university in the country to offer an undergraduate agribusiness degree through the business college.

Ira Dolich, marketing professor and co-director of the program, said although agribusiness degrees are common, they usually are offered only through agriculture colleges or at the graduate level in business.

"This will allow those students who are ag-oriented to still pursue a business background," Dolich said.

The new program still in its planning stages, has the complete support of the agriculture and business college deans, he said.

The new degree will not differ much from business courses offered through the agriculture college, Dolich said, but the idea is to encourage business students interested in agriculture to choose the agribusiness major.

No new courses will be added to existing curricula and no additional faculty members will be needed, he said.

The business college, which currently offers majors in economics, management and accounting, simply will add the agribusiness major, he said.

Dolich and Mike Turner, a UNL professor of agricultural economics, were the original co-directors of the program.

They organized a committee of 10 business and agriculture professors, which in the last year formulated an academic plan for the program.

The plan will be reviewed next semester by curriculum committees in both colleges and then has to be passed by the faculty of each college, Dolich said.

If both faculties pass it, the plan will go to a committee headed by Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs John Strong for further approval and to the NU Board of Regents for final approval, Dolich said.

Dolich said he is optimistic that the program will go into effect, but said some compromises probably will have to be reached about curriculum content.

Money for the program and support activities has come from the Con-Agra foundation, Dolich said. He said the corporation donated \$25,000 last year and will give increased support this year.

In addition to being used for program development, the money will support promotional activities, a seminar series and the sponsoring of visiting agribusiness executives.

Dolich, who visited three universities with agribusiness programs as part of his research, said the program is definitely needed in Nebraska.

It will encourage business students to study agribusiness in Nebraska, where there is a strong agribusiness sector, he said.

The program will emphasize such areas as grain merchandising and commodities, agriculture banking, the sale and marketing of agricultural products and management of non-production efforts like farm equipment and cooperative dealerships.