

Early transfer a way out for seniors

By Mona Koppelman

Pending legislation may give talented high school seniors the opportunity to complete their senior year at a university or technical college.

Lincoln Sen. Chris Beutler and Sen. Tom Vickers of Farnam are co-sponsoring LB141, which would permit students to simultaneously complete their high school education and pursue higher education through an early transfer program.

The bill states that "credits earned while participating in the program shall count both as high school credits and as post-secondary credits."

"This is only with the approval of the parents," Vickers said. "If a student is not emotionally mature enough to go on to the university or institution of higher learning, the parents would recognize that and not give their approval."

Students must be academically in either the top 10 percent of those in the class accepted to an accredited college or university or in the top 10 percent accepted to a Nebraska technical community college. Standards for determining the top 10 percent are left to individual school districts.

Early transfer students receive a conditional diploma dependent on the completion of their fourth year of high school in good standing at a university or college.

"Some people call it an 'early out,'" Vickers said. "It's not an 'early out,' it's an early transfer. You can't just quit school after your junior year and get a high school diploma."

The bill also would create an early transfer scholarship fund administered by the State Department of Education. Early transfer students would receive money for

tuition, books and fees up to \$1,000.

"The \$1,000 scholarship idea is designed to act as an incentive for students to participate in the program," said Ken Winston, legislative aid to Beutler. "Otherwise, they (students) would suddenly have the burden of paying tuition a year early without much chance of any usual means of financial aid."

"This sounds like it might be an additional cost to the state," Winston said. "It's really not that much. Currently, according to the Department of Education, it costs an average of \$2,500 per year per (high school) student. About 30 percent of that is state funds at the present time — about \$800 per pupil. Therefore, if the Legislature lays out \$1,000 for a student to go to a university, it's a pretty close trade-off."

"Theoretically, it could ease some of the burden on the local area because over

60 percent of the \$2,500 per student comes from local property taxes," Winston said. "We recognize that for a school with 50 seniors, of which two or three transfer, that's really not going to alleviate much of the burden. But perhaps it would lessen some of the pressure to find a physics or foreign language teacher."

Winston said that one of the foreseen benefits to smaller high schools is this relief of pressure to develop expensive, highly specialized courses which they can't afford.

"Probably those students in that top 10 percent of their class would be the ones most needing advanced science and math classes," Winston said. "An early transfer to a college environment would provide the needed challenge for those students."

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TEARS, CHEERS

Miss UNL, Miss Lincoln named in local contest

By Marcia Warkentin

Amid tears and cheers, Julie Meusburger and Shelly Boehmer were crowned Miss UNL and Miss Lincoln, respectively, at the 1983 Lincoln Area Scholarship Pageant Saturday night at the Nebraska Center for Continuing Education.

"I just thank God; that's all I can say," Meusburger, a UNL sophomore in civil engineering, said after the contest. "The only way you can do something like this is if it's for the glory of God."

Meusburger, a member of Gamma Phi Beta sorority, played Doppler's "Hungarian Pastoral Fantasy" on the flute for her talent presentation.

Boehmer, a UNL junior majoring in music theater, said being crowned Miss Lincoln was "unreal."

"The interviews were wonderful," she said. "It's great to be treated like an adult instead of a student."

Boehmer, a member of Alpha Phi sorority, sang "My Man" for her talent presentation. Like last year's Miss Nebraska, she had to start her song over after forgetting the words.

UNL's Melissa Blaisdell, a junior marketing major, Nancy Rogic, a sophomore pre-med major, and Kim Smith, a sophomore in fashion merchandising, were runners-up. Shari Shell, a UNL junior majoring in elementary education, won the talent award. She combined her singing and dancing talents to perform a song from "Cinderella."

Jean Somerhalder, co-director of the Lincoln Community Women's Club which sponsored the pageant, said talent counted for 50 percent of the judging points. The girls also were judged on poise, character, and carriage while modeling evening gowns and swimsuits and during personal interviews before the pageant.

"It's (the pageant) not based just on figure and face," Somerhalder said. "It's not just a beauty pageant."

The 15 semifinalists who competed Saturday were chosen from 32 applicants, she said.

Paul Douglas, Nebraska's attorney general and one of the pageant's judges who has judged contests in Kansas and Iowa, said judging the talent presentations is the most difficult part.

"I have to compare a ballet dancer with a singer," he said. "That's what makes it so difficult."

Meusburger and Boehmer each received \$350 scholarships. They will join 28 other girls from 14 other pageants across the state for the Miss Nebraska Pageant in June.



Staff photos by Joel Sartore

Clockwise from top left: "I'm Just a Girl Who Can't Say No," was the song that Laura Miyoshi performed during the pageant's talent competition; the new Miss UNL Julie Meusburger is congratulated by friends after the pageant; Sheri Rennerfeldt warms up for her dance act.