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Black student enrollment rising; educational difficulties still exist

By Sara Thomassen

"The child is black, the child is white, together they learn to read and write," sang the members of Three Dog Night nearly 10 years ago. But universities and colleges across the United States are just beginning to fully realize the significance of the statement. And UNL has not been idle in its attempts to increase minority interest in higher education.

"My department has been actively involved in recruiting black and other racial minorities throughout the state of Nebraska," said James Smith, director of Multi-Cultural Affairs at UNL.

Of the 22,400 students who were registered at UNL in 1978, 271 were black, according to the earliest available statistics from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. In 1982, 381 of about 25,000 students were black. This shows a 40.6 percent increase for black student enrollment over a four year period.

Smith said a number of factors have contributed to the increase of the black student population. The ACT, PSAT and other achievement test scores of black students are gradually increasing, which would imply a more competitive arena between minority groups and other students in higher education. Minority students often come from a completely different social frame of reference than most other students, he said, and have to make a great deal of social adjustments. Also, there has been a push to identify non-traditional black role models. The athlete is no longer the only black image portrayed by educational institutions, he said.

"Credit should be given to the black and other minority students," Smith said. "Youth are a little bit better at competing in higher education than their ancestors because of social changes."

Although progress is being made in attracting minorities to higher education, there are still many problems that need to be considered, he said. Social and cultural adjustments need to be eased. Fewer scholarships are offered to minority groups. A larger number of minority faculty members would be a possible way of making all the parts fit into a

whole. And financial aid in cultural programming would help make things easier, Smith said.

Elizabeth Burden, an active member of the Afrikan Peoples' Union, said such an increase in black enrollment was not relevant and getting black and other minorities to the university was not the issue.

"One of the major factors is not the recruitment of minority students: its the retention for four years," Burden said.

She added, however, that the efforts of Multi-Cultural Affairs are admirable and that the organization's recruitment and assistance to minority groups is good.

ASUN...

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Hinn said she felt she was chosen because she was "the most qualified" person.

"They need somebody who's already been in ASUN to take up where Bill left off," she said.

She said she has tried to keep informed about recent ASUN activities and is looking forward to working with ASUN again. Hinn ran for second vice-president against Buntain in the ASUN elections last spring.

"ASUN will have a good year. Kay will be good," Buntain said.

Wallace said since there is no precedent to Buntain's resignation, he opted to appoint Hinn to avoid "disrupting the senate" by going through other channels.

In other actions, Wallace said he plans to visit with Vice Chancellor John Strong Thursday to discuss the library closings on football Saturdays.

"We're all working for the same thing — to make sure the libraries are open when the greatest number of students need it," Wallace said.

Wallace also announced an 11 a.m. press conference Thursday at Broyhill Fountain to promote the ASUN campus litter reduction program.

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Roskens...

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Roskens said he finds no joy in the reduction and limitations of university programs.

"We cannot continue to preach quality with limited resources," he said.

Roskens said he has visited with 46 of the 49 Nebraska state senators and that the senators showed no interest in modifying the structure of UNL. He said that despite the visits with the senators, many people believe that UNL officials are not doing enough to convince legislators that UNL needs more money. He said a more aggressive approach is planned for this year.

Even with the current lack of funds, Roskens said he is optimistic that the situation soon may take a turn for the better.

"I have a keen sense that the legislators know they have to address the salaries of the university employees," he said. "A lot of people that weren't sensitive are now aware that things need to change. Things will get better."

Roskens said that he is comfortable with the decisions he has made concerning the budget, and called on UAAD members to "make a difference" by becoming involved in the funding plight.

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