

PRIVATE D

Supplementing the pursuit of excellence



Andrea Hoy/Sower

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— Edward Hirsch, NU Foundation vice-president

Bookbags slung over their shoulders, students racing to class ignore Mueller Tower as it chimes 25 after the hour. Next door, class after class of Nebraska grade school children leave Morrill Hall with sore necks from staring up at the 30-foot stuffed elephants. And across campus, a couple wandering through Sheldon Art Gallery stops to blow on the Calder mobile and watch it move.

By Diana Johnson and
Jonathan Taylor

What ties these three situations together is the money that made each scene possible. The Tower, Broyhill Fountain, the Ralph Mueller planetarium and other exhibits in Elephant Hall are among the many campus buildings and ornaments funded by private donations.

UNL, UNO and the NU Medical Center receive about 20,000 gifts, grants and donations each year, bringing about 12 million tax-deductible dollars into the university system annually.

Most of the gifts come from corporations and the estates of school alumni. Additional donations are given by other foundations, individuals and organizations. The bulk of the gifts are not unusual: cash, property, artwork. Others, such as cars and livestock, stray slightly from the norm.

But whether it be a horse or a check, most of

the gifts, per NU Board of Regents' request, are channeled through the University of Nebraska Foundation. Established in 1936, the Foundation has but one function, which is something similar to a year-round Jerry Lewis telethon.

"Our only purpose is to solicit, receive and manage private support for the university system," said Edward Hirsch, executive vice president and secretary for the Foundation.

The Foundation does not raise money to replace tax money not allocated from the state, Hirsch said. Instead, part of the Foundation's responsibility is to maintain the quality of excellence at the three campuses.

"The Legislature's responsibility is to provide an adequate university," Hirsch said. "We provide that extra excellence."

Examples of these excellence programs include franchise studies and the mass spectrometer lab in the chemistry department, he said.

The people behind the Foundation's pursuit of excellence include 24 paid full-time staff members

who manage everything from raising money to secretarial and legal work. There is also a Board of Trustees made up of 450 volunteers across the country. The Board of Trustees meets annually in the fall.

Finally, an 18-member volunteer Board of Directors supervises the activities of the Foundation which are carried out by six standing committees, Hirsch said. Salaries for the paid employees come from an endowment investment fund that started when the Foundation began, he said, rather than from donations intended for the university.

The directors, all NU graduates, hold positions as corporate executives, homemakers, business owners, lawyers and physicians throughout the state. An assortment of 13 NU officials and alumni association members, of which only eight vote, also sit on the board.

With more than 200,000 alumni from the three campuses, the nine-member solicitation

committee has its work cut out. But fundraising efforts such as mailings and phone drives, Hirsch said, have been successful to the point that the Foundation is expecting \$1-2 million more in gifts this year than last year.

Money is donated at such a rate, he said, that the Foundation contributes about \$5-7 million to the university in one year. It used to take up to four years to raise the same amount, he said. This makes the NU Foundation the top money-raiser in the Big Eight, he said.

About 97 percent of the gifts the Foundation receives have their uses designated by the donors, Hirsch said. These are called "restricted gifts." The Foundation, acting as trustee, divides the gifts among 3,000 different Foundation funds, according to which campus, college and department the gifts are slated for. The gifts include everything from research money to scholarships, Hirsch said.

The approximately \$1.5 million in remaining gifts which are unrestricted, are distributed by

