

# No experience required.

Texas Christian and Southern Methodist universities compete in the area.

Often, the choice comes down to money, Schmidt said. UNL offers \$750 to every merit scholar finalist it attracts, provided by funds from the NU Foundation. Students who need more can get up to \$2,000 based on need.

Schmidt says she wants to increase the \$750 to \$1,000 for each student to be more competitive with other schools.

Money apparently makes a difference. Elizabeth Beck of Iowa State University's admissions office said its number of merit scholars was down last year, partly because UNL's \$750 is more competitive than its base scholarship of \$500.

There are three types of merit scholarships: those sponsored by universities, corporations and national merit-sponsored \$2,000 awards funded by the NM agency.

The economic situation for the entire state of Nebraska also plays a role in merit scholar recruiting, Schmidt and other high school counselors say.

"I think they read headlines," Schmidt said. "They have lots of options. They don't get Iowa papers so they don't realize other states also are having financial problems," she said.

Gov. Bob Kerrey had threatened to cut nearly \$3.1 million from the university budget — a move that was heavily carried in the media. But the Legislature overrode his decision last week.

Marion Schute of Grand Island Central High School said some students think "Why should I stay," partly because of the budget problems at UNL.

And there are those scholars who choose other universities simply for a change of setting.

"We can be a lot of things but we

can't be an out-of-state institution," Schmidt said. "The college in your own backyard never seems as prestigious.

Stan Maliscewski of the Omaha Central High School guidance control office agrees.

"It sounds more prestigious to go far away," he said. "The further, the more prestigious."

Nebraska loses several scholars to southern states, Schmidt said. The weather is nicer, and when you couple that with a strong faculty and academic programs, it looks appealing to many merit scholars. Nebraska loses few merit scholars to South or North Dakota and Minnesota, she said. In contrast, several Nebraska high school seniors send their ACT scores to southern universities like Arizona State. Some merit scholars, however, decide to brave the cold and attend UNL if it has a strong program that interests them, said Maliscewski and Betty Stephens of Scottsbluff High School's counseling center. Examples of strong UNL programs that attract merit scholars include journalism, physics and engineering, counselors said.

Rankings of the top 40 U.S. universities in terms of freshman merit scholar enrollment range from Harvard to Michigan State to the University of Iowa.

In 1984, Nebraska attracted 28 scholars; KU, 33; Missouri, 35; OSU, 13 and Colorado 10.

But whether Nebraska can increase its number of merit scholars isn't known. Maliscewski of Omaha Central said only one of his nine merit scholars this year has decided to attend UNL. Marion Schute of Grand Island Central High School said the number of his students choosing out-of-state schools has been increasing over the last few years.



Schmidt

Schmidt said Nebraska will continue to recruit heavily in Nebraska. The state's average ACT score of 21 shows Nebraska has a fair share of scholars, she said. National ACT average score is 17.

But Schmidt said her staff will continue to try and attract out-of-state students to Nebraska as well. UNL has traveled to Denver to recruit and also wants to start in St. Louis, Kansas City, Mo., and Wichita, Kan., she said.

Last year's UNL merit scholar classes had one person out of state. Two out-of-state students enrolled the year before that.