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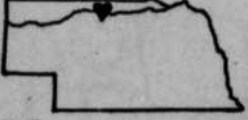
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Eric Gregory/Daily Nebraskan
Two scuba diving students head for the surface as they practice the "buddy-breathing octopus," while instructor Shawn Mahler, left, and another student look on. The "octopus" is a technique by which two divers can share one air tank in case of an emergency. The divers were learning the basics in the Mabel Lee pool Thursday night.

Scuba diving interests slowly surfacing

By Jeff Apel
Staff Reporter

When the Nebraska Office of Campus Recreation began offering scuba diving instruction courses three years ago, there were only three sessions that were plagued by a lack of interest.

Today, the Office of Campus Recreation offers as many as seven sessions every year because of high interest in the courses.

Kenda Scheele, intramural coordinator at Campus Rec, said three factors led to the increase in the course's participation. Those factors are a rise in the interest level of non-credit programs, an improvement in the course's quality of instruction, and an increase in the familiarity of the course that was brought about by student socialization, she said.

Scheele said the courses showed their most significant increase in participation when the Office of Campus Recreation dropped an Omaha-based, instructional company in favor of Big Mac Scuba and Sale.

Scheele said students receive quality

instruction from Big Mac Scuba and Sale because they are required to complete class work and a series of open-water dives before they are certified.

Jeff Dyar, an instructor at Big Mac Scuba and Sale, said students are required to complete six classroom and six pool sessions in addition to the dives at Lake McConaughy.

Dyar said the course has a near-perfect graduation rate because it is taught in three-week sessions with new courses beginning bi-weekly. He said students are required to attend two two-hour classroom sessions and an equal number of pool sessions each week before they are allowed to dive.

"It's not like anyone who wants to graduate doesn't," Dyar said. "I can't honestly tell you the last time we had someone who felt comfortable in the water that didn't graduate."

Dyar said students are presented with a special treat when they are completing their dives because the visibility in Lake McConaughy is 30- to 50-feet. Dyar said it is because of visibility that he travels to Ogalalla

rather than dive in lakes around Lincoln.

"The visibility in the lakes around here (Lincoln) is very poor — usually in the three to five foot range," he said.

Dyar said he instructs the courses around safety. He said students are required to use the proper equipment, have an extra oxygen tank and to always dive with someone else.

Marcia Wills, a first-year student at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, said that when she was completing her scuba training in the Caribbean, students were taught to be on the look out for sharks.

Wills said students were taught to get out of the water as quickly as possible if they ever saw a shark. She said students were also taught not to panic because a shark will see a diver long before a diver spots them.

"You see a lot when you dive," Wills said. "That enables you to learn a lot."

Scheele said students and faculty members interested in registering for the next course should call 472-3467 or stop by the Office of Campus Recreation at 1740 Vine St. The course costs \$210.



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