

Police-student communication called a problem on campus

By Dotti Krist
Staff Reporter

Jay Johnson said he knows University of Nebraska-Lincoln police are on campus to help students. But when he was questioned by police last semester about a stolen license plate, he said, communication was poor.

"I think the officer thought I was somehow connected" with the theft of the license plate, said Johnson, a UNL advertising senior.

And yet the officer had to ask questions, causing Johnson to feel defensive.

"It was kind of tense," he said.

The police questioned Johnson routinely as part of an investigation of the stolen license plate. They also questioned other people in Johnson's neighborhood.

Communication between students and police has concerned many UNL students. But some people connected with the UNL Police Committee disagree on whether it is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Although not pervasive, the tension between police and students could be reduced, said Tom Meola, student representative on the UNL Police Committee.

"Students don't realize the officer has a wife and kids at home and plays racquetball," said Meola, a sophomore criminal justice major. "And the police see us at our worst. They rarely see our good side."

The committee should discuss police-student contact and communication, he said.

Peter Bleed, an ASUN faculty representative on the committee, said he does not think a communication problem exists. He said the committee's duty is not necessarily to act as a liaison for communication or to determine the level of communication.

"There is not a clear understanding how the committee should operate," said Bleed, an associate professor of anthropology.

Although it isn't a large problem, Meola said, some students do resent the police. The committee could help improve communication, he said.

Committee members will meet Nov. 16 to discuss the group's function. Assuming that the committee decides to address possible problems, Meola recommends increased foot patrol.

The police department has an average of three officers patrolling the campus each shift. Depending on the day and number of officers, foot patrol officers are assigned.

Police Chief Gail Gade said foot patrol is a good practice. Students are more likely that way to see the police officers, polishing their image and giving students more access to talk to them, he said.

But because of a limited budget, he said, cruisers receive priority because they can reach a destination faster than police on foot.

The police department has a \$750,000 budget for security and traffic, and employs 27 officers.

Although contact through foot patrol is limited, the department sends an officer to residence halls to talk to students as part of its crime prevention program.

Meola said officers might appear less threatening to students if they did not wear their firearms on foot patrol.

But without firearms, the officers would be vulnerable, said Fred Holbert, UNL associate professor of criminal justice.

"They do need to wear side arms" because of the danger inherent to the job, Holbert said. Although students may not pose a threat, someone else on campus could.

Holbert said he believed parking problems may be a major source of student discontent.

"It's a real sore point with students... a constant irritation between police and students," he said.

If parking violations were handled by a different department, resentment toward the police could be reduced, he said.

Holbert said communication between UNL students and police is similar to other universities.

Despite feeling defensive when questioned by police, Johnson said he knew he was innocent and the police were just "trying to do their job."

Admiral: U.S. talent frail

By Daniel Paez
Staff Reporter

The United States can compete in the international marketplace if it focuses on developing a greater pool of talent in science and engineering, retired Navy Adm. Bobby Ray Inman said Thursday.

Speaking to about 300 people in the Nebraska Union, Inman said the large trade deficit is a result of the United States' inability to apply new technology to industrial processes as quickly as possible.

Inman, chief executive officer of

Westmark Systems, Inc., delivered a lecture sponsored by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Business Administration and the Woodmen Accident and Life Co.

The nation can compete as long as it adapts to the reality of the international scene, Inman said.

To reverse the trend of a declining standard of living in this country, Inman said, the United States must have better productivity. The continuous decline over the past 25 years has been caused, in part, by a decline of



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