

Senators say they will listen to students

By Pat Dinslage
Staff Reporter

Politically, the student body at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is "not a force to be reckoned with," according to state Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha.

"They (UNL students) won't marshal their numbers," and won't "get power until they show they recognize the value of numbers when used effectively," Chambers said.

"But everything I've said can be changed if students get involved in greater numbers on serious issues; issues broader than just ... pertaining to the university."

Bryan Hill, chairman of the Government Liaison Committee, said that historically, 18- to 22-year-olds are the "most apathetic" age group. Hill and other GLC members encourage UNL students to become active in state politics year round.

However, Hill said, "I'll be happy if I can just keep the students in-

formed."

Hill and senators agree that there are several ways in which students can become involved in the state legislative process.

Sen. Don Wesely of Lincoln said the first step students who want to become involved in state government should take is to contact campus organizations, such as the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska, and express an interest in working within the organization or on a committee.

Sen. Bill Barrett of Lexington, Speaker of the Legislature, said that becoming one of 35 legislative pages is the best way for students to become thoroughly familiar with state government.

Internships also are available through UNL, or students can contact individual senator's offices, he said.

Hill said students should first educate themselves about the Legislature, issues under consideration, their specific senator and his voting rec-

ord. GLC has background information on the senators, Hill said. Information also can be obtained by reading a daily newspaper.

The next step, according to Barrett, Chambers and Hill, is to visit the senator to express concerns or discuss certain issues in which the student is interested.

Barrett said the Nebraska Legislature has been called "the most accessible legislative body in the nation" because senators make time to meet with their constituents.

Chambers said one visit is not enough. The student needs to "make the senator see that he is really interested." The senator then may use the student as a resource on specific issues, he said.

Because of the limited time available to the senators, Hill suggested that students should visit their senators only when they are specifically concerned or interested in an issue. Concerns can be expanded to a broader view, even including com-

mending the senator on the way he voted on a certain issue, Hill said.

Wesely said that writing a letter or phoning senators is another effective way for students to express their concerns.

'People underestimate the impact of a letter or a phone call.'
--Wesely

"People underestimate the impact of a letter or a phone call," Wesely said. Generally, senators don't get that many individual letters, he said. Wesely said legislators want to see young people get more involved in state government. The experience of learning how to be a part of public life and public policy-making can be valuable in any career, he said.

The Legislature is aware of the

lack of student involvement and apathy, Barrett said.

If UNL students can only do one thing this semester to become involved in state government, Hill said, they should come to the "Senators on Campus" programs. About 25 to 30 state senators will come to the Nebraska Union throughout the spring semester.

Sponsored by the GLC, the program gives students the opportunity to voice their concerns and meet their senators personally, Hill said. The program also gives the senators the opportunity to realize that students are interested in legislative issues and to hear their views.

Students have a "lot of untapped potential," Hill said. They are an "important component in the university lobbying effort."

"Students don't carry as much weight as a professional lobbyist," he said, but when students do go to the Legislature, "Senators do listen."

Griesen: System shouldn't raise fees

By Brandon Loomis
Senior Reporter

Although a proposed university-wide photo student identification system would cost about \$255,000 initially and \$85,000 in yearly operating costs, a university official said yearly student fees should not increase.

James Griesen, vice chancellor for student affairs, said 10 percent to 25 percent of the operating costs would be paid by the units that use the computer card system, some of which are student funded. Each unit also would be responsible for maintaining and replacing its own machinery, he said.

But those costs should be offset by the money each unit saves with the new system, Griesen said.

"I don't see anything so drastic that we'd raise student fees," he said.

The current ID system is not capable of stopping ineligible students from using the University Health Center and running up about \$12,000 in uncollectible accounts each year, Griesen said.

"Under the present system, a person can walk in here, sign up for classes, drop out and still have a valid ID," he said.

Since UNL has no transcripts to withhold from such students, he said, there is no way to make them pay their medical bills.

The new computer system could invalidate a card the minute a student

drops out or loses the card.

Griesen said the new system also could increase food service sales at the Nebraska unions, which would affect student fees indirectly.

The university has discussed setting up a food service debit system, he said. With such a system, students could pay a fixed amount at the beginning of the year and then use their cards to draw on that amount when purchasing food, he said.

Currently, if the food services lose money over the course of a year, student fees are used to subsidize the loss.

"The more we could get food service sales up, the less we have to subsidize with student fees," Griesen said.

The card, which would cost each student a one-time payment of \$7.50 to \$10, also would make student life more convenient, Griesen said.

With a new computer system, residence hall food services could offer a wider variety of meal plans, he said. The current system is 17 years old and running at capacity.

Currently, dormitory residents can pay for either 13 or 20 meals a week. But those who take the 13-meal option cannot eat breakfast. The new system would allow students to pick any 13 meals throughout the week, Griesen said.

Also, commuters could make payments each semester to use their IDs as lunch-only passes at the dormitory food services.

Griesen said computer cards would tighten security at the new Campus Recreation Center, making more space available for students who are paying for the center.

Security has never been a problem at the older recreation centers, but ineligible people probably will try to use the new center, Griesen said.

"(The older centers) have been so unattractive that we've had no problem keeping people out," he said.

The new system also could tighten security at the dormitories, he said, because the outer doors could remain unlocked. Students could use their cards as keys.

Despite some opposition, Griesen said if the system is implemented, seniors probably will pay the same one-time fee as freshmen. Griesen said he would like to give a discount to seniors, who will use the card for only one year, but such a discount would be too expensive from an administrative standpoint.

"It's kind of like a one-day pass to Worlds of Fun," he said. "You're going to pay \$16.50 whether you get there at nine in the morning or three in the afternoon."

He said Chancellor Martin Masengale probably will decide early this week whether or not to go to the computer system.

Griesen said he would like to have the system at least partly operational by fall semester, but said planning must start soon.

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