

Test has different emphasis

Medical entrance exam changed

By Sara Bauder Schott
Senior Reporter

Students taking the MCAT this spring will face a new and improved version of the Medical College Admissions Test, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor said.

Richard Booher, an associate professor of biology and chief adviser for the School of Biological Sciences, said the previous version of the test put too much emphasis on memorization. The new test stresses thought processes and learning, he said.

The number of sections in the test will be reduced from six to four, and the test time will be shortened by at least 80 minutes. The previous test required an average of 9 1/2 hours.

The new version also will be the first among professional school admissions tests to use essays and evaluate writing skills.

Richard O'Brien, dean of Creighton University School of Medicine and chairman of the panel responsible for modifying the test, said the test is just one of many criteria medical schools use to admit students. The schools also look at grades, recommendation

letters from faculty members, essays, extracurricular activities and personal interviews with applicants, he said.

The MCAT is reviewed every seven to 10 years to update the science portions and to make other necessary changes, O'Brien said. The latest changes were more extensive than the typical review, he said.

When looking at the old MCAT, O'Brien said, the panel decided that the test did a good job of predicting a student's performance in the first two years of medical school, but only a fair job of predicting performance in the last two years. The test also put too much emphasis on science and not enough on humanities, he said.

To improve the test, the panel retained some parts of the old test, but added sections on problem-solving and communications skills, O'Brien said.

Booher said medical schools want students to have a background in the liberal arts, not just in the technical aspects of science. The schools started a trend toward emphasis on liberal arts backgrounds about five to eight years ago, he said.

UNL will not make any curriculum changes because of the changes in the test, Booher said. Changing a curriculum to accommodate a professional school admissions test is "one of the stupidest things you can do," he said.

The biological science department is considering curriculum changes in the future, but they are unrelated to the test, he said.

Because of the ever-growing mass of information in the sciences, the department has to look periodically at how instructors are used, Booher said.

"We can't just keep multiplying courses without giving somewhere," he said.

UNL can prepare students to be good writers and thus do well on the writing portion of the test, but that doesn't always happen, Booher said. The basic writing skills that freshman have upon entering UNL are "pretty bad," he said. The students have limited vocabularies and often are fuzzy on word meanings, he said.

Students can learn to write, but faculty members need to put pressure on them to do so, Booher said.



Shaun Sartin/Daily Nebraskan

Tree trimming

Al Keen and Dave Rice of the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department trim trees in front of the old Lewis Syford House, 700 N. 16th St.

ASUN

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pointments are subject to ASUN senate approval.

"Before we do this (pass the amendments), we need to fix the Appointments Board," Sigerson said.

College of Arts and Sciences Sen. Chris Potter said he shares concerns about the Appointments Board and the constitutionality of the committee but ASUN should act soon.

Newly-appointed College of Journalism Sen. Frank Forman said he was for passage of the racial affairs committee.

"This issue has been kicked around way too much," he said. "Senators should try to break the stereotypes people have of ASUN and make a gutsy move."

Clark Sackchewsky, a law and College of Business Administration student, said he feels that because senate positions are apportioned by college, the committee would be giving double representation to certain students. This is because these students would not only represent individuals but also their respective colleges.

But, he said, the bylaws changes are constitutional in that aspect because the ASUN bylaws do provide for student-at-large members on committees.

Also, he said that the NU Board of Regents, the University of Nebraska and ASUN have rules saying they cannot discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or religion.

"By setting a quota system, they are judging those people by their individual characteristics," Sack-

chewsky said.

And, even though the bylaws changes include an exemption from ASUN discrimination policies, they do not cover university or regents' rules on the subject, he said.

ASUN Second Vice President Yolanda Scott said that as a student and from talking to lawyers, she thinks that the committee is not discriminatory because all races are represented on it.

And, she said, people on the committees will be representing individuals and not their colleges' interests.

In other action, ASUN passed a bylaws change creating a committee to deal with "issues relating to oppression based on sexual orientation."

In addition to senators appointed to serve on that committee, one gay, one lesbian, one heterosexual and one bisexual will serve as student-at-large

members.

College of Journalism Sen. Alisa Miller said that the committee is needed to combat ignorance and violence against gays, lesbians and bisexuals on campus.

Sigerson said he voted no on the second committee because he feels voting for it would not be representative of his constituents.

Also, he said, ASUN addressed the issue last year by financing the Committee Offering Lesbian and Gay Events.

Newly-appointed Teachers College Sen. Nanci Rivenburg said discrimination based on sexual orientation is not confined to gay bashing. State

and federal laws offer no protection for discrimination against gays, lesbians and bisexuals, she said.

"Here at this university, we have the opportunity to be forward-thinking and make this situation change," she said.

ASUN President Phil Gosch said the committees' creation is effective immediately. Under Appointments Board rules, the positions must be open for applications for two weeks not counting dead and finals weeks.

Gosch said he assumes that applications will be accepted during the first two or three weeks of next semester.

Massengale

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Griesen said. "He sets out to do something and stays the course."

As an example, Griesen said, Massengale "stayed sturdy at the helm" during the hard economic times of the '80s.

"It's toughest to be a top manager when resources are tight," he said. "He tried to reverse the situation.

You need that kind of commitment and dedication. Another person might have abandoned the institution (for another position), but not Martin. He was committed to the university for the long haul."

John Yost, the former UNL vice chancellor for research who left the university for a position at the University of Alabama at Huntsville, said Massengale was "absolutely determined to achieve what was in the best interest of the institution. He had a mastery of all aspects of the university."

His strength was his commitment to improving the status of the campus as a research university with high-quality undergraduate education, Yost said.

Under Massengale's leadership, he said, UNL received the best accreditation from the North Central Accreditation Association that it had received in two decades. And following that report, Massengale began a long-range strategic plan for UNL, Yost said.

"He had the leadership, courage and stature to persevere during a period of midyear budget cuts," Yost said. Massengale was able to strengthen the university in the eyes of the people of Nebraska and the state Legislature, he said.

Howe said the difficult times Massengale faced during his chancellorship were "dramatically different" than today. But they were times of great opportunity, and under Massengale, UNL became much stronger, he said.

As a result of Massengale's leadership, UNL's research productivity has increased and liberal education is stronger, Howe said.

In addition, the Lied Center for Performing Arts and the Campus Recreation Center projects began under his leadership, Howe said. And

Massengale saw to it that the Lied hired a permanent, professional director to ensure it would keep going, he said.

Griesen said one of the greatest challenges Massengale faced as chancellor was to ensure that UNL didn't stop progressing during the tough times and took advantage of existing opportunities for growth, such as the Lied Center, the foundations courses and the Honors Programs, he said.

Griesen and Yost said that another of Massengale's strengths as chancellor was his "tremendous number of personal contacts across the state," as Griesen said.

"It's an asset. His credibility with other influence-makers means a lot" to the university, Griesen said.

Yost said, "He has built up a tremendous amount of good will toward the university through his contacts."

These contacts will be an asset in his new position as president, Yost said.

"In times of restructuring (of higher education), the university needs to become more externally oriented. Massengale's contacts and leadership in national and state organizations is going to benefit the whole university," he said.

"He'll provide stable, strong, forward-looking leadership for the university in times that call for considerable change," Yost said. "He's an individual who grows with new responsibility and challenges."

"That is now important in providing leadership to strengthen the system as a whole and to bring long-term fiscal responsibility to higher education in Nebraska. We're facing a period of constrained resources, and his fiscal management skill will be an asset to the university," Yost said. "He knows full well the importance of the president's role in academic education."

Copple said that during his term as chancellor, and still today, Massengale was politically sensitive to the people of the state, the regents, legislators and students.

"He's well-versed in the university and the state," Copple said, "and understood how the university fit."

"He's just smarter than hell," Copple said.

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