

Officials say racism declining

By Kim Spurlock
Staff Reporter

Ku Klux Klan letters have resurfaced the issue of racism on campus, but two University of Nebraska-Lincoln officials agree that racism at UNL isn't on the rise.

James Griesen, vice chancellor for student affairs, and Jimmi Smith, director of the Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs, said significant improvements on campus have helped lessen the problem of campus racism.

Racism reared its head recently, however, when the multi-cultural affairs office received several racist letters from the Ku Klux Klan, one of which criticized the Big 8 Conference on Black Student Government hosted at UNL in February.

Despite these incidents, Griesen and Smith cited improvements in the campus atmosphere.

Griesen said that in his work, he has seen evidence that may justify his perception of a decrease in racism on campus.

"I think we've had a good reception to the cultural diversity retreats that we've had in the last three years," Griesen said, from both majority and minority students.

The recruitment of minorities also has increased from the past academic year.

"Last year alone, there was a 16 percent increase in minority students enrolled, and that's significant, because part of having a pluralistic campus is simply reaching the critical mass where minority students don't feel as much in the minority," Griesen said.

The total enrollment of minority students on campus this academic year is 1,034, or 4.2 percent of 24,453 students, Griesen said.

Association of Students of the University of Nebraska senators also have taken a role in dealing with racism on campus, Griesen said.

Despite the controversy last semester over a standing minority affairs committee in ASUN, Griesen said he has seen considerable prog-

ress by senators in getting more minority students appointed to ASUN positions, committees and task forces.

Although the racial affairs committee issue is at an impasse, the impasse shouldn't be construed as ASUN leaders trying to block the committee, Griesen said.

"Two-thirds of the senators still voted to create a racial affairs committee. It was simply that the outgoing president, (Phil Gosch), felt that the structure was not proper, and he felt that it should be done properly. So it's not a dead issue—it's going to come back," Griesen said.

Smith said racism at UNL is comparatively no worse than at any other Big Eight university.

"According to people (at Big Eight schools), there is less violence here (at UNL) than other Big Eight schools," Smith said.

However, racism on campus is not a dead issue, Griesen said.

He said a number of students have come to him claiming racism in the classroom.

"I've had students say that their classroom instructors displayed racist attitudes. I've heard students say that they feel singled out in the classroom—not with (bad) intent on the part of the instructor," Griesen said.

He said that any time a minority issue comes up and the instructor turns to the minority student for comment, "they feel tired of carrying the burden of representing all of the minorities in all of the country."

Smith said the weight of stopping racism is on the students.

"The key to keeping (out) racist organizations and to controlling racist people, in large part, the burden lies with the student because there's more students on this campus than anything," Smith said.

He said that in order to recognize the difference between racism and prejudice, students need to become more aware.

If someone doesn't like another person because of what they wear, Smith said, that person is showing prejudice, but the person who is being

criticized still can function.

However, a racist will stop a person right in his or her tracks, he said.

"The racist will attack you and get in your way and stop you from being successful in the classroom, stop you from having a job so that you can spend your money; they will out and out viciously try to cut you out of society and they will put you down, not as a person, but as a race," Smith said.

He said Griesen is working to reduce the negative attitudes toward racial minority students.

"It's been an issue that (Griesen) has sought to attack," Smith said. "As a major part of his goal for the next several years, he's listed improving race relations through cultural diversity. It's one of his primary goals."

In an effort to reach his goal, Smith said, Griesen helped supplement funds for cultural diversity programs, attended cultural diversity meetings and celebrations and talked with minorities on ways in which they feel UNL's campus environment could be improved.

Smith said Griesen also supports the disbursement of minority scholarships, including the Davis Scholarship.

He (Griesen) is the first vice chancellor to go in front of the legislative board in support of the establishment of minority scholarships," Smith said.

But more needs to be done, he said.

Smith thinks that there is a lack of minorities in meaningful positions at

UNL and that there needs to be racial minorities in positions in which they can make decisions.

"They can't determine what's good for them. They can't control their destiny," Smith said.

Smith said that although the cultural diversity retreats have "opened up the lines of communication between black student leaders and white student leaders," there needs to be a requirement of ethnic study classes for everyone.

Faculty members should be knowledgeable of other cultures besides European cultures, he said, because they have more than just European students in their classes.

The university needs to put more known resources in the community so students who are uncomfortable with one particular university office still can find people they can talk to and report such violations, Smith said.

"When you allow people to exist inside of your environment who consciously try to destroy other people's opportunities, the sense of psychological safety is disturbed. . . . The people who are under attack can't really function as freely as they normally would. . . . Therefore they're going to be less capable students because they have to deal with all these distractions," Smith said.

He said students need to observe this kind of pattern and report it when it is observed so the university can look into the problem and get a better picture of how bad the situation is.

"Racism is an illness, and that illness, when it gets together, spreads," he said.

Budget

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Stevens of North Platte.

Committee members said they would draw up a rationale for their budget proposal and attach it to the budget bill.

The senators looked at several options of how to allow for the distribution of the funds, including allot-

ting the money campus-by-campus or giving the regents a lump sum with a directive of how and where the money should be allotted.

The committee also advanced a proposal to place in the budget bill 2 percent and 3 percent across-the-board cuts for state agencies, including Nebraska's colleges and universities. This is a smaller percentage than the formerly suggested 4 percent cut.

"It's still being evaluated on this end what the governor wants," Rocky said. "There's still a long way to go in the budget process."

of a pay as you go" process, he said. Marion O'Leary, director and professor in the Center for Biological Chemistry, said the important issue solved by the committee was state commitment to the project. The proposal means money for the project will be there when it's needed, he said.

U.S. Sen. Bob Kerrey, D-Neb., said earlier this month that a state commitment was needed to secure Beadle Center funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Brian Rockey, public affairs director at the governor's office, said the governor did not yet have an official response to the committee decision.

reached, Rupp said.

He said that originally the proposal would have earmarked funds from the tax for nine to 10 years.

But the Legislature "didn't want to tie up funds for that long," Rupp said.

He said the Legislature had to find a plan that would fit Nebraska's economic climate.

Under the proposal, the funds would be appropriated for three years.

Rupp said that means only \$17 million of the scheduled \$40 million of construction on the Beadle Center could be completed and some professors would not be able to begin projects they had planned.

The three-year plan provides "more

Official: UNL should ignore Klan letters

From Staff Reports

Students shouldn't give the Ku Klux Klan members who sent letters to the Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs the satisfaction of seeing their frustration, one official said.

"I think it's wrong to overreact to these things. We don't want a single racist citizen in this city of Lincoln or elsewhere yanking us around like yo-yos on a string," said James Griesen, University of Nebraska-Lincoln vice chancellor for student affairs.

The racist letters were sent after UNL hosted the Big 8 Conference on Black Student Government in February.

Griesen said nothing can be done about the letters unless they violate a university code.

And the letters should not receive much attention or the Klan members may be spurred to more action, he said.

"We cannot ascribe that much power to an individual racist. It's regrettable that they're out there. . . . there's no room for that sort of thing in our society, yet our society also has values of freedom of expression."

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Beadle

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lion dollars will come from the cigarette tax and \$1.5 million from the state's general fund.

Nelson had suggested that the money from the 4-cent cigarette tax be used for prisons.

"He may still come back and say he has to do that," Splinter said. "This is only the Legislature's side of it."

Lee Rupp, vice president for university relations, was optimistic about the proposal.

"I think it will work, and I think it has a good chance of passing," he said.

The proposal went through a lot of amendments before a compromise was

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