

# Panelists discuss how they were successful in overcoming disabilities

By Sean Green  
Senior Reporter

Five panelists said Monday that education, determination and acceptance of their disabilities allowed them to be successful and productive, in spite of the problems they faced.

The five women talked about going to school, getting jobs and dealing with family members who sometimes rejected them because of their disabilities.

They spoke during a discussion titled "Women and abilities," as part of Women's Week 1992.

Panelist Nancy Ward, of Lincoln, said she had a learning disability but was considered mentally retarded by her family and her community when she was growing up.

"People didn't know what a learning disability was," she said. "I was in special-education classes all through school, and no matter how hard we tried, we were never allowed to earn better than average grades."

After graduating, Ward tried to get into nursing school, but was unable to pass the entrance exam because she'd never had calculus or algebra, she said.

"A counselor told me I had to go back and get a GED," she said. "I thought that was why I went to high school, but I found out that people who take special education classes don't actually get a degree."

Ward said she got her GED and started working and taking college level classes. She said she did it to prove to herself, to her family and to society that she could.

"I'm the oldest of six kids in my family," she said. "My parents helped all the kids pay for college, except me. I paid for my own education."

Other panelists said they had faced challenges similar to Ward's, and discussed their own disabilities that ranged from bipolar disorder to dyslexia to polio.

Christy Horn, coordinator of services for students with disabilities at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said most of the 431 UNL students with disabilities did a good job of surmounting obstacles, despite the fear and ignorance of others.

Horn talked about one ASUN senator who spent a day in a wheelchair last fall to learn what it was like.

"He said nobody would look at him because they were afraid they would have to acknowledge his disability," Horn said. "Even people he knew wouldn't make eye contact with him."



# Bill could affect curriculum at university level as well

## College placing more emphasis on cultural diversity

By Sarah Scalet  
Staff Reporter

A legislative bill requiring Nebraska public schools to provide multicultural education programs also would increase multicultural emphasis at the UNL Teachers College, an official said.

LB922, still pending after appearing on select file, would require Nebraska public schools to provide for the development and implementation of multicultural education programs.

Ali Moeller, an assistant professor of curriculum and instruction in the Teachers College at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said the college had explored for the past several years how to make multicultural sensitivity and awareness more acute.

Instructors in the college were attempting to integrate multiculturalism into existing courses through field exposure and teaching models, Moeller said.

Teresita Aguilar, coordinator of multicultural education in the Teachers College, said the college was preparing for LB922 and exploring

the expansion of multicultural education.

Most students in the Teachers College took a multicultural education course, CNI 330, which fulfills a cultural diversity requirement, she said.

However, Aguilar said she wanted the course to become a requirement for all students in the Teachers College.

At the end of the semester, many instructors required CNI 330 students to critique textbooks used in public schools, she said. In their critiques, students considered gender, race, ethnic group and religious persuasion.

Moeller said teachers in the college also tried to teach multiculturalism by their own teaching methods.

"What we try to do is model the way we want them to teach," Moeller said.

Teachers also tried to build the ideas of open-mindedness and accepting differences in courses, Moeller said.

However, the classroom is not the only place multiculturalism is being emphasized. An upcoming conference will address issues of multicultural education and literature.

The conference will bring in two famous children's authors, said Sheri Rogers, an instructor of cur-

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Moeller  
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riculum and instructional literature studies in the Teachers College.

Children's authors Virginia Hamilton and Arnold Adoff will speak at the "Multi-Cultural Literacy Conference," April 11 at Lincoln Southeast High School, Rogers said.

At the conference, educators from the elementary level through the university level will discuss the need for more multicultural literature, she said.

Aguilar said this increased emphasis on multiculturalism was fueled by different factors, including changing demographics, the realization that people have promoted a mono-cultural education and people's reliance on the media and stereotypes.

Teaching positive and healthy aspects of people from different groups, instead of perpetuating negative images, was important, she said.

## Multiculturalism

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Although educators are trying to incorporate more information from and about Native Americans, African-Americans, Mexican-Americans and Asians, she said, a "patchwork" technique is being used.

Instead of making little "patchwork" changes, something dramatic and different must be done, Joyce said.

Helen Long Soldier, a counselor at the Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs, said textbooks were not written as inclusively as they should have been.

And most textbooks are written by white, middle-class males, she said.

Teachers should use more than one source for their classes to help students learn about contributions of more than just one culture, she said.

Long Soldier said the availability of multicultural textbooks was improving.

"We are now entering an era of . . . more authentic information in our textbooks, . . . which means inclusiveness of more groups," Long Soldier said.

"We have a new generation coming along saying, 'Wait a minute.'" Benjamin Rader, chairman of the history department, said history in-

structors were increasingly conscious of attention given to minority groups.

Instructors choose their own textbooks, he said.

Although the history department emphasizes multiculturalism, Rader said, overall attention to the issue is inadequate. And the available textbooks frequently are not integrated well, Rader said.

Many textbooks are more like encyclopedias, he said. Instead of integrating multiculturalism, textbooks often have, for example, a chapter on women's history, he said.

Rader said the process of integration was incomplete because historians needed to think through and synthesize multicultural aspects.

Joyce said that in the English department, integrating multiculturalism would require radical changes.

"Until we do something in a radical perspective . . . everything else is just the 'patchwork technique,'" she said.

Restructuring the system would require students to learn about literature from other cultures, Joyce said.

However, to study more literature, students must take more classes, Joyce said. This means UNL would need to hire additional teachers, which would cost more money.

Joyce also said she wanted the ethnic-studies program restructured.

UNL's ethnic-studies program is an essential element that does nothing, gets little attention and has a small budget, Joyce said.

Most students only take ethnic-studies classes to fulfill requirements, she said. Instead, the program could be serving a greater purpose.

She said the program must become a department so it could offer majors. The program also needs housing, Joyce said, so faculty members could have their offices together.

The program has two American Indian professors, two African-American professors and two or three Mexican-American professors, Joyce said.

Although the status of minorities appears to be improving, Joyce said, it is not improving for all people.

Because a small number of minorities have been able to find a level of success, those in power make the situation appear better, Joyce said.

Although the situation for minorities is not good, Long Soldier said she sensed change.

She said there was a movement, especially with American Indians, to ensure that representation of people was fair, accurate and respectful of people.

However, Long Soldier said there still was room for improvement, and she suggested teacher evaluations include questions about multiculturalism.

## Forum

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Beck said some efforts were being made by university foundations classes to educate students about drinking, social situations and safety.

"But this effort could certainly be beefed up," she said.

Some efforts also are being made to improve safety on campus, Beck said. The number of emergency phones on campus is being increased from seven to 24, she said.

But Hibler and Beck both agreed the university had no current plan for campus safety. Most of what is done now happens by chance, they said.

Beck said the commission would be meeting this semester to lay a groundwork to address such facets of campus safety as the groundspeople who plant the shrubbery, the people in charge of lighting on campus, as well as the university police.

Beck said the university also was

lacking because no one at the University Health Center was trained to deal with evidence of a sexual assault. Instead, victims are sent to Lincoln General Hospital and can return to the health center for treatment of any physical harm.

"It's discrimination not to have someone on campus to deal with this," Beck said.

During the rest of the forum, Beck also addressed a number of other concerns of women at UNL, including adequate child-care facilities, staff salary inequities, the university's faculty-leave policy and the retention and recruitment of women at UNL.

Beck said the emphasis for women had shifted somewhat from inequalities in faculty salaries to actual numbers on staff, as well as the climate and advancement of women.

The commission is trying to get away from being just a "generator of reports," she said. Instead, it is taking a pro-active stance and is facilitating discussion between groups at UNL to solve or fix problems, she said.

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