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NCAA rule vs. state law struggle wanes

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Redshirts could face same choice next season

Al Papik is breathing a little easier these days when he gets a call from the NCAA.

But he admits that anxiety may set in again next fall.

Papik, assistant athletic director for administration and compliance, was concerned earlier this fall about a new state law that could have put the Nebraska athletic department in the awkward position of having to choose between NCAA regulations and state law.

The confusion arose with the adoption of LB69, a state law requiring the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to allow all athletes eligible for need-based aid to receive the full amount. The bill went into effect June 1.

NCAA regulations prohibit universities from awarding more than 92 football scholarships a year. All need-based aid, except Pell Grants and

student loans, counts as an athletic scholarship.

Papik said 15 Husker football players — eight of whom are freshmen — were eligible for need-based aid this fall. Any players who accepted aid and competed on the varsity level would have broken NCAA rules.

However, Nebraska coaches would be prohibited under LB69 from denying athletes playing time to avoid NCAA sanctions.

Papik said Tuesday that all eight freshman players had redshirted this season, and five of the other players eligible for aid declined to accept it.

The remaining two players already have accepted aid, he said, and will present problems for the athletic department only if they compete in a varsity game. He declined to name the players, but said they had not played in the first two games.

“If they end up playing sometime down the road, we’ll have to report the violation to the NCAA.”

Papik
assistant athletic director

“We’ll just have to monitor it from game to game,” Papik said. “If they end up playing sometime down the road, we’ll have to report the violation to the NCAA.”

Steve Morgan, associate executive director of the NCAA, said that if the players under question participated in a varsity game, the likely

result would be to remove two scholarships from Nebraska’s scholarship allotment next season.

The NCAA will cut the number of football scholarships allowed from 92 to 88 next year. Therefore, the Huskers would be allowed 86 scholarships if the players in question played this season.

Papik said the same problems could arise for the Nebraska athletic department next season, when the eight redshirted freshmen were eligible to play.

The confusion over athletic scholarships and financial aid is nothing new to Papik. Every year, the athletic department deals with the same problem, usually with 15 to 20 athletes, he said. But this year, the problem was heightened by LB69’s passage, he said.

Before LB69, coaches told the play-

ers that accepting financial aid other than Pell Grants or student loans might have meant not playing.

“But now, the law won’t allow that, and we have to deal with it in other ways,” he said. “We’ve informed all the athletes and their parents that we won’t prevent anyone from playing if they accept the financial aid they’re entitled to.”

“But we also told them what accepting aid might mean to the program (losing scholarships).”

Papik said he was pleased that what he thought would be a major incident had turned out to be a minor matter.

“It was a tremendous hassle, with a lot of red tape to cut through,” he said. “But we were happy that what we thought was going to be a serious problem didn’t end up affecting everybody.”

“But next year, it will probably happen again.”



Cracking the books

Robin Trimarchi/DN

Brooke Bale, a junior music theater major, finds shade in the sculpture “Willy,” by Tony Smith, while studying on a summary Tuesday afternoon.

Service provides mediation of disputes

By Susie Arth
Senior Reporter

Roommate disputes, romance problems and divorce settlements can all be solved without tears or raised voices at a new service in the Women’s Center, an official said.

Melanie Reese, volunteer coordinator of the new Mediation Program, said the service would focus on promoting communication between disputing parties.

Reese said she believed the root of many problems was a failure to express and listen to each other’s personal needs and opinions.

The Mediation Program will provide a neutral setting so people can feel comfortable talking about their needs and opinions, she said.

“(The program) offers a safe place for people who are in conflict to come and work out their problems with a third party,” she said.

Reese said it was her responsibility to enforce certain ground rules during mediation. The rules include no yelling, no name-calling and no blaming.

Reese, who is working on a doctorate in speech communication, said she would oversee the cases and en-

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NU family leave plan delayed, but moving

By Alan Phelps
Senior Editor

Politicians wrangling in Washington, D.C., over the proposed Family and Medical Leave Act won’t affect family leave plans at the University of Nebraska, an official said.

“If you wait for them, you might wait forever,” said John Russell, NU director of personnel and assistant vice president for administration.

President Bush has promised to veto this year’s congressional effort, as he did a similar bill in 1990.

Russell said university officials slowed the pace of a 1990 investigation into a possible family leave plan in anticipation of a federal mandate.

“We run a policy like this through every group imaginable. It’s just taken a long time to get through the hurdles.”

— Russell
director of personnel and

But this time around, he said, the leave proposal moving through university circles wouldn’t be abandoned, although it is behind schedule.

Russell said last spring that the plan would be in place for the fall semester, but both he and Joe Rowson, NU director of public affairs, said some details still had to be looked at before the idea was presented to the NU Board of Regents “in the near future.”

“Legal terms, things like that, need to be ironed out,” Rowson said. “Attorneys, everybody and their brother” must look at the proposal, he said.

Russell said different university groups looking at the plan had questions about how the plan would work in different situations.

Such examination is not unusual, he said.

“We run a policy like this through every group imaginable,” he said. “It’s

just taken a long time to get through the hurdles.”

Rowson said no significant changes had been made in the proposed policy during discussions over the summer. Only a few technical language changes were made, he said.

Family leave is now determined by individual departments. The proposal would give all university employees the right to take an unpaid family leave of absence in the event of prob-

lems with the health of a child, parent or spouse; the birth or adoption of a child; or a death in the immediate family, Rowson said.

Employees could be granted up to 12 weeks in a consecutive 24-month period of family leave, Russell said. Such leave could be taken in conjunction with sick, disability or vacation leave.

However, he said, departments would have the right to negotiate terms of the leave with employees if the leave would cause undue hardship on the department.

The family leave proposal originally was among recommendations made by a regents’ committee looking into gender equity issues, Rowson said.