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Officials agree future cuts at NU inevitable

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Nebraska Gov. Ben Nelson's plan recommending flat budgets — except for salary increases — for the University of Nebraska and state colleges has at least two NU officials both optimistic and discouraged.

Discouraged by what the plan includes, but pleased by what it excluded.

Under Nelson's proposal, which he announced Monday, NU would receive a 2.5 percent increase of state tax dollars — about \$8.3 million — during the next two years. All but \$300,000 of those funds would be allocated for faculty and staff salary increases and health insurance costs, said Randy Haack, NU budget

“I think we're getting to the point that we have so many areas that have to have money, something needs to be done. I wonder whether the governor lacks the political courage needed to get that money to the university.”

— Sigerson
ASUN President

director.

Haack said he was relieved the plan didn't specifically include further budget cuts for the university. But he said NU remained far from immune to future cuts.

“But this is only round one,” he said. “Round two will come during the Legislature's session.”

Although he was thankful Nelson's plan didn't call for more budget cuts, Haack said he

was concerned that the plan does not allow for new funds to combat the rising operation costs of the university.

He said NU officials now face a 3.5 percent yearly increase in operational costs alone — about \$1.8 million per year.

Andrew Sigerson, Association of Students for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln president and UNL student regent, said he, too, was pleased that no new cuts were included in Nelson's recommendation.

But he agreed that more money was needed to keep the university system running.

“I think we're getting to the point that we have so many areas that have to have money,

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Jeff Haller/ DN

Hoisting the crane

Roger Giesmann of Syracuse attaches a support cable to Crane River Brewpub and Cafe, 200 N. 11th St., Thursday for Nebraska Neon Sign Company.

Legislation gets both support, opposition

By Michelle Leary
Senior Reporter

There's a new bill in town, well, actually the state, that, if passed, would allow Nebraska bars to stay open an extra hour.

LB287, introduced by Sen. Tim Haack of Omaha, would permit bars in Nebraska to remain open until 2 a.m.

Jennifer Lodes, chairwoman of UNL's Government Liaison Committee, said the bill would be good for the state if it could help raise revenue.

“The only real benefit is if Nebraska businesses can make more money for themselves, as well as the state,” said Lodes, a senior political science major.

“The bill would be more beneficial if it also sponsored some sort of designated-driver program with it,” Lode said. “That's one of the best things a bar can do.”

Capt. Doug Ahlberg of the Lincoln Police Department said if LB287 was passed, an amendment should be added to the measure that would make designated-driver programs a requirement.

“I don't see the need for this bill,” Ahlberg said. “At 2 a.m., most people should be home in bed. But if it's

going to pass, provisions need to be made for the public's safety.”

“I'm against it,” said Sen. LaVon Crosby of Lincoln, who said she would not support the bill if it went to a vote. “Every time you lengthen drinking hours, people drink more.”

David Johnson, president of the Lancaster County Mothers Against Drunk Driving chapter, agreed with Crosby, saying the bill did not make sense.

“It just gives people an extra hour to drink,” he said. “The only way I can see it happening is if the bars stay open until 2 a.m., but they stop serving at 1 a.m.”

“That way people's bodies can at least digest one drink before they drive.”

James Moylan of Omaha, a lobbyist for the Nebraska Licensed Beverage Association, said allowing Nebraska's bars to remain open an hour later would reduce drunken driving and make the streets and highways safer.

Because four of the six surrounding states allow liquor establishments to stay open later, some people are driving into those states after Nebraska bars close at 1 a.m. and then driving back, Moylan said.

Iowa, Wyoming and Colorado bars can stay open until 2 a.m. Bars in Missouri can stay open until 3 a.m. South Dakota bars close at 1 a.m.

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Payne only candidate for regents chairman

Skrupa, Wilson don't follow up on aspirations

By Kristine Long
Staff Reporter

The campaign for the chairmanship of the NU Board of Regents, which seemed like a hotly contested race earlier this week; has dwindled to involve only one candidate.

Three regents — John Payne of Kearney, Rosemary Skrupa of Omaha and Charles Wilson of Lincoln — had announced that

they were interested in the position, but now only one candidate shows real interest in the position.

The board will elect a chairman

Saturday at its first meeting of the semester.

Payne, the current board chairman, said he was not going to speculate about the election.

“I have made the statement that if the rest of the regents want me to serve another term, I will do it,” Payne said.

Skrupa said earlier this week that she had considered campaigning for chairwoman, but she had not sought votes actively.

“I am just testing the waters,” Skrupa said.

Wilson said he thought seriously about campaigning for chairman but decided the timing was not good for him this year. He said his medical practice was too time-consuming to allow his taking on the responsibility of being chairman.

But he said he still was interested in holding that position in the future.

Wilson said the chairman — and the entire board — had a busy year ahead.

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Bill proposes regent term limits

Senator wants four-year limit

By Jeff Zeleny
Senior Reporter

The NU Board of Regents should be held more accountable, a state senator said, and he is introducing a constitutional amendment to see that it happens.



Sen. Ron Withem of Papillion, chairman of the education committee, introduced LR3CA last week. The proposal would reduce regents' terms from six years to four years. Withem said most other board members in Nebraska served four-year terms, and the NU board should be no different.

“A four-year term keeps members in touch with the people who

elected them,” Withem said. “We have had six to seven years with much turmoil in the university structure. We need to end the turmoil to stabilize and create plans for the future to move in a uniform direction.”

The NU Board of Regents has been under public scrutiny since NU President Ronald Roskens was fired in 1989. Last Friday Martin Massengale announced his intentions to step down from the head of the university system, sending more controversy to the board.

Withem introduced a bill to recall regent members in 1991. The bill was not discussed because of time constraints, Withem said.

Board of regent members' opinions varied on the proposed amendment Thursday.

Regent Rosemary Skrupa of Omaha said she supported term limitation, but said a four-year term would be too short.

“It takes at least four years to really know what you're doing,” she said, “because of the complexity of the system.”

“After all, the president of the United States is elected for four-year terms too.”

— Robinson
Regent

Skrupa, a five-year member, said regents didn't have a secretarial or support staff to help them adjust to the job.

“I have to type my own letters, for goodness' sake.”

Regent Nancy O'Brien of Waterloo agreed.

“I think it takes at least two years to get really acclimated to the role and the function of the university,” she said.

O'Brien said she didn't have strong feelings about the issue, and wasn't sure if changing term lengths would improve accountability.

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