

Officials say benefits offset cuts

By Jeff Zeleny
Senior Reporter

KEARNEY — UNK administrators say they have no regrets about joining the University of Nebraska system, even though massive proposed budget cuts loom over the institution.

Chancellor William Nester said he was completely content with the University of Nebraska at Kearney since its transition from Kearney State College in July 1991.

"We were a university without a name prior to the decision," Nester said. "Integration into the university was almost flawless."

If the proposed \$13.98 million in NU budget cuts are approved, UNK will take a \$1 million hit.

The cut would be devastating to UNK, Nester said. Programs would not only be cut but eliminated, he said. About 30 upper-level faculty positions would be eliminated to comply with the cuts.

Faculty members already are required to teach 12 hours a semester, said Gene Koepke, vice chancellor for academic affairs. Some faculty

— “**We'll take whole programs, rather than weaken existing programs.**”

— Koepke
UNK vice chancellor for academic affairs

lower than other colleges and universities.

The benefits of being part of the university system far outweigh the budget-cutting threats, Rademacher said.

Being part of a university system makes faculty recruiting easier because of name recognition, Koepke said.

Nester agreed.

The university title opened the door to a campus-wide emphasis on teaching, he said.

"It tells the faculty member that 'this is the place to be,'" Nester said.

Another benefit of being in the NU system is the objectivity shown by the NU Board of Regents and the central administration, Nester said.

"We're very pleased with the response of central administration," he said.

Koepke agreed and said UNK was treated better than other NU campuses.

"From the first day, we were taken into the university, we were treated fairly and as equals," Koepke said.

members also advise up to 70 students.

If entire programs were cut, and others reduced, it would increase an already full academic load, Koepke said. He said eliminating a few programs was better than damaging many.

"We'll take whole programs, rather than weaken existing programs," he said. "We have to invoke a process to look at vitality of programs (to cause the) least amount of damage to educational process."

If cuts take place, Koepke said, a financial emergency will be declared at UNK. The emergency will involve faculty, students and administration. All will have input in finding where the least amount of damage would be done.

Koepke would not comment on which programs might be cut.

Nester said the NU budget needed to be supplemented, not reduced. UNK is suffering from nearly a decade of not enough funding.

To compensate for the lack of funding and rising costs, tuition has gone up 10 percent annually since Kearney State College was granted university status, said Earl Rademacher, vice chancellor for business and finance.

Tuition is now \$49.75 per credit hour.

"It's not that our students are paying a higher tuition percentage than other campuses," Rademacher said.

Housing rates have increased 4.6 percent, he said, but the rates still are



stands on the campus of what is now



represents sometimes feel as



William Nester, chancellor of the University of Nebraska at Kearney, said UNK's integration into the NU system was "almost flawless."

UNK students worry about proposed cuts

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

KEARNEY — In the summer of 1991, the marriage of Kearney State College and the University of Nebraska changed the lives of almost 9,000 administrators, faculty, staff and students.

A year and a half later, many of the students are questioning whether it was for better or for worse.

With impending budget cuts and growing restraints on student activities from the NU administration, some students at the University of Nebraska at Kearney are beginning to wonder who their friends are outside their city.

Or if they have any.

Many students were concerned that UNK's inclusion in the NU system would mean more budget cuts for the school — budget cuts that would be ill-afforded to an institution that already trails all other NU campuses in funding.

Kris Van Egan, a senior political science major from Grand Island, said she thought budget cuts would be aimed primarily at UNK.

"I think because we're the new kids on the block, we're going to get hit hard," Van Egan said. "I don't think the rest of the schools (in the NU system) have a lot of respect for us, like we're not really a university or something, and I think that will show when it comes time to make the cuts."

The Legislature's Appropriations Committee has proposed a \$14 million cut for the NU system's budget.

Van Egan, who expects to graduate next December, said she had not considered transferring to another campus, although she worried that

budget cuts could keep her at UNK longer than anticipated.

"I just hope I can get all the classes I need next fall so I don't get stuck here longer," she said.

Jim Stauffer, a senior English major from Kearney, said he also worried about what effects the budget cuts would have on UNK.

He also questioned whether the school had benefited from becoming part of the NU system.

"I don't see any evidence that it's benefited us," Stauffer said. "Our tuition is going up fast and they're taking money away from us even faster."

"I'm not sure if we would be better off now if we were still Kearney State College, but it seems like they decided to fix something that was working just fine."

Brad James, a sophomore art major from Lincoln, said that although he was still in high school when Kearney State merged with NU, he could tell things had changed on campus.

"I've heard about how things used to be here before we joined the university," James said. "It's not that everything is that much different, I guess, but it's like we don't have as much say in what we do and don't do anymore."

"All the decisions come from the top."

James said he didn't know if students and faculty at other campuses in the NU system respected UNK.

"I don't know if we're respected or not... but we already have budget problems," he said. "If we have to take more cuts, we're all going to be in a fix. Cutting what little we have will hurt quite a bit, I think."



Members of the UNK Antelope basketball team practice Tuesday in Cushing Coliseum.

Photos by
Robin Trimarchi

UNL or the (University of Nebraska Medical Center) can shave their budgets through reduced research, and it won't affect the students all that much. But money here is going to end up coming out of classes, teachers' salaries and so on.

"These cuts are going to hurt us much worse than people seem to realize."

McCully said the impending budget cuts could be devastating to UNK.

"If the senators on the Appropriations Committee would take a look at the actual numbers," McCully said, "they'd see that we have a legitimate argument for not being included in the across-the-board cuts. But the real question is, why should we be spared cuts?"

"I guess if we're going to reap the benefits of being part of the NU system, we're going to have to learn to take a kick in the pants now and then too."

Stock said he didn't have any specific plans to combat the cuts, but that he and other UNK students would attend the committee hearing next Tuesday at the Legislature, where concerns will be voiced from administrators, faculty, staff and students from all four NU campuses.

"I guess at this point, all we can really do is make sure we're heard," he said.

McCully said he believed the biggest problem facing UNK was its demographics.

"We're all the way out here, two hours from Lincoln and the central administration, and it seems like we're kind of forgotten," he said. "Heck, some people still don't know we're no longer Kearney State College."