



Michelle Paulman/DN

Pat Kroese, head of the ASUN subcommittee on services for the disabled, makes his way up the ramp at Ferguson Hall as part of Wheelchair Wednesday.

Wheelchair tour reveals snags

UNL administrators experience barriers of disabled firsthand

By Katherine Gordon
Staff Reporter

Although some speaking events were forced inside because of bad weather, the rain did not stop Wheelchair Wednesday events.

In fact, the freezing rain and wind emphasized the message that accessibility for disabled students needs improvement at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

University administrators and members of ASUN toured UNL's campus in borrowed wheelchairs and got a taste of what it would be like to be a disabled student.

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs James Griesen struggled to make it up the ramp at the College of Business Administration building in his borrowed wheelchair.

"It's awkward and you worry continuously about sliding back down," he said.

"On such a miserable morning you'd have to sit there in the rain until someone came along to open the door for you because the CBA building's doors aren't electronic.

"We were reminded by our (wheelchair) experience that many routes on campus are not accessible," Griesen said.

Patrick Kroese, chairman for the Students with Disabilities subcommittee, said he thought the events accomplished what ASUN wanted.

"Our purpose was to make the administration aware," he said. "Administrative response was great."

Kroese used a borrowed wheelchair to illustrate access difficulties to other participants.

"You have to be pretty strong to wheel one of those around," he said.

Kroese had to stop for a break before he reached his cross-campus destination. Once on the steep, narrow access ramps, wheelchairs become even more difficult to maneuver and some buildings still don't have electronic doors, he said.

Dianna Grove, assistant director of Services for Students with Disabilities, said the

events were a good opportunity for people to encounter accessibility problems firsthand.

Grove accompanied wheelchair participants on a tour to Seaton Hall. She said they could not get in with wheelchairs because of the building's accessibility problems.

"It was miserable cold and people's hands were slipping on the wet wheelchair rails," she said.

Volunteers assisted first-time wheelchair users by holding umbrellas over them, but, Grove said, "An actual disabled person probably wouldn't have that help."

Grove said she believed the events would encourage administrators to make accessibility improvements a priority.

Randy May, a senior majoring in political science, braved the rain to help lead wheelchair tours despite the risk of short-circuiting his electric wheelchair.

May said he took part in the events because he believed they would have positive results. He said new ramps and elevators in some buildings were improvements that still needed to be made if UNL was to be fully accessible.

Possibility of smoking ban sparks debate

By Chuck Green
Senior Reporter

Where to smoke raised fiery debate during an open forum Wednesday in the main lounge of the Nebraska Union.

Daryl Swanson, director of the Nebraska Unions, and members of Union Board heard comments and questions from students, faculty and staff — smokers and non-smokers — about the possibility of a total smoking ban in the Nebraska Union.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln officials are reviewing the university's smoking policy and are moving toward smoke-free buildings throughout campus.

That movement had some smokers smoldering.

"There aren't many places on this campus where we can still smoke," said Chris Keenan, a sophomore psychology major.

"I think it's my privilege to smoke in designated smoking areas. We don't find this to be fair that a few people are making decisions — and they're mostly non-smokers — that are going to affect a lot of people," Keenan said.

Lois Goss, a senior history major, said a smoking ban in the Nebraska Union would increase outside pollution.

"You'd have smokers sprawled out all over campus, throwing their cigarette butts all over the place," she said.

"Then why don't you throw the butts in the garbage cans?" someone in the audience interjected.

Goss did not answer.

Alicia Law, an assistant manager at the University Bookstore and a smoker for 40 years, said she thought the university was being hypocritical in accepting money generated from state tobacco taxes while preventing students and faculty members from smoking in the buildings the money helped maintain.

Several students and board members discussed the possibility of a "smoking fishbowl," a glass-enclosed area with an adequate ventilation system to remove the smoke from the building.

Colin Theis, union board president, said such a project would cost about \$40,000.

"If students who smoke really feel strongly about being able to smoke in the union," Theis said, "they ought to talk about how to come up with that kind of money."

Theis also suggested that smokers smoke outside, or in buildings off campus, where smoking would be allowed.

Diane McCashland, a junior advertising

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Happy days are here again for new ASUN president

By Kristine Long
Staff Reporter

Three years ago Keith Benes didn't want to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln because he thought he couldn't get a quality education at such a big university.

But somehow Benes ended up at UNL, and he has become pretty comfortable on the campus he used to disdain.

Today he will officially begin his term as president of the UNL student body.

Benes, a junior speech communication major, graduated from Raymond Central High School, just 10 miles from Lincoln.

In the middle of his senior year, Benes said, he decided he wanted to attend a prestigious Eastern school or a smaller school where he could play football.

In July 1990, Benes said, he was prepared to go to Bradley University in Peoria, Ill.; but after attending the orientation he decided he hated the school.

Benes had no choice but to attend UNL, at least for a while.

Benes joined a fraternity at UNL and got

involved on campus by joining University Ambassadors, tutoring through the multicultural affairs office, being public relations chairman for the Interfraternity Council and helping with ASUN campaigns.

He said he learned that UNL wasn't such a bad school after all.

Benes said he believed UNL provides students with a quality education, provided that they get involved on campus.

That is one of the reasons Benes wanted to be president of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska and UNL's student regent.

"I am just not the type to sit by and complain that something isn't going right," Benes said. "I like to take my shot at fixing it."

Benes will have plenty of problems to fix during his first months in office.

His first challenge will be to reduce the proposed budget cuts by lobbying legislators and encouraging students to write letters. He also is studying the Fund B allocations that he will vote on at the April meeting of the NU

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Michelle Paulman/DN

Keith Benes took the reins of ASUN at last night's meeting.