

Senators to elect speaker, begin learning ropes tonight

By Andrea Kaser
Staff Reporter

The newly elected members of the ASUN Student Senate will elect their presiding officer tonight in what President Keith Benes said would be a typical first meeting.

Benes said it would be typical because, other than the election of the speaker, nothing very exciting would happen. No new legislation is on the agenda, he said, but electing the speaker is a good way for senators to get acquainted with each other and with how student government works.

"It's a chance for them to interact with each other... to see how they work together... a time to get their feet wet," Benes said.

During the meeting, former President Andrew Sigerson and former committee leaders will teach members of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska

about constitutional bylaws and committee structure.

Benes said that in previous years, new members of ASUN had three-hour orientations, during which they learned about constitutional bylaws, committees and bill writing, on a weekend day. But because of the Easter holiday, they will be trained during the next three Wednesday meetings.

Benes said he was looking forward to his first meeting because it would be the first time he would be working with students.

His job as student body president consists of two facets, he said: the administrative side, or working from the students up, and the student side, or working from student to student.

Up until now, he said, he has worked only with the administrative side of the university, researching the proposed budget cuts and working with the University of Nebraska Board of Regents to form a committee to select the new NU president.

"I'm excited to get the student side, too," Benes said.



Legislature

Continued from Page 1

of the budget-writing process.

Mike Mulnix, executive director of university relations, said Tuesday night that despite the tuition increase recommendation, the reduction of the proposed cuts was a good sign for UNL.

"It's better than what we expected in the main-line bill," he said. "The Appropriations Committee is just looking at the existing revenue picture."

The committee's priority two recommendation creates hope for another reduction in the remaining \$7 million of cuts, Mulnix said.

"That is the vehicle that could lower our cut even more," he said. "Thank goodness they introduced that sort of a vehicle for that to happen."

The tuition increase can be a recommendation only, Mulnix said, because the NU Board of Regents establishes tuition rates. If adopted by the regents, a 5 percent increase would bring UNL tuition to \$64.58 a credit hour.

"I'm not surprised that they mentioned tuition," Mulnix said. "It seems like it would be a fairly natural thing to touch upon."

UNL's portion of a \$7 million cut would be about \$3.5 million. The new amount sounds better, Mulnix said, but if approved, it still means devastation for UNL.

"We're pulling out our hair to figure out how to come up with last year's \$1.5 (million cut) from the special session," he said. "To come up with any more will definitely result in program elimination and faculty and staff reductions."

UNL Government Liaison Committee Student Lobbyists Chris Peterson and Robb Douglas agreed,

saying the 2.5 percent reduction sounded good but inevitably would have a major effect on UNL students.

"A lot of students don't realize 2.5 percent is \$3.5 million," Douglas said. "I think 2.5 percent will become a vertical cut."

The budget cuts, proposed by the committee in February, brought strong reaction from students, faculty, staff and administration throughout the NU system.

Before a March 9 Appropriations Committee hearing, more than 150 students protested the cuts in a march to the State Capitol. During the hearing, legislators heard seven hours of testimony.

Appropriations Committee member Sen. LaVon Crosby of Lincoln, who has opposed university budget cuts, said she was pleased with the reduction.

"It's half the battle," she said.

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