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NOVEMBER 16, 1994

Students take more Spanish

By Chad Lorenz

Staff Reporter

Enrollment in Spanish classes at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is growing as the language becomes more widely spoken in the United States, the head of the modern languages department said.

The total number of credits taken in Spanish courses increased 4 percent in the past five academic years, Harriet Turner said.

Increased enrollment in advanced Spanish classes accounts for most of the growth, she said.

Enrollment has gone up 58 percent in the 300-level courses since the 1989 fall semester, Turner said. In the 400- to 800-level classes, enrollment has grown 186 percent.

Enrollment in lower level courses has dropped 6 percent, Turner said, but that drop shows that more people are taking Spanish classes in high school.

Those students may sometimes skip 100- and 200-level Spanish courses.

The number of bachelor's degrees awarded in Spanish at UNL has grown from five degrees in 1989 to 14 in 1994.

Spanish also is the most popular language in the modern languages department, Turner said. Enrollment in Spanish courses makes up more than half of the total enrollment in modern languages.

About 70 students major in Spanish at UNL. French and German each have about 60 majors, followed by about 20 Italian majors.

More students are taking Spanish because of its social and economic uses in the world today, Turner said.

Adelaida Martinez, head of the Spanish division at UNL, said Americans were seeking closer ties to Hispanic people. Most of the Spanish-speaking world lies just south of the United States.

"We are joined at the hip," she said.

Turner said employers were seeking Spanish-speaking professionals because of the growing Spanish-speaking population in the United States.

Students are preparing to meet that demand by integrating Spanish courses into their primary studies, she said. Students from the colleges of business administration, journalism and mass communications, and human resources and family sciences commonly take Spanish.

Downtown rebounds from decline



Shawn Russell plays his guitar on the corner of 14th and O streets Tuesday afternoon. The downtown area has been revitalized recently by the addition of small businesses and parking garages.

Gerik Parmele/DN

By Josh Wimmer

Staff Reporter

Five years ago, downtown Lincoln was in a state of decline.

Today, the area is bouncing back, the president and chief executive officer of the Downtown Lincoln Association said.

Lou Shields said the most recent signs of life were the new mini-mall at 16th and Q streets, the new parking garages and the changes in the Centrum.

The mini-mall, which opened last spring, contains five businesses, including a Boston Chicken restaurant and a MaggieMoo's ice cream store. Shields said the mall was convenient for downtown residents — including students — and residents of nearby suburbs.

The mini-mall's Blockbuster Video is a "tremendous asset" to university students and downtown dwellers, who didn't have a convenient video rental store until the mall's installation, Shields said.

She said new parking garages were another sign of life downtown and were badly needed.

The garage at Que Place, 11th and Q streets, has about 700 parking stalls. Those spaces will decrease the demand for parking by downtown residents, employees and consumers, she said.

The renovation of the Centrum provides more evidence of change. Shields said the Centrum's long-time vacancy gave some the wrong impression that space was unneeded downtown.

A city engineering company, Municipal Energy, is renovating the building. The company plans to move its offices there in January.

Lincoln Southeast Community College also has begun teaching classes in the Centrum.

Shields said downtown improvements are drawing new business to the rejuvenated area.

"It's a ripple effect," she said.

Complete overhaul

These changes are a complete turnaround from the direction downtown was heading recently, Shields said.

Only five years ago, downtown Lincoln was following other downtown areas nationwide into decline.

Major retailers were moving out of downtown areas in favor of more convenient and popular malls and shopping centers uptown, she said. FirstTier Bank president Orlin

See DOWNTOWN on 3

Senator expects much feedback on engineering decision

By Brian Sharp

Senior Reporter

Twenty-five days, and counting.

That's how long state senators must wait before they learn whether the engineering debate will continue at the State Capitol.

The University of Nebraska Board of Regents will decide on Dec. 10 whether to create a separate engineering college in Omaha. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln administers the current college, and some programs are offered at the University of Nebraska at Omaha campus.

From there, the issue will go to the Nebraska Legislature, where state senators will join the debate.

Phyllis Larsen, director of public relations at UNL, said university administrators have held off taking the debate to the Legislature. So far, state senators have not been involved in the issue, she said.

"People are not looking that far ahead yet," Larsen said. "They're not saying, 'Gee, I wonder if the Legislature is going to give us money to do this.' They're just trying to figure out what to do."

Sen. Jerome Warner, chairman of the revenue committee, said senators wanted to let the process play out before getting involved.

"In essence, this is not for the Legislature yet," Warner said.

But Sen. Ardyce Bohlke, chairwoman of the education committee, said senators were preparing for a storm of phone calls to the Capitol following the regents' decision.

No matter what the outcome, she said, con-

stituents and those involved in the issue will start calling state senators that Monday.

If the regents decide to go ahead with the separate colleges, the plan must make several stops in the State Capitol before being approved.

The proposal first would go to the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education. The commission prevents duplication in the state's educational programs.

Then, the Legislature's education committee would have to approve a separate college by statute. The appropriations committee also would have to approve funding for the college.

At that point, Bohlke said, state senators would give a "yes" or "no" to the proposal, but they would not provide compromises, such as strengthening programs.

Bohlke of Hastings said that like any legislative bill, senators would consider cost and need for a separate college. Students' interests

also would play a part, she said.

Most senators haven't made up their minds on the proposal yet, she said, and they are waiting to see how NU President Dennis Smith handles "the first real hot topic that has been put on his plate."

Warner said senators would have to face several factors in deciding the issues. The most important factor, he said, is money.

The Legislature will face an estimated \$40 million shortfall in the state budget this session, Warner said. Any budget requests, such as for a new engineering college, will have to be conservative, he said.

"Money is going to be quite tight," Warner said. "Any amount real significant ... is not likely to be there. I would anticipate some funding that would strengthen the engineering programs in Omaha."

**ENGINEERING
DEBATE**