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New task force to help NU be more efficient

By Brian Sharp
Senior Reporter

In an effort to make the University of Nebraska fit and trim, NU President Dennis Smith has named a task force to eliminate administrative excess.

NU REGENTS



The announcement, which came at a Friday meeting of the NU Board of Regents, has been met with full support — and confusion.

The question is how far the task force will go to cut costs and exactly who will have the final say — or any say — on what is cut.

A statement included in a report to the regents said there were 3,787 personnel in administration and operations, whose salaries make up 25.8 percent of the university budget. That is compared to 2,830 faculty members whose salaries total 34.9 percent of the budget.

"The university has made improvements in the way it does business," Smith said in a statement accompanying the announcement. "But it has not, in recent years, undertaken a comprehensive review of its administrative processes."

Regent Charles Wilson of Lincoln said after the meeting that the task force would serve an advisory role. Any recommendations would go to Smith, he said, and then be filtered through administrators, the board and many other people.

Regent Drew Miller of Papillion said that having Smith on the committee was all the approval needed in most cases. Miller and Regent Rosemary Skrupa of Omaha also are members.

But reducing administrative costs can't be done through analysis of business processes alone, Miller said. Jobs will have to be cut, he said, and more attention given to computers.

Wilson said he expected the task force to begin with general guidelines for an administrative slim down and then get more specific about

functions, offices, positions and departments.

The problem is that the further such recommendations go, they begin to conflict with the governance shared with departments and faculty. Regents were not clear on exactly how far the task force's charge extended.

Departments already go through practice reviews, where they are given a predicted budget cut and asked to make accommodations. The exercise is meant to maintain efficiency.

Miller said Smith's task force sent the message that those reviews were no longer doing enough given today's restrictive budgets.

That "squeeze on funding" is not going away, Wilson said, and will likely continue for another 10 to 15 years.

The 10-member task force also includes the following people: John Angel, retired chairman and CEO of Guardian Life Insurance; Fred Luthans, UNL management professor; James McClurg, president and CEO of Life Sciences for Harris Laboratories, Inc.; John Oseth, UNK executive assistant to the chancellor; Julie

"The university has made improvements in the way it does business."

■
DENNIS SMITH

NU president

Totten, UNO assistant vice chancellor for business and finance and director of finance; Pamela Triolo, UNMC associate dean of the college of nursing; Lewis Trowbridge, president of Mammel and Associates in Omaha; James Young, vice president re-engineering Union Pacific Railroad in Omaha.

Angel, who will serve as chairman of the task force, said the need for outside influences such as himself was needed. Universities are competing in a market they've never seen before, he said — the business market.

Plea bargain possibility for Williams

By Brian Sharp
Senior Reporter

Less than one week ago, Robert E. Williams came within three hours of his scheduled execution.

Today, his lawyers are talking plea bargain as the courts grapple with who will represent Williams in future court hearings and who will pay.

Vince Powers, one of Williams' lawyers, has said Williams was prepared to plead guilty to the 1977 murders of Patricia McGarry and Catherine Brooks in exchange for commuting his death sentence to life in prison.

The offer came after Williams' scheduled execution was stayed because of possible juror misconduct in his 1978 trial.

County Attorney Gary Lacey called the latest action "a prayer."

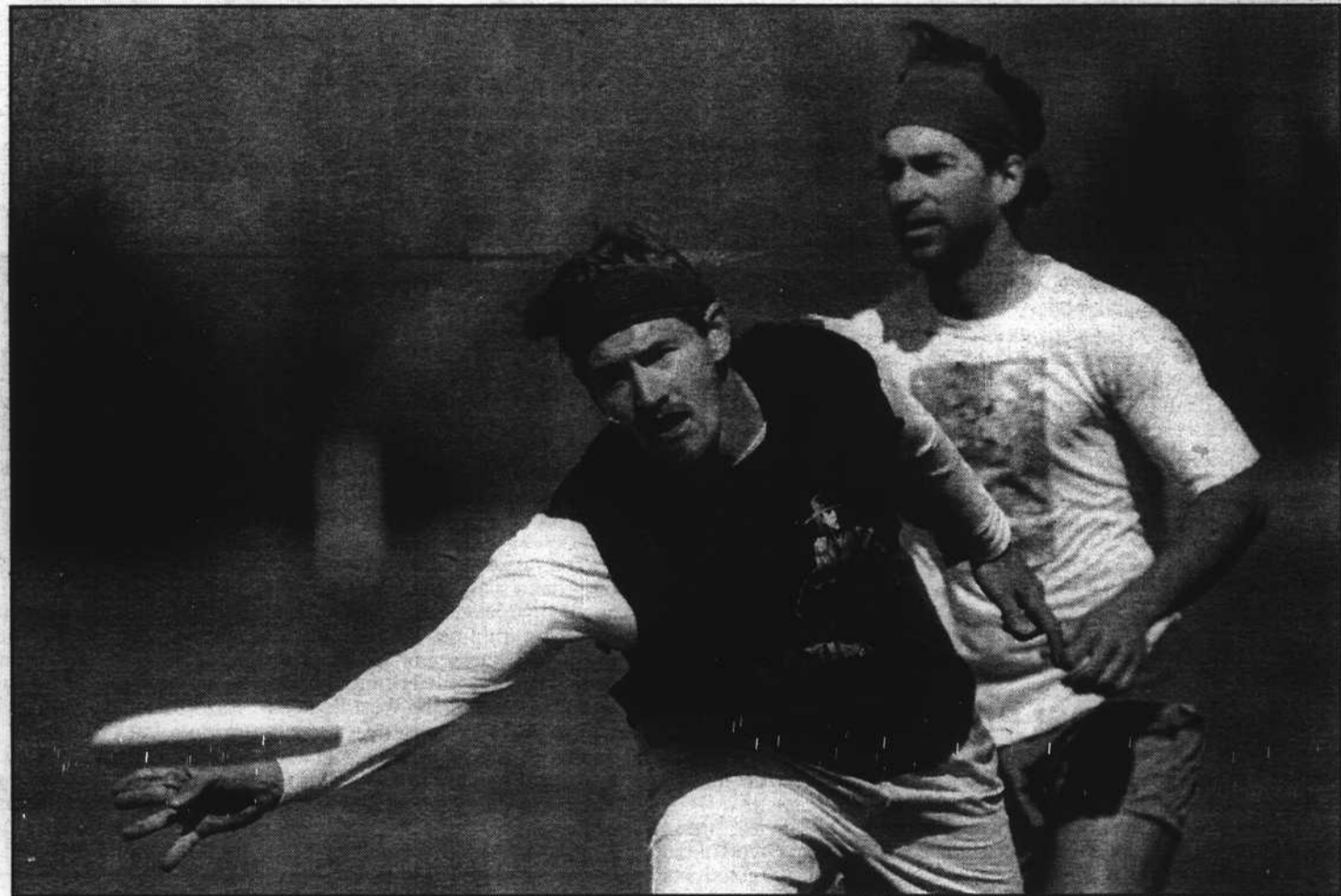
But Friday afternoon, Lacey, Powers, representatives from the public defender's office and other officials met with Lancaster County District Court Judge Paul Merritt. A new question had arisen.

County officials and Williams' lawyers at first declined to comment on the meeting. Powers later said, however, that Williams' representation was in question.

Powers and co-counsel Paula Hutchinson were appointed by the federal courts, which

See WILLIAMS on 7

SPRING FLING



Travis Heying/DN

Taking advantage of Sunday's warm weather, UNL student Dan Ryan tosses a Frisbee during a game of Ultimate Frisbee on East Campus.

Boot camp bill would replace prison with push-ups

By J. Christopher Hain
Senior Reporter

Some criminals in Nebraska could soon be doing push-ups and running obstacle courses instead of mopping prison floors and making license plates.

Part of Gov. Ben Nelson's crime bill, LB371, would create a boot camp prison for first-time, non-violent offenders.

Boot camps, or shock incarceration, are an alternative to prison where regimented physical training is combined with education and rehabilitation.

Nebraska actually is jumping on the boot camp bandwagon late, said Steve King, planning/administration manager for the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services.

The first boot camp prison was started in Georgia in 1983, and since

then, many more states have implemented some form of the camps.

King said boot camps had wide appeal because they served the interests of the public, the criminal justice system and the criminals themselves.

The public probably will like the discipline of a boot camp, he said.

"I think it's seen as getting tough on crime," King said. "It matches what the public wants to see."

Boot camps can help alleviate one of the biggest problems in criminal justice — prison overcrowding.

"Where other states have started a boot camp, it has been an effective prison crowding release," King said.

The Nebraska penitentiary currently is almost 700 inmates beyond capacity, he said, and that number will only grow.

A boot camp also is a money saver when compared to prison, King said. King said his office was working

with Nelson's office to get federal funds that may be available to the state.

In terms of preventing offenders from returning to prison, however, boot camps have not been proven to be much more effective than prison.

Several studies, including one issued by the National Institute of Justice in October 1994, have found that rates for criminals returning to incarceration are similar for prison and boot camps.

Nebraska's boot camp would attempt to include the benefits of the boot camp experience and improve offenders' rates of return, King said.

"We've spent a lot of time looking at what works and what doesn't," King said.

A large number of people who have successfully completed a boot camp program in other states, King said, described the experience as positive.

"I think it's seen as getting tough on crime. It matches what the public wants to see."

■
STEVE KING

Correctional Services manager

"The attitudes of people coming out of a boot camp are better than prison," King said.

King said the Nebraska boot camp would attempt to address the needs of individual offenders. For example, education or rehabilitation would be used for a drug addiction.

"There will be a major emphasis on programming," King said.

Average reading and math skills improved in most boot camps, the National Institute of Justice study re-

ported. "These individuals will spend a lot of time in class, as well as out doing push-ups or an obstacle course," he said.

King said the Legislature still needed to approve the boot camp provision of LB371 and fund the program before it could become a reality.

A boot camp provision was included in Nelson's crime bill last year, but the bill failed to pass the Legisla-