

Students urged to fight cuts

From Staff Reports

Time is running out to fight proposed financial aid cuts, said ASUN president Shawntell Hurtgen, but students can still make a difference.

The Association of Students of the University of Nebraska unanimously approved a bill at its meeting Wednesday night that pledges to lead students in a fight against Congressional cuts.

"We really need to come together," she said. "I think a lot of students are still in the dark about what's happening to them."

Students sometimes feel that changes in federal government won't affect them, she said.

"It's really going to hurt our

campus," Hurtgen said. "We're a large institution with a lot of people on federal student loans."

ASUN will organize a campaign that lets students oppose the cuts through the mail, over the phone and electronically.

Students can come to the senate's office in the Nebraska Union for a list of addresses, a sample letter and phone numbers, Hurtgen said. A computer in the office will be set up so that students can write a message and have it sent to about 300 electronic addresses.

The proposed cuts will be brought before the U.S. Senate floor Oct. 10.

"While our time is very limited," Hurtgen said, "I think it's going to be a very good effort."

Study reveals hidden homeless

By Ted Taylor
Staff Reporter

Nearly 320,000 Nebraskans are identified as near-homeless because they are at risk of becoming homeless during the next year, according to a study Gov. Ben Nelson released Wednesday.

That number was added to the 9,280 people officially recorded as homeless for a day or more in Nebraska in 1994.

Nelson's press secretary, Dara Troutman, said the study would improve the problem at the state and community level.

"This is the first of its kind in the state," she said. "It will help us target and meet the needs of the homeless, and not just the housing needs, but social needs, as well."

A statement from the governor defined the near-homeless as people

living in substandard housing, people at risk of being evicted, people threatened by domestic violence or people living in facilities of a short-term treatment program.

"Mental illness, AIDS or the HIV virus and domestic abuse seem to be the largest contributing factors to homelessness," Troutman said.

Nelson's statement listed three priorities for the state to alleviate homelessness and near-homelessness:

- The need to implement a uniform, systematic data collection and record-keeping process for identifying homeless and near-homeless persons.

- The need to help service providers implement a comprehensive program for homeless and near-homeless families through care systems and service delivery.

- The need to create affordable housing for families earning 80 per-

cent or less of an area's medium income.

Troutman commended the state's homeless advocacy groups and service agencies for their response to the survey.

"It's been difficult to count the homeless in the past," she said. "Eighty-five percent of the surveys were returned from the people who directly work with the homeless. This gives us a very comprehensive look at the problem."

Teresa Priefert, community development consultant for the Department of Economic Development, said the organization would put the information from the study to use soon.

"This gives us a good starting point to assess where we're at and look at where we need to go," she said. "It is considered an excellent statistical sample for projecting an unduplicated count."

Switched roles give new view

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

Dr. Peg Blake's title may be a little misleading.

Although she directs the University Health Center, her doctorate is not in the medical profession. It's in education.

Blake is part of a university program to switch administrators and directors in student affairs. The program was designed to give everyone a better understanding of how different branches of student affairs operate.

She usually fills the position of assistant vice chancellor for student affairs. The one-year switch with UHC director Kunle Ojikutu began in August.

Blake said the switch was a professional development opportunity. "You find when you do a job for a certain number of years it becomes

fairly routine," she said. "After this, you go back with a certain perspective and renewed energy."

Though the job duties are similar, she said, the medical field is foreign.

Blake said she had to take a crash course in Health Center 101 to help James Griesen, vice chancellor for student affairs, defend the health center at an NU Board of Regents meeting last week.

Not knowing the medical field made her ask more questions at the meetings, Blake said. She learns as she goes.

"I could make changes," she said, "but it's more of an ongoing process of helping the health center meet its goals of serving the community."

And learning about the health center will be beneficial when she returns to her assistant vice chancellorship, she said, because the center is an extension of student affairs.

Meanwhile, back in that office,

Ojikutu is having a similar experience.

"It's been interesting," he said. "It gives me a better understanding of how the whole student affairs operates from administration to financial aid."

Ojikutu has been in the health profession for more than 20 years and agreed the new job was a refreshing change.

"I'm doing new things. I'm learning new things. I'm getting new knowledge," he said. "And there's no limit to knowledge."

Ojikutu plans to use that knowledge. He has a more aggressive plan for change than his counterpart.

"You can get a lot done in a year," he said. "Maybe I have some new perspectives on how some of the things that have been done can be improved."

"You can always make an impact."

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