

Students should be less modest

DURST from page 1

college takes more than an "aw-shucks" attitude.

Durst, 51, said when he was checking into the dean position at UNL, he heard fine arts professors from other universities say that Nebraska didn't realize just how good its fine arts programs were. Durst said he wanted to build confidence in the people of the college — staff as well as students.

"That's the dean's job — to shake people out of that modesty," Durst said.

Durst said Lincoln and UNL have a lot of resources to brag about. The Lied Center for Performing Arts, the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden (which has a \$58 million collection), the Lentz Center for Asian Culture, The Wagon Train Project and the Lincoln Community Playhouse are just some of the facilities available to those interested in the arts.

"All of this in a moderate-size city in the U.S. is not something you're going to get access to in other cities,"

Durst said. "It's unheard of."

UNL needs to be more outspoken about accomplishments, such as winning the Sudler Trophy last year for the best marching band in the country, Durst said.

Durst didn't start his career in the arts with a paintbrush or a microphone — he started with a hammer.

After four years in the Navy, he found himself jobless. He saw an advertisement in a newspaper for a stage carpenter, and decided to follow in the steps of his grandfather, who was an incredible woodworker, he said.

Later, he went on to earn his bachelor of arts degree in theater from Missouri Western State College, and he also earned a master of fine arts degree in scenery design-technical theater at the University of Oklahoma.

Durst started his teaching career at the University of South Dakota and then was hired as an assistant professor at UMD. In 1987, he became director of UMD's Study in England Programme in Birmingham, England. He stayed there until 1989, when he

returned to Duluth to take over as dean of the School of Fine and Performing Arts.

Durst's colleagues at UNL say the college is in a good position for new leadership.

"The college is in excellent shape in so many ways that he doesn't have to come in and make earth-shattering changes," said Kevin Hofeditz, assistant dean of the college. "But we certainly have room to grow and move forward."

Durst said he had a "ton of goals" for those forward moves.

One is increasing technology in the arts curriculum, especially in graphic design. He also wants to get a film production program started.

Durst also said he wanted to set up an interactive television classroom, such as those at UMD. The classes would help high school arts teachers upgrade their teaching skills, he said.

Durst's wife, Karen, teaches theater at UNL. They have two children.

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