

# Distance education program runs on technology, dedication

## Students earn master's degrees via satellite, Internet

By **BRIAN CARLSON**  
Assignment Reporter

Judy Malone has never wanted to stop learning.

But with teaching, spending time with her husband and children, and working on her ranch, her time was limited. And living near Palisade, a rural community in Southwest Nebraska, she found herself hours away from the nearest university with a master's degree program.

So when she heard about a distance education program being offered by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, she jumped at the chance to advance her education.

"It's something I've always wanted to do," Malone said.

Malone was one of 19 students who recently received their master's degrees from UNL's College of Human Resources and Family Science after completing three years of instruction through distance education.

Although UNL previously has presented master's degrees to individual long-distance students, the members of this year's graduating class are the first to further their education as part of a distance-learning group.

UNL introduced distance education programs in 1909, and has been a leader in the field. Recently, UNL officials have said they expect an expansion of the university's distance education programs in the upcoming years. In his State of the University speech last month, Chancellor James Moeser announced plans to improve distance-learning opportunities.

Moeser proposed that the univer-

sity create the position of vice chancellor for extended education. If the NU Board of Regents approves the post, Moeser said, he will support the appointment of Irv Omtvedt. Last year, Omtvedt was interim senior vice chancellor for academic affairs.

The Human Resources and Family Science long-distance students began their studies in August 1994. For the next three years, they used a variety of technological resources to complete the 12 necessary courses. Live satellite feeds, videotaped lectures, e-mail, the Internet and telephone bridges were all put to use at various stages of the program.

All the students were women who lived more than 100 miles from the UNL campus, said Joan Laughlin, associate dean of the college and adviser to the distance education students. Family and work responsibilities, in addition to distance, were factors in the students' decisions to take part in the program.

For her part, Malone had to drive 40 miles to McCook for class each week. At a community college, she gained access to the technology needed for the weekly three-hour sessions.

Although students were miles from their classmates and professors, they communicated constantly. Students could seek assistance from their teachers over the phone, and they often worked in groups with other students from their region of the state.

"It's as close to being in a classroom as you can get without actually being there," Malone said.

Because it was a master's degree program, research was an integral part of the process, Laughlin said. Students said they put in about 15 to 20 hours of outside work each week, and sometimes as much as 30 to 40.

However, the UNL library was not readily accessible in many of the state's rural areas where online services aren't fully implemented. Malone said conducting research, in which she often had to utilize materials copied and mailed to her by UNL librarians, was the most frustrating part of her experience.

Technological glitches also caused occasional problems. Ice storms, sunspots and downed power lines hindered the students' progress at times. But students and advisers agreed that the problems never became serious.

"Technology is our salvation and the cross we bear," Laughlin said.

Anita Keys of Elsmere, in north central Nebraska, also received her degree. As a part-time extension service worker, she wanted to earn a master's degree to attain greater job

security and update her knowledge. She drove 50 miles each week to Ainsworth to participate.

Keys said students needed to be highly motivated and self-disciplined.

"The professors hardly ever took roll because they figured if you've paid the money, you're going to be there," she said.

Most of the graduates met for the first time at a reception on the UNL East Campus on Aug. 15. They received their diplomas the following day.

Students said it was wonderful to meet their classmates face to face after three years of hearing their voices over the phone or seeing them on videotape.

Malone said the distance education program was a great experience for her, but said she is relieved to have completed it.

"I'm anxious to do some things with my family that have been on the burner," she said.

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# Students complain, comply with stadium ultimatum

By **JOSHUA GILLIN**  
Assignment Reporter

Whether because of the sun or ASUN, University of Nebraska-Lincoln students did the one thing the Athletic Department asked them to do — they stayed off the bleachers.

Caught between temperatures hovering in the mid-90s and orders to not stand on seats, student ticket-holders grudgingly complied. Throughout the Huskers' 59-14 romp against the Akron Zips, students stood in the seat wells and not on the seats.

The Athletic Department last week issued a flier to students warning them to not stand on seats in the southern end of Memorial Stadium because the department had been receiving complaints from other fans. The flier stated students must not stand on the stadium bleachers or student seating would be moved away from the south end zone and into the upper reaches of South Stadium.

Still, student fans were not happy with the Athletic Department's ultimatum.

"What they (the Athletic Department) are telling us to do is just stupid," said Joe Mueller, a sophomore civil engineering major. "We pay our money; if we want to stand on the seats, we should be able to."

Other students complained about the demands placed upon them as well, but some were happy the

request was not as severe as it could have been.

"They could have said to not stand at all," said Traci Lawrence, a junior pre-law transfer student.

Cameron Stowe, a freshman English major, said he didn't care about the request at all. Even though Saturday's game was his first in Memorial Stadium's student section, he said his first taste of standing through the entire game left much to be desired.

"I don't know why people stand through these things," Stowe said, "especially against nobody teams like this; it's boring. Who really cares enough to stand the whole time?"

Adam Lincicum and Denton Dye, two members of the stadium's student security staff, said there didn't seem to be any problem with students standing on the seats.

"I didn't hear of anything," Dye said.

Both men said heat stroke was more of a concern Saturday. Aiding sufferers of heat stroke took priority, Lincicum said.

"We had about four or five people get it in my section alone," he said.

Some students found a way to both stand on the seats and comply with the new rule. Amy Pryor, an undeclared freshman, said her short stature forced her to stand on the bleachers to see anything.

When security was walking by, however, she stood down.

"If they can't catch you, you didn't do it, right?" Pryor said.

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