

More construction costs OK'd

By ERIN GIBSON
Senior Reporter

Regents

The University of Nebraska Board of Regents and NU President Dennis Smith said Friday they were disgusted with the price tag of a new building at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, and then unanimously approved spending \$11.5 million to finish its construction.

"I'm sick and tired of it," Smith said of the new Lied Transplant Center. "Let's get it done. Let's make it functional."

In November 1995, the university first signed a \$42 million contract to build the 12-story center. With Friday's budget increase, the university will pay Penn-Co Construction, Inc. \$61.3 million for the center.

University Hospital reserve funds will pay for the project's budget increase.

Regent Don Blank of McCook said the first building contract didn't include finishing the building's top three floors, but Friday's budget increase will pay Penn-Co to complete all unfinished space in the structure.

Regents knew there would be

additional construction costs to cover finishing the floors when they approved the original building contract in 1995, Blank said.

Smith said Friday he wanted to finish all unfinished floors now because the construction contractor was still working on the building.

But regents wouldn't have approved the project in 1995 with today's price tag, Regent Chuck Wilson of Lincoln said.

"This is the most expensive building the University of Nebraska has ever built," Wilson said.

Smith agreed and said the project "wouldn't have come to the board because it wouldn't have come through my office."

Smith's office, NU central administration, previews all major university construction proposals before the regents vote to approve them.

Friday's budget increase will pay to finish another 83,194 square feet of space, including the top three unfinished floors, plus space on floors seven through 10, 3800

square feet of space on the second floor, and a link between the center's third floor and University Hospital.

Penn-Co will complete construction covered in the original contract in 1998.

Regents said they hoped a new position recently created at the university, assistant vice president and director of facilities planning and management, would ensure the university avoids unexpected spending on buildings in the future.

Administrators hired Rebecca Koller, a registered architect with a master's degree in business administration, for the new position.

In other action, the Board of Regents approved establishing a new Center for Neurovirology and Neurodegenerative Disorders at UNMC.

The center will create a core group to research neurological disorders, including Alzheimer's disease and HIV-associated dementia.

Howard Gendelman, director of the center, said the center will research new drugs and other treatments for patients suffering from these disorders and increase the quality of clinical care given to Nebraskans with various forms of neurovirological disorders.

RHA president plans mentoring groups

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between executive and student RHA members. Three student members would be assigned to one executive member who would act

as a mentor, he said.

"These mentors will give RHA members personal RHA contacts to answer questions and be there to provide assistance," Wallace said.

RHA also discussed its budget,

which will be passed in two weeks. The group passed a bill that will provide Harper-Schramm-Smith residence hall complex with \$450 dollars for the annual Beach Bash which will be held Sept. 13.



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