

Senators move online

An Internet feature, UniCAM Live!, will broadcast legislature.

By TODD ANDERSON
Assignment Reporter

Live from Lincoln, it's "UniCAM Live!"

For Internet users, coverage of this year's debates on the floor of the Nebraska Legislature is not limited to short media highlights. Full, live coverage of the Legislature has been available since the first day of the second session, Jan. 7, through the Legislature's homepage at <http://www.unicam.state.ne.us>.

Angela Lutz, an employee of Legislative Computer Services, said UniCAM Live! displays a digitized version of Educable's video coverage.

The process, which is called "video streaming," takes the image from the television and digitizes it, she said. The image is then downloaded onto the Internet.

Computer users will need a modem that operates at a speed of 28.8 kilobytes per second or faster and an Internet browser such as Netscape Navigator, as well as a program called RealPlayer, Lutz said.

RealPlayer works with the World Wide Web browser to allow the user to see and hear the video and audio signals, she said. The program can be downloaded for free from RealPlayer's homepage at <http://www.real.com>.

Lutz said the sound of the audio recording is "very clear," while the video display is a little slower, at four frames per second. A television image is displayed at 24 frames per second.

Richard Brown, assistant clerk of the Legislature, said the quality of the image depends on the speed of the user's modem and the number of users on a particular Internet network.

The cost to install the system was less than \$20,000, he said, and maintenance costs will be minimal.

"The system is self-maintaining, and any problems are handled by current staff. There is not really going to

be an added significant cost," he said.

Brown said the state of Nebraska is close to the forefront of states that have decided on such an undertaking.

He said the technological capabilities to expand into other branches of the government already exist. For example, Washington already broadcasts executive and judicial proceedings over the Internet, he said.

The decision to make legislative debates accessible through the Internet came after concern was shown for parts of the state that do not have access to Educable's live broadcasts, Lutz said.

Steve Graziano, assistant programming manager for Educable, said the decision to carry the Educable station is made by independent cable companies throughout the state. An estimated one-third of the state does not have access to the Educable channel, he said.

With UniCAM Live! People with access to the Internet can view their government in action, he said.

"The nice thing is that you can see what happens as it happens and the way it happens," he said. "It's an unvarnished look at what's going on."



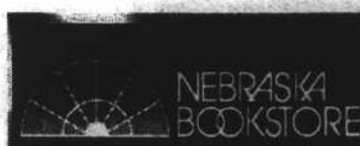
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Study finds politics boring to freshmen

WASHINGTON (AP) - Three decades after an unpopular war, the civil rights struggle and free speech disputes brought turmoil to college campuses, a record low number of college freshmen show much interest in politics, according to a survey released Sunday.

It's even hard to get students riled up about tuition, said one campus Republican.

The annual freshman survey by the University of California at Los Angeles for the Washington-based American Council on Education found just 27 percent of the nation's 1.6 million freshmen believe that keeping up with political affairs is a very important life goal, less than half the percentage recorded in 1966.

Just 14 percent said they frequently discuss politics, down from 30 percent in 1968.

Large numbers also reported being turned off by their studies when they were seniors in high school.

Because the annual survey began in 1966, the benchmark is a period of political ferment. Except for a few blips, the political disengagement has been fairly steady.

Freshmen and some frustrated activists point to several reasons: a sense of powerlessness, a lack of burning issues, and a desire to shun political labels or even a reluctance to antagonize acquaintances in a new social setting.

"At the age I am now, it doesn't seem that important," said Jessica Grace Evans, 18, a freshman at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. "I don't think our opinion matters in the grand scale of things."

Campus activists from both parties have trouble explaining such a feeling of powerlessness, but they know it's there.

"They don't think tuition is going to rise or decline because they say it's not their problem," said Dana Mathes, a 21-year-old senior and spokesman for the College Republicans at the University of Washington in Seattle.

"I think that reflects the level of contentment in the general society," said Dana Gaylin Mathes, a 21-year-old senior and president of the University of California at Berkeley Democrats, a group whose phone number ends with the digits 1964. "What gets people involved in politics is the bad things."

After all, less than half the voters cast ballots in the 1996 presidential election, the lowest since 1924.

But cynicism and a lack of younger politicians have alienated many as well. Even President Clinton, who made direct appeals to the MTV crowd, is the father of a freshman. And first daughter Chelsea Clinton's peers around the country don't like political pigeonholes.

"I think sometimes people are afraid of the label," said Pruitt, who describes himself as a moderate with libertarian leanings. "It's either the liberal Democratic party or the conservative Republican party, and students aren't really interested in one or the other."

The poll of more than 250,000 students in fact found 55 percent identifying themselves as middle of the road - the highest in a decade.

UCLA freshman Corinne LeTourneau, 18, has another view. She says that the campus is a melting pot of people with different backgrounds and cultures, requiring extreme sensitivity, and that may be why people hold down their discussions. Politics "is a touchy subject," she said.

"You don't want to touch on someone's nerves when you've just met these people."

People also are adjusting to a new life and are cut off from their usual sources of information. "You are isolated from a lot more news media," she said. "You're not going home clicking on the TV by yourself as much. You're not by yourself as much to just sit and concentrate on what occurred."

The pollsters also found what they called a disengagement from studies, with a record 36 percent reporting that they had been frequently bored during their senior year in high school. A record number had overslept or missed class or an appointment. The amount of homework and study time fell.

But the erstwhile seniors had plenty of reasons, mostly falling into the category of "senioritis."

"It was hard to focus, because you're so excited to be going to college," said Evans, the UNL freshman.

Brian W. Thompson, a 19-year-old freshman at the University of North Carolina, said the courses ceased to be challenging.

"I think high schools don't keep up with most of the students that go to college," said the politically interested history and political science major.

Notice to Students

All Students are eligible to apply for a refund of their "A" portion of student fees beginning January 12, 1998 and ending February 6, 1998. Students claiming a refund will lose benefits provided by Fund "A" users during the Spring semester 1997-1998.

Application forms are available at the Student Activities Financial Services Office, Room 334 City Union; ASUN Office, 115 Nebraska Union and should be returned by the applicant in person to 334 Nebraska Union or 300 Nebraska East Union. Students must bring their student I.D. cards at the time of application. Students who are unable to personally return their application to the Student Activities Financial Services Office should contact Daniel Paez, Room 334 (phone 472-2154) on or before February 6, 1998 to make arrangements.

Students who have completed a refund application and returned it on or before February 6, 1998 will be mailed a check for the amount of the refund claimed. Refund checks will be mailed between the dates of February 9-13, 1998.

Fund "A" refund amounts are as follows:

ASUN	\$3.96
Daily Nebraskan	.98
Lied Center Discounts	1.82
University Program Council	2.43
Total Refund	\$9.35

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