

Workshop focuses on UNL diversity

Organizers hope university speakers will share cultural insights

By KIM SWEET
Staff writer

Business and community leaders, school administrators and college professors will have a chance to go back to school over the next two days to learn about cultural diversity.

Various speakers from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will teach unity, respect and acceptance to the attendees of the first workshop of its kind held at UNL.

The workshop, sponsored by Nebraska Network 21, takes place today and Friday at the Nebraska East Union.

Funded by a grant from the Kellogg Foundation, Nebraska Network 21 is an initiative that looks at how the University of Nebraska is serving the citizens of the state in the 21st century, said Emilia Gonzalez-Clements, co-chairwoman of the group's culture and gender diversity team.

The team is one of seven action teams formed by Nebraska Network 21 to identify and implement changes within the community of learning that

the University of Nebraska serves across the state, said Steve Jackson, a counseling and testing coordinator for the state of Nebraska and co-chairman of the workshop.

While the goal of Nebraska Network 21 is to provide education throughout Nebraska, Jackson said the group decided to start with the Lincoln campus because a number of events at UNL have dealt directly with cultural diversity.

The decision to observe Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the hiring of Shari Clark, a black woman, as a special assistant for diversity and equity to NU President Dennis Smith and the Sigma Chi Fraternity cross burning that occurred almost two years ago are events that have brought attention to the issue of diversity at UNL, Jackson said.

By bringing members of the UNL community together with leaders from across Nebraska, the organizers of the event hope speakers from the university can share the insights they have gained.

"Our goal is to increase communication between educational institutions and the community," said Patti

Hurst, a volunteer for the culture and gender diversity team and secretary for the NU Cooperative Extension.

While the focus of the workshop will be the university, Jackson said, Nebraska Network 21 hopes to focus on the state as a whole in the future.

Planning sessions at the workshop will help attendees use what they learn from the speakers. The sessions will allow community and business leaders, educators and others who attend to brainstorm how to make change.

Topics that will be addressed by speakers include cultural duality, effective skills of communication and how people of privilege can be allies to disadvantaged groups.

While students are not specifically targeted, Hurst said they are welcome to attend the events.

Today registration begins at 8 a.m. Workshops run from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday registration begins at 8:30 a.m., and the workshop runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The registration fees are \$35. Hurst said students and others desiring to attend the conference are welcome to show up at the door.

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