

UNL takes action against student drinking

Grant money to aid in battling binge drinking

By Ieva Augstums
Senior staff writer

Planning to make an impact on the UNL binge-drinking scene, University of Nebraska-Lincoln officials said Thursday they would have their strategy finalized by April.

"We are dealing with societal and cultural practices students bring with them to college," UNL Chancellor James Moeser said. "It's not going to be easy."

In September, the university began to wage a war against excessive student drinking.

Its ammunition was a five-year, \$700,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, N.J.

Linda Major, former coordinator of UNL's alcohol and drug education program, said the university decided to apply for the grant, because it "saw a need to improve the campus and community drinking climate."

"The mission of the grant is to reduce high-risk drinking among university students," Major said. "The grant will hopefully accomplish that."

Vice Chancellor James Griesen said he believed UNL received the grant because the university put together what promises to be a very effective coalition of individuals to proceed with the grant's mission.

Members of the campus-community coalition include university officials, business leaders, students, parents and UNL faculty members, he said.

"Nationwide there is high-risk

drinking among college students — this university included," Griesen said.

Major, who was named project director of the Johnson grant, said a total of eight universities received funding to combat binge drinking, while two universities received partial funding.

The group established a first-year planning budget of \$100,000, Major said. The remaining grant money will be divided among the group in \$150,000 increments in the next four years.

The complete comprehensive plan of the grant will be available in April, Major said.

Members of the campus and community would be able to comment and make suggestions to the plan, she said.

"To change a culture, you have to look at it very complexly," Major said. "The good news is we have planning and strategy time. The bad news is that there is no action."

The coalition is examining the following areas:

- Education and information, including awareness of risks associated with high-risk and illegal drinking.

- Social environment, including alternative student activities to high-risk drinking.

- Neighborhood relations, improving the social climate of UNL students who live off campus.

- Policy and enforcement to revise institutional policy as appropriate.

In a recent high-profile incident, a 20-year-old sophomore fell from a third-floor window in the Chi Phi

Group promotes alcohol safety

By Ieva Augstums
Senior staff writer

One student group has decided to fight a battle against college binge drinking, and university officials hope that the steps they take will lead other UNL students in the right direction. NU Directions, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln student task force, started waging its war against excessive drinking in September.

Chris Linder, NU Directions student chairwoman, said the 35 member student group is ready to challenge university students and overall drinking on campus.

"We want students to be more responsible," Linder said. "It's one of our goals, but it's not going to be easy."

The vision of the group is to create a campus culture that supports responsible, low-risk drinking, including abstaining from drinking all together, she said.

UNL Chancellor James Moeser said he has confidence in the group's ability to confront the campus drinking issue.

"We have a great task in front of us," Moeser said. "This is our opportunity to be proactive instead of reactive."

Linder said three work groups — policy and enforcement, education and information and social environment — would look at ways to reduce high-risk drinking among university students.

The groups also will look at improving the safety and environment of the campus and community, she said.

Brenda Chrastil, a junior biochemistry major, decided to join the group because, she said, she has seen first-hand the devastating effects of alcohol.

A member of Gamma Phi Beta Sorority, Chrastil experienced the death of Laura Cockson, a sorority sis-

ter who died when the car she was riding in was hit by a drunken driver.

"(Drinking) is a problem on campus that everyone needs to be concerned about," Chrastil said. "This is a serious issue affecting schools nationwide."

Some of the NU Direction program goals include:

- Reducing or controlling the spread of liquor.
- Reducing high-risk marketing and promotion practices.

- Reducing the use of false identification.

- Increasing campus based substance abuse treatment services and/or the availability of community based substance abuse treatment services.

- Increasing the availability of attractive, student-centered social activities located both on and off the UNL campus.

"It's going to be up to students to inform students about these issues," Linder said. "We want as many students involved as possible."

NU Directions members have visited UNL student organizations, discussed alcohol issues on campus and have asked for suggestions, she said.

By April, Linder said, the group should have visited each UNL student organization. A complete list of issues and comments would then be compiled for reference and future use, she said.

"This is something I have always believed in," Linder said. "I've had friends whose lives have been changed because of drinking. This affects everyone."

NU Directions is funded through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Matter of Degree program. The university received the \$700,000 grant in September to reduce high-risk drinking among UNL students.

Students who are interested in becoming involved with NU Directions can contact Linder at (402) 472-7440.

Bill targets women's health care; proponents look to set up council

By Jessica Fargen
Senior staff writer

Legislature

A women's health council that would act as an information center, provide resources for medical services to low-income women and advise government was the subject of testimony Thursday.

LB480, sponsored by Lincoln Sen. DiAnna Schimek, would set up the Women's Health Initiative of Nebraska. The Health and Human Services Committee took no action on the bill.

Schimek said she introduced the bill because health issues in areas specific to women, such as osteoporosis, have been overlooked. Nebraska has no concerted effort to coordinate information on women's health, she said.

"There wasn't a focused effort, and so we suggested it," Schimek said. "We got all kinds of support for the deal."

Ten senators have signed the bill. At Thursday's hearing, representatives from groups such as the Nebraska Nurses Association, the

Lincoln/Lancaster County Women's Commission and the Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women testified in favor of the bill. No one testified in opposition to the bill.

Patti Lutter, a public information officer with the Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women, said it was time Nebraska had a concerted effort to coordinate women's health information.

"Basically, the main objective is to serve as a clearing house, and coordinate efforts of health care organizations as they relate to women," Lutter said. "The supporters realize that putting (in) a women's health initiative would help to facilitate and improve the poor status of women's health in Nebraska."

Nebraska's performance on most preventative health care measures is below average according to the 1998 Status of Women in Nebraska report by the Institute for Women's Policy

Research, Lutter said.

According to the report, Nebraska women have lower rates of pap smear tests and cholesterol screenings than other states.

Lutter said older women and minority women are especially at risk for health problems because of lack of insurance or inadequate diets and access to medical services.

"Because women live longer than men, it's just no secret that women's health issues are completely different than men," she said. "Unfortunately most of the research done on health issues has been done on men."

The cost of the council and its services would be about \$150,000, Schimek said, but that is an estimate and could be adjusted.

Three-fourths of the council's members would be women. Members of the council would include the executive director of the Commission on the Status of Women, representatives from the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Creighton Medical School and women of varying ages who are health-care consumers.

Fraternity house after a night of drinking.

The woman had been vomiting out the window before she fell, breaking several ribs, her arm and pelvis. Her spleen was also removed.

She was released from the hospi-

tal earlier this week and is expected to return to classes when able.

Sanctions against the fraternity are expected to be announced early next week.

Major said campus and community members working with the grant

have discussed the incident and plan to use it as a case for future prevention.

"This was a good teaching moment for the campus and the university," Major said. "It will be examined."

Clinton under fire

Clinton's acquittal rests with Senate

President's future looks brighter

WASHINGTON (AP) — With acquittal assured, the Senate talked its way through a final full day of closed-door deliberations Thursday at President Clinton's impeachment trial, set for climactic noontime votes Friday in the case that one Democrat called "this sordid saga."

Sen. Olympia Snowe of Maine became the fourth Republican to declare her intention to vote to acquit on both charges, following the lead of other moderates who broke party ranks a day earlier.

Inside the chamber, where Chief Justice William Rehnquist presided, the talk was blunt at times. "Over and over and over again, from both sides of the aisle," senators denounced the president as a liar, GOP Sen. Bob Bennett of Utah said later.

Bennett predicted that Clinton would go down in history as "the most accomplished, polished liar we've ever had in the White House."

A two-thirds vote is required to convict the president and remove him from office, and there was no chance of that happening.

"There can be no doubt that President Clinton's conduct has made a mockery of most of his words, or that his example has been corrosive beyond calculation to our culture and to our children," said Oregon Republican Gordon Smith, who said he would vote to convict.

For all the expressions of disgust, a formal effort to censure the president appeared all but dead, a victim of Republican opposition. Democrats said they would make an effort to

force a post-trial vote on the Senate floor, and failing passage, would draft a statement of condemnation.

Controversy broke out over a report that Clinton had vowed revenge on House Republicans at the polls in 2000.

"It is deeply troubling that the president views closure of this constitutional process as an opportunity for revenge," said Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss.

White House spokesman Joe Lockhart didn't deny presidential anger, but said, "I can't think of a worse, more dumb strategy than going after people based on whether they were a House manager or not."

Chief Justice William Rehnquist made the trip from the Supreme Court in his limousine Thursday, as he has for each session since the trial began Jan. 8, and a few moments later the Senate's doors were closed for deliberations.

At the start of the day, the third devoted to private deliberations, Lott said 37 senators had yet to speak, each given 15 minutes to address 19th century Senate impeachment rules.

"The House managers failed to establish that the president's conduct amounts to 'high crimes and misdemeanors,'" said Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island.

Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo., saw the case otherwise. "When President Clinton chose not to 'tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth,' he put himself above the law. He violated his oath and undermined the rule of law which he had sworn to uphold."

Daily Nebraskan

Questions? Comments?
Ask for the appropriate section editor at (402) 472-2588
or e-mail dn@unl.edu.

Fax number: (402) 472-1761

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