ASUN

ASUN candidates eligible for grants

Pepsi, bookstore to match donations

BY KIM SWEET
Staff writer

ASUN election candidates won't have to reach as far into their pockets to fund their campaigns this year.

Thanks to a deal with Pepsi-Cola and the University Bookstore, executive officer candidates in this year's election are eligible to receive $200 in matching funds. Senate, Advisory Board and Committee for Fees Allocation candidates are eligible for $50 in matching funds.

The agreement between the university, LinPepCo and Follett College Stores came after the Voice student election group inquired whether it could have Coca-Cola as a sponsor, said James Main, assistant vice chancellor for business and finance.

When approached, James Griesen, vice chancellor for student affairs, said he recommended the UNL-Pepsi Cola beverage alliance be utilized.

Because the future student body president will also become the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's student regent on the NU Board of Regents, Griesen said it would not be appropriate for a campaign to be sponsored by one of Pepsi's competitors.

Griesen said the grants were not intended to allow corporations to influence the student election process.

"We're not trying to bring corporations into this," Griesen said. "The objective is to minimize the personal cost of running for office."

The funds are available to student election groups, independent candidates and write-in candidates alike, Griesen said.

The funds of candidates belonging to student election groups are combined. Because the Voice party has more people running under its name, it is eligible to receive $3,300. The Focus party is eligible to receive $3,050 in matching funds.

As of Friday, Griesen said, Focus had received 54 percent of the total funds it is eligible for, and Voice had received 66 percent.

Three independent candidates raised the $50 necessary to receive another $50 from Pepsi and the University Bookstore.

Griesen said the one-year experiment would help ease the financial burden that came with running for office.

"Historically, the majority of the money had to come from executive officer candidates," he said.

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>
> **JAMES GRIESEN**
> vice chancellor for student affairs

Unlike many universities, UNL's executive offices don't come with a paycheck, making the amount of private funds a candidate has to invest even larger, Griesen said.

Rachelle Winkle, an executive candidate running in next month's election, said she didn't realize the magnitude of the costs associated with running a campaign.

"It is so much more expensive than I ever imagined," Winkle said. "There are a whole bunch of hidden costs."

Winkle said she was happy that LinPepCo and Follett College Stores stepped forward to support student government.

"It helps so much," she said.

The only funds eligible for matching grants are those provided by UNL students. The ASUN electoral commission approves the amounts available for matching funds.

Main said it was the role of the Electoral Commission to monitor how the money is spent.

"In discussions, (candidates) gave us a sense of comfort that we wouldn't be sponsoring a drunken beer-fest in Frontier Park," Main said. "If they demonstrate otherwise, the support will go away."

Griesen said it was also the goal of the Electoral Commission and the two corporations to make sure the playing field was level for all candidates.

The interest the university's corporate partners have in supporting perspective student leaders is commendable, Griesen said.

"I think it's great that we have business partners who are interested in supporting a strong student government."

Tobacco settlement in dispute

Federal agency may vie for cut, jeopardizing state plan for money

BY BRIAN CARLSON
Staff writer

Legislature

Deputy Attorney General Steve Grasz urged lawmakers Friday to petition Congress and the Clinton administration to keep the federal government's hands off Nebraska's tobacco settlement.

In a hearing before the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee, Grasz testified in support of LR29, a non-binding resolution that would call on Congress and the Clinton administration to allow Nebraska to claim its entire settlement.

"It is now time to ensure the state of Nebraska is guaranteed the use of its own settlement funds," he said.

In the November 1998 settlement with the tobacco industry, Nebraska was awarded $1.16 billion for medical costs associated with smoking-related illnesses.

But the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said it should receive a portion of the settlement because federal Medicaid funds also were used to treat smoking-related illnesses. In this year's State of the Union address, President Clinton said the U.S. Justice Department would bring its own litigation against the tobacco industry.

Grasz said Nebraska and the other 45 states that joined in the lawsuit faced the risks that came with it, so they should keep the settlement.

"The lawsuit filed by the state of Nebraska was based largely on violation of state law under state law theories," he said. "Furthermore, the state bore all the risk and expense of the litigation and settled without any assistance from the federal government."

Without a prohibition on federal recoupment of state settlement funds passed by Congress, Grasz said, the state could not be sure it would receive all of the settlement.

The 1998 Legislature passed a bill to place Nebraska's tobacco settlement revenues in the Nebraska Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund, which would pay for public health programs across the state.

In a letter to the committee, Attorney General Don Stenberg said federal claims on a portion of Nebraska's settlement could jeopardize the trust fund and its programs.

"The state of Nebraska should not be penalized for taking aggressive action to reduce a known public health risk, and to secure resources for preventing youth access to harmful tobacco products," he said.

Payment of settlement funds is being delayed currently by appeals. If those appeals are not resolved in the next 16 months, Grasz said, the state will begin receiving payments on July 1, 2000 automatically.

Under the settlement, Nebraska would receive $14.2 million the first year, $38.1 million the next year, and between $40 million and $50 million annually until 2025.