

Plans for honors hall adapted

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hall. Maintenance workers could work in both Selleck and the Kauffman Center, he said.

Regent Charles Wilson of Lincoln said the tunnel was a positive addition to the hall, which was scheduled to be finished in 2001.

"We have everything to gain and nothing to lose," Wilson said.

The \$400,000 tunnel will be funded with money donated by Carole and C. Edward McVane, UNL alumni, who gave \$32 million for the honors hall and program.

NU President Dennis Smith said the donors were contacted, and they wanted the money spent in this way.

At their Saturday meeting, the regents also discussed an annual gender-equity report presented by the universitywide committee on gender equity.

Child care dominated the discussion after a representative from each NU campus presented steps made toward equity on their cam-

pus. The report updates the regents on seven gender-equity goals set by the board in 1991.

The University of Nebraska at Omaha was commended for its child care facilities in the equity report. The report said that in the center's last survey, 95 percent of its users were "very satisfied."

Other campuses are taking steps to improve the availability and accessibility of their care facilities.

UNL, for example, is looking to increase contact with private child-care facilities near campus to increase accessibility to faculty members, staff and students, said Nancy Mitchell, a gender equity committee member and UNL advertising professor.

Ninety-five spots exist at the UNL child care facility, which is run by the Nebraska Union.

In other regents business:

■ The board voted to strike the proposed tenure termination of UNL Associate English Professor Bruce Erlich from its agenda.

Erlich submitted a letter of res-

ignation Thursday, which the university has accepted. He will retire from his position at the end of February.

Erlich, who had worked for the university since 1973, taught primarily comparative literature courses in the English department and German literature in the modern languages department.

Officials did not disclose reasons for the proposed tenure termination.

■ The board approved a \$2.2 million proposal to replace UNL's outdoor track.

The project will include adding a new sub-base to the track; improving the infield; relocating the throwing, jumping and other related events; and improving the electrical and timing capabilities.

Joe Selig, associate athletic director, told the regents no home track meets were held in the last year because of the condition of the track.

"It's hard to have a track program without a track, and that's about where we're at right now."

Operators handle bizarre questions

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schedule of events on campus that week.

If asked, they can also attempt to find the phone number of male strippers in town or the type of hot dogs served at NU home football games. Operators handle about 6,000 calls a day; 8,000 when there's bad weather. The information bank they provide has more than 300,000 residences and businesses.

Bruce Bernt, manager of operator services, said the service coming out of Nebraska Hall was out of the ordinary.

"This is one of the few switchboards at universities that provide as much service as we do," Bernt said. "I would consider this not a switchboard, but an information center."

Colleen Huls, the day supervisor, has worked in the department for 16 years. She said people would be surprised at the range of questions operators have answered.

"A lot of times they start out, 'This is a really dumb question,'" she said. "And you want to say, 'I've had a lot dumber.'"

Here is a collection of the oddest questions operators said they had been asked:

■ How to tell when a piece of chicken is fully cooked.

■ What channel the television show "Friends" is on.

■ How to get former NU Football Coach Tom Osborne on the phone as he coached on the sidelines.

■ How to jump a dead battery.

■ How AIDS is transmitted.

■ Where O Street is located.

■ If a chicken has a wishbone.

Two non-students work from midnight to 8 a.m. Most of the time four to eight people are working. Students usually work the 4 p.m.-until-late evening shift.

Carrie Knievel, a senior speech pathology major, has been working as a phone operator at UNL for 2½ years. Her brother, Jeff, has been working there for 1½ years.

"I don't know why, but something about it has always sounded interesting," she said. "You don't know the face with the voice on the other line."

Knievel said callers got pretty emotional when they heard school was off for the day, such as during October 1997's snowstorm.

"Oh, I love you, man," students have told me when they hear that we are not having school," she said.

Annie Greer, who has been a UNL operator for 12 years, said students often jumped the gun when it snowed.

"Even if we have a little snow, they think that they are going to close the college," Greer said.

Before UNL, Greer was an operator for the state capitol. Instead of computers, they used books, she

“A lot of times they start out, 'This is a really dumb question.' And you want to say, 'I've had a lot dumber.'”

COLLEEN HULS
Switchboard supervisor

said. It was the closest thing to the old-fashioned telephone operators most people think of.

Knievel's brother, Jeff, a junior sociology major, had conjured up the same vision of operators.

"I thought I'd be working with a bunch of old ladies," he said.

Jeff said he liked the laid-back atmosphere of his job, which is why he said he planned on sticking with it until graduation.

When he works on weekends or Friday nights, a lot of drunk students partake in a little drinking and dialing. Sometimes they want the phone number for the closest pizza place or the phone number of someone they had just met.

His biggest pet peeve is rude callers.

"You try to be as kind as you can," Jeff said of rude callers, "then you rip them when you get off the phone."

Greer said the phone operators were trained to be nice. And they are, even when people are rude.

"Sir, you don't need to talk to us like that," was how Greer said she dealt with rude calls.

Rudeness can entail callers taking a condescending tone with operators, Huls said.

"There's a tendency sometimes to think we're not intelligent people," Huls said. "Sometimes we have people talking down to us."

Besides providing information, Huls said she had learned a lot through instructing people on where to go.

"There's a lot of information to know, and you learn a lot in a job like this," Huls said. "You know a lot of what you need to know to get a job done."

Adam Coulter, a junior broadcasting major, has been an operator for 2 years. Like most of the other operators, he just wants people to realize that the voice on the other end of the line is more than a voice.

"Most people don't realize that there's so much information here," he said. "I don't think they realize how much we do."

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Union renovations offer expanded game room

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planned to broadcast cable sports networks, will be added as well, he said. Traditional board games, including chess and checkers, also will be available.

"We will be willing to try anything that the student might want to do," Buysman said.

Daryl Swanson, Nebraska Unions director, said the union had been without a recreation room for about two years.

Swanson said the union had always had a large recreation

room, and in 1959 included a 10-lane bowling alley in the basement.

In 1985, the alley was torn out to expand the bookstore. A small billiard room was opened in the south part of the basement, which was made into the Daily Nebraskan offices two years ago.

Swanson said after the completion of the union's new addition, it was decided to bring back recreation services to the building.

The new recreation room is open daily from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.