

Griesen says NebHELP is unfair toward UNL

By JESSICA FARGEN
Senior staff writer

Thousands of dollars in public money were given out in January to 31 colleges in the state for need-based scholarships, but UNL was excluded from that allotment.

That is one of the reasons why representatives from a national consumer group met with university and state officials Wednesday.

At issue is last year's conversion of NebHELP - Nebraska Higher Education Loan Program Inc. - from non-profit to profit. NebHELP buys and sells student loans.

In that transition, an estimated \$100 million in charitable money was transferred to the Foundation for Educational Funding.

That foundation issued \$500,000 in scholarships in January to 31 colleges that contract loans through the Federal Family Education Loan Program. UNL was not included in this allotment because the university participates in the federal Direct Student Loan Program.

Although the foundation recently gave \$50,000 to the NU system for scholarships for participants in Tom Osborne's Teammates mentoring

program, that allocation is narrow and restrictive, said James Griesen, UNL vice chancellor for student affairs.

"It's a far more restrictive grant than was given to the others, and if you would look at the UNL student contributions over the years in building up those assets, it's not all in proportion," Griesen said.

"We believe that if this is a truly public foundation interested in serving the students of Nebraska, there would be no basis for excluding UNL students."

Although Griesen said no specific actions were planned as of yet, the university would monitor the situation.

Griesen met with Consumers Union Educational Assets Project coordinator Patrick Gardner, NU Regent Chuck Hassebrook and Milo Mumgaard, executive director of the Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest.

Discrimination against UNL students was also a concern of Steve Grasz, deputy attorney general, who also met with Gardner on Wednesday.

"We are also continuing to look into whether there is a restriction that precludes UNL students from being eligible for their grants," Grasz said.

"As far as I know they still have a policy against grants to students who participate in the direct student loan program."

Gardner encouraged the attorney general's office to take more responsibility for prompting public involvement in the foundation.

"Their response was encouraging," Gardner said. "They listened. They took notes. They clearly are thinking about this."

Representatives from the FEF did not return phone calls to the Daily Nebraskan.

Wednesday's meetings were the result of an ongoing discussion about whether the \$100 million is the actual amount of the money in the foundation.

Grasz said the Attorney General's office was going to look closely at whether the \$100 million was all preserved in the transition from non-profit to for-profit. Their role is a watchdog role, he said. So far, no evidence of fraud was present.

Gardner said he felt confident the attorney general would monitor the money closely.

"They've given us every indication they are going to look carefully whether the assets are reserved," Gardner said.

Galligo takes the stand

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Hopkins was not upset about the cigarettes either.

That evening, Hopkins invited Schmader and Galligo to the tunnels under 48th Street to smoke marijuana.

Galligo said that when they got to the tunnels, he stayed at the west end while Hopkins and Schmader walked to the middle of the 100-foot long tunnel.

When Galligo saw Hopkins start stabbing Schmader, he ran from the tunnel to a Kwik Shop more than 10 blocks away.

Deputy Lancaster County Attorney Pat Condon questioned why Galligo did not call police then or at any other time.

Hopkins said that Galligo had picked up a rock and dropped it on Schmader's head after Hopkins stabbed him. Hopkins then slammed the rock on Schmader's head more than a dozen times, he said.

Galligo said Hopkins threatened to kill him the next morning if he talked to police, and Galligo said he feared for his life.

One of the provisions of Hopkins' plea agreement is that he must tell the truth. If prosecutors determine he lied, they can revoke the agreement and charge Hopkins with first-degree murder.

Staff writer Josh Knaub contributed to this report.

Birth control bill fails to advance

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tee, who was heavily chastised by Chambers for his vote, said sexism had nothing to do with the committee's vote.

Only a few mandates a year make it out of his committee, he said. Keeping premiums low and giving insurance companies a choice killed the bill, he said, not sexism.

"I believe the individual and not the state should determine what the best interest is in this area," he said.

Landis said other statements that insurance companies cover Viagra, but not birth control, were unfounded. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska in some cases offers both

prescriptions as an option, and Mutual of Omaha does not cover either, he said.

Mandatory coverage of birth control prescriptions is one issue in a long line of discriminatory practices by insurance companies, said Omaha Sen. Shelley Kiel.

Mammograms, prenatal care, delivery services and mandatory 24-hour stays after pregnancy, which are now required, were not always mandated by insurance coverage.

Chambers closed the debate with a call for senators to realize the unspoken sentiment he saw behind their vote.

"We understand the symbolism which sometimes has more impact than reality."

Students rally behind UNL biology instructor

By IEVA AUGSTUMS
Senior staff writer

With the right formula of activism and a few thousand signatures, some UNL students hope to convince university officials of the importance of student-instructor connections.

In an effort to keep a "highly qualified teacher," University of Nebraska-Lincoln students launched a petition and e-mail campaign, lobbying administrators to award biology instructor Russ Benedict a longer-term contract.

"If you want someone who knows how to educate at a research institution, well, here's your guy," said Zac Roehrs, a senior fisheries and wildlife major. "Students love the guy. Students learn from him."

Benedict, a lecturer in the UNL biological sciences department, has been teaching biology classes on a semester-to-semester contract since 1997.

Benedict said he has signed a contract to teach during the fall 1999 semester, but students would like to see him around longer.

"Mr. Benedict is dedicated not only to his work, but to his students," said Melissa Nootz, a senior biology and English major. "He needs to keep teaching here."

Nootz said Benedict's creative teaching techniques, fun outdoor classroom excursions and outstanding ability to relate to students are the nuts and bolts of a university education.

Roehrs agreed. "Isn't he what we should have? Someone who teaches and does research and is also connected with his students?" Roehrs asked. "I think so."

This is the second year UNL students have rallied for an instructor and petitioned administrators to look into longer-term contracts.

Last year students lobbied administrators to extend chemistry lecturer Bill McLaughlin's one-year teaching contract. McLaughlin signed a three-year contract with the university last April.

"I have to say congratulations to

students in seeing a good thing at this university - teaching," McLaughlin said. "You cannot complain about students wanting to receive a good education."

Benedict said he was flattered to see students raising support.

"Yes, I would love to stay here," Benedict said. "But I can only fulfill the contract I have."

Benedict said he is planning to interview this month for three out-of-state tenure-track positions.

"As much as I appreciate what students are doing, I have to continue to look elsewhere," he said.

Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Evelyn Jacobson said all decisions on the hiring of faculty members for tenure-track positions are initially made at the college department level.

The university does conduct a search process for tenure-track positions if requested by the college or department, she said.

Brent Nickol, vice chancellor of biological sciences, said he is aware of the student petition, but the department had not discussed the issue with students.

"We would like to put the best instructors in our classrooms, and I am delighted students are happy with Mr. Benedict," Nickol said. "However, seldom would (the department) recommend a person for a tenure-track position."

Nickol said if the department would identify a need for extended contracts or tenure-track positions, proper actions would be taken to fulfill its need.

Roehrs said he had talked with ASUN members about Benedict, but said he didn't want the issue to turn into a political battle between students and university administration.

"None of us are really political fighters," he said. "We just want to raise support."

Roehrs said students are encouraged to sign the petition and express their concerns to the department.

"We just want to have his teaching influence as many students as possible," he said. "At the very least we, the students, will give him the appreciation and recognition he deserves."

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