

# Program revels in rigor

HONORS from page 1

"I was drawn to the program because of the one-on-one treatment it offers," Minert said. "I wanted to be challenged by personal professor instruction, as well as rigorous coursework."

Recruitment for the honors program begins with a database of more than 30,000 high school juniors and seniors, ranked and identified by their PSAT and ACT scores.

About 85 percent of UNL's incoming class is recruited from Nebraska, while the remaining 15 percent is predominantly recruited from Iowa, South Dakota, North Dakota, Missouri, Kansas and Colorado, Stelzer said.

By using an elimination process that looks at a student's GPA, test scores, class ranking, leadership skills and school and community involvement, Stelzer said the honors applicant pool is narrowed down to about 1,000-1,500 students. In 1997-98 there were 1,094 prospective honors program students, and in 1998-99 there were 1,124 students.

There are currently about 1,350 honors program prospects for the 1999-2000 academic year.

Stelzer said students are first contacted during the fall semester and communication between the university and the student continues through their graduation.

"The attention I received was tremendous," said Katie Hart, a freshman Spanish and education major. "Everyone made me feel welcome."

Hart said many methods of recruitment, including mailings, e-mail and phone campaigns, as well as social gatherings, receptions and campus tours, convinced her to come to UNL.

Stelzer said every potential honors program student receives one-on-one attention.

"Establishing a relationship with our prospective students is key," Stelzer said. "We try to let them know and experience what campus life is like."

Final acceptance into the honors program is based on a review of the student's application, including an essay.

All applications are screened by a the honors program faculty committee.

"A lot of diversity is what we are looking for and want," Stelzer said. "Students learn from other students' backgrounds and experiences."

## Upholding high standards

Admission to the honors program is becoming more strict every year.

"I'm very pleased that there is a heightened awareness about our academic culture," UNL Chancellor James Moeser said. "Our honors program fits the definition of academic rigor."

Three years ago, according to the 1995-96 undergraduate bulletin, honors program admission required students to have an ACT composite score in the upper 20s or higher, and be in the top 25 percent of their graduating class.

Now, honors program students are averaging a 30.7 ACT score, and are graduating from the top 10 percent of their class, Stelzer said.

More than 80 percent of the students recruited graduated in the top 12 percent of their class, she said.

Although the same recruiting standards used in 1995-96 are still being used, Stelzer said "the application

## Honors requirements raised to meet the mark

BY IEVA AUGSTUMS  
Senior staff writer

The standards are high and requirements tough, but when it comes to pursuing academic excellence, some University of Nebraska-Lincoln honors program students and professors don't mind.

"Membership in the honors program brings both benefits and obligations," said music history professor Peter Lefferts. "The obligations are real, and on account of them the honors program will not be the best choice for every academic high achiever."

Last year, the honors program decided to restructure its requirements, requesting more work and higher academic achievement from its students.

"Our requirements were below national standards," said Honors Program Director Patrice Berger. "We needed to make some changes."

Honors students who were admitted to the program in the fall of 1998 were required to take at least one honors class each semester.

They must also complete at least 24 honors credit hours with grades of B or better during their entire college career, Berger said.

This is a six-credit increase from the old requirements, which require honors students admitted to the program before 1998 to complete 18 honors credit hours with a grade of B or better, as well as complete at least one honors course both inside and

outside their majors.

Under the new requirements, first- and second-year honors program students must complete 15 honors credit hours in the first 64 hours of their college coursework and at least six honors credit hours each year.

During their third and fourth years in the program, students must complete at least three honors credit hours each year.

All honors program students are required to maintain a cumulative 3.5 GPA and be a full-time UNL student.

"I don't think the requirements are too difficult," said Katie Hart, a freshman Spanish and education major. "I think some students, like honors students, need a different level of expectations."

Lefferts agreed, but said the academic obligations of the honors program are not as easy to pursue in every college, department or degree program.

"This circumstance is a natural reflection of innate differences across campus and means that there is no one, uniform, honors program experience for every student," he said.

Berger said to make sure each new honors student is in compliance with all program requirements, students are asked to file a statement of academic interest, which focuses on education and professional goals, and a memorandum of study, which identifies a student's primary research focus.

"Our goal is to keep students on the right track," Berger said. "We want them all to be successful."

process is becoming highly competitive."

Berger agreed.

"Our standards have increased because national standards have increased," Berger said. "Students nationwide, including Nebraska students, are faring better in high school than past years."

Stelzer said she expected the student ACT score average to plateau at 31 in the next two years. Students will continue to be recruited from the top quartile of their graduating class, she said.

Scott Hornyak, president of the Honors Board, a group of elected students who serve as liaisons between honors program students, professors and administration, said he was glad to see honors program standards increasing.

"If the program is to continue growing, we don't need to lower our standards," said Hornyak, a junior actuarial science major. "We are already getting top-quality people. Why change that?"

## All students can apply

Every year about 400 students are admitted to the UNL honors program. The majority are incoming freshmen, but some are upperclassmen.

"Access to the honors program is fairly open to anyone," Berger said. "Students just need to apply."

Candace Cain, a junior middle school education major, was not admit-

ted to the honors program her freshman year but considered reapplying last fall.

"I see the honors program as a really good way to gain a good education in a small, focused community," said Cain, who lives in Neihardt Residence Hall, an honors-focused housing unit. "I was upset I didn't get in, but I've managed."

Berger said those students who are not admitted or who do not wish to be in the honors program but still want a rigorous learning environment can still learn alongside honors students.

Non-honors students can request to take an honors course or receive permission from the instructor or the honors program, Berger said.

"I did it, and I would say if a student wants to take an honors class, more power to them," Cain said. "It was a fun experience."

Stelzer said it is the honors program's goal to promote academic excellence at UNL.

"Our goal is to advertise the honors program and its availability to everyone," Stelzer said. "No one should be uninformed."

Upperclassman applications to the honors program can be found in the Honors Program Office, 118 Neihardt Residence Hall.

"The stimulation of academic rigor is apparent in all honors program students," Stelzer said. "It's a neat environment that all university students should try."

# Diversity projects funded to promote open discussion

BY VERONICA DAEHN  
Staff writer

Establishing dialogue on campus was the main focus of a subcommittee designated to fund university diversity projects.

In a grant provided by the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Diversity Enhancement Fund, 10 projects received funding this semester.

Teresita Aguilar, chairwoman of the subcommittee of the Faculty Liaison Task Force on Diversity, said 30 proposals were received.

"We were looking at what could happen right now on campus," Aguilar said. "We also looked at the people that could be served, and chose activities that could be open to all students."

One of those activities, "How to be an Ally for Students of Color Without Being a Person of Color," will take place today from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. in the Nebraska Union Heritage Room.

This session will provide discussion about several topics including racially motivated incidents, campus climate and ways to increase understanding of diversity issues among students.

Aguilar said the main criteria in deciding which activities to fund were if the activities would promote dialogue, if they wouldn't extend beyond one year and if they would promote a campus climate of equality.

Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Evelyn Jacobson said other projects chosen for funding include the Voices of the People series and the No Limits Conference that was held last week.

A research project titled "What Do We Know? Examining Ethnic and Gender Biases of University Faculty and Students" is also being paid for, as well as the production of a manual by the Teaching and Learning Center to address issues of campus climate.

Limited funding made the num-

"I'm hoping those reactions will offer suggestions. ..."

TERESITA AGUILAR  
chairwoman of diversity subcommittee

ber of proposals that were accepted small, Aguilar said.

Some proposals centered on recruitment, she said, but couldn't be funded because of the timeline.

The fund is a one-time deal and provides money for one year only.

However, Aguilar said she hopes the university will continue to provide money next year.

"If the university is committed to diversity, there needs to be funding," she said.

The subcommittee designated to choose which projects deserve funding was made up of three faculty members, one staff member and one student.

Aguilar said a process similar to one she had used before was used in the selection process.

Each proposal was graded based on set criteria, she said, and then they were discussed and eliminated from there.

While one of the most important goals of the activities is to promote dialogue among issues, Aguilar said she's not sure if that goal is being reached.

She blamed the structure of the activities for the lack of lasting dialogue.

"You need time to mull over ideas," she said. "That would take at least a four-hour block of time."

Aguilar said she hopes the problem will surface in evaluations at the end of the year.

"I'm hoping those reactions will offer suggestions," she said. "That's how you make change. The plus is, though, that they're actually talking about these topics."

# Hopkins gets maximum sentence in plea bargain

HOPKINS from page 1

As part of the plea agreement, Hopkins waived his attorney-client privilege, which made it possible for Helvie to testify.

In his sentencing order, Lancaster County District Court Judge Paul Merritt Jr. said Hopkins deserved the maximum sentence for his crime.

"The court finds that imprisonment of the defendant is necessary because a lesser sentence would depreciate the seriousness of the defendant's crime and promote disrespect for the law," Merritt wrote.

Hopkins and his lawyer brokered a plea agreement with prosecutors to reduce the charges against him from first-degree murder to manslaughter

in exchange for his testimony against Galligo.

But prosecutors did not know the details of the crime when they entered the plea agreement.

Hopkins told the story of a premeditated murder that he planned and carried out.

Galligo testified that he fled as soon as he saw the stabbing begin, but did not report it for more than two years because he was terrified of Hopkins.

Prosecutors had the option to revoke Hopkins' plea agreement and charge him with first-degree murder if they determined he had lied on the stand.

The state allowed Hopkins' sentence to commence unhindered Monday.

# Vrtiska pushes for Peru

PERU from page 1

ty of the small southeastern Nebraska town.

Vrtiska said that support is there for the college, and recent economic projects have put southeast Nebraska on the rebound.

Vrtiska's passion for Peru stems from his desire to maintain the college and its distinctive population.

About 40 percent of Peru students don't meet the University of Nebraska's minimum ACT score of 18. And nontraditional students such as parents or full-time workers make

up a significant portion of Peru students.

On top of that, said Carrol Krause, executive director of the Nebraska State College System, Peru produces a hot commodity in Nebraska right now.

"Peru is a supplier of teachers to the state and we have a shortage," he said.

Leonard Skov, interim Peru president, said the Legislature needs to trust that Peru will improve, and Peru needs the state's backing.

"It's kind of like a mutual agreement that we will trust each other."

## 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

World Wide Web: www.dailynebraskan.com

The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-030) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68582-0448, Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during the summer sessions. The public has access to the Publications Board.

Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by calling (402) 472-2588.

Subscriptions are \$55 for one year.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68582-0448. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE.

ALL MATERIAL COPYRIGHT 1999

THE DAILY NEBRASKAN

Editor: Erin Gibson  
Managing Editor: Brad Davis  
Associate News Editor: Sarah Baker  
Associate News Editor: Bryce Glenn  
Assignment Editor: Lindsay Young  
Opinion Editor: Cliff Hicks  
Sports Editor: Sam McKewon  
A&E Editor: Bret Schulte  
Copy Desk Chief: Tasha Kelter  
Asst. Copy Desk Chief: Heidi White  
Photo Co-Chief: Matt Miller  
Photo Co-Chief: Lane Hickenbottom  
Design Chief: Nancy Christensen  
Art Director: Matt Haney  
Web Editor: Gregg Stearns  
Asst. Web Editor: Amy Burke  
General Manager: Dan Shattil  
Publications Board Chairwoman: Jessica Hofmann, (402) 466-8404  
Professional Adviser: Don Walton, (402) 473-7248  
Advertising Manager: Nick Patsch, (402) 472-2589  
Asst. Ad Manager: Andrea Oeltjen  
Classified Ad Manager: Mary Johnson