

DUTY SGT. Tim Salmen displays bricks of confiscated marijuana, each weighing about 2½ pounds. Police seize thousands of pounds of marijuana and other drugs each year in an effort to keep them off the streets.

LANE HICKENBOTTOM/DN

On-campus drug crimes on the rise at UNL

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Bushing also cited the work of the Community Service Officers, who periodically check all of the floors in residence halls. Their objective is to insure the safety and protection of the residents, Bushing said.

Bushing said in the past few years, marijuana has become easier to obtain.

"There has been a very large increase in the use of marijuana," Bushing said. "When more students use marijuana, then there is higher demand, which makes the drug easier to get."

Glenn Gray, assistant director of residence life and coordinator of student behavior, offered other explanations for the rise in drug-related offenses.

In 1995, Chancellor Moeser assembled a task force to look into the influence of drugs on university students.

"The task force found that NU students were above the norm in activities like binge drinking," Gray said. "Drugs were also found in an increasing frequency."

After the findings of the chancellor's task force, University Housing assembled a task force in 1996. The two groups' findings were similar.

"We found that students didn't respect the University's policy on drugs and alcohol," Gray said. "So we reviewed our policy in residence halls and tried to create a clearer understanding of our policy and the consequences of breaking it."

The punishment for a first offense of the university drug policy is community service and mandatory participation in a drug and alcohol training course.

The course consists of a small group meeting, which meets for two hours on two days and explores the role of drugs and alcohol in college students' lives, Gray said.

Punishment for a second offense could include probation, relocation to another housing unit and a more aggressive rehabilitation program.

The University Health Center runs the more aggressive program, which includes two one-on-one counseling sessions.

Gray said the university's policy on drugs has become more rigid since the task force findings were released.

"The drug education programs were not mandatory in every situation before 1995," Gray said. "We are also much quicker to call the student's parents and evict the student from the residence halls if necessary."

"We have made strides to become one of the leading universities in the nation in the fight against drugs on campus. From the chancellor to the students and back up, everyone has been affected."

Students who violate the drug policy also face legal consequences. Bushing said the punishments vary according to the student's record and the circumstances of the offense.

"The punishments can vary from pre-trial diversion to a fine and court costs," Bushing said. "It really depends on how frequently the student has been in trouble with the law."

Drug abuse critical problem

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drug cases are prosecuted, Criminal Chief Mike Heavican works closely with drug task forces.

"We've seen a lot more drug prosecutions," Heavican said, "and our caseload has increased dramatically."

Federal prosecutors target dealers and suppliers higher up the chain than the average street dealer, he said.

At the local, county and state levels,

\$120 per gram – not cheap, Bullock said, and he has seen users with \$200- to \$300-a-day habits.

"For a long time we didn't have large amounts of meth," Bullock said. "Now we hear about pounds (of the drug) coming into the community."

Heroin use is also picking up, because methamphetamine users will take it to temper their potentially violent high from methamphetamine, Bullock said.

Last Monday, three men were arrested outside a house on the 300 block of F Street with 1¼ pounds of methamphetamine and a pound of marijuana.

Although methamphetamine replaced crack cocaine as the city's leading drug in the early 1990s, crack-cocaine is still a problem, Bullock said.

Crack cocaine comes into Lincoln from several cities, including Omaha, Kansas City, Mo., and Chicago.

LSD, mostly in the form of thin paper that's been soaked with the drug, shows up irregularly in Lincoln, usually in the junior high schools. And marijuana continues to be a problem in Lincoln both on its own and as a gateway to other drugs, he said.

"Marijuana is very dangerous in that users are in the drug culture, and they will use what is available," Bullock said. "If someone will do one drug, they will do any."

Last spring police arrested two Lincoln men for growing marijuana in their homes, one with 116 plants, the other with 36.

Many of the problems and crimes associated with drugs such as addiction, domestic abuse and child neglect are byproducts of use, Bullock said.

"People out there are doing anything they can to get the drug," he said.

Robbery and burglary are two of the most common crimes committed to get money for drugs.

"Tell me how long your salary will handle a \$300-a-day habit," Bullock said.

The drug trade is spread throughout the city and the population, Bullock said.

Narcotics arrests were up in 1998, and that increase has continued into the first quarter of 1999: 654 in 1998, up from 439 in 1997.

Arrests jumped almost 49 percent in those two years. In the first quarter of this year, the number was up 17 percent over the same time last year.

Lincoln Police also seized an estimated \$617,509 of drugs in 1998, up from \$318,460 the previous year.

"No place is immune (to drugs)," Bullock said, and it is impossible to stereotype users, comprising people junior high age and up.

But, he added, statistics can't tell the whole story.

Lincoln police officers focus their efforts on conspiracy investigations to arrest major suppliers and dealers instead of trying

to seize large amounts of drugs. And because some conspiracy arrests may not involve drug seizures, they may not be reported as narcotics arrests.

"It doesn't matter how many ounces they are caught with," Bullock said. "It's how much they are involved with the trade."

Interagency task forces, such as the one here in Lincoln, enable police to better attack the drug trade by pooling agency resources and encouraging communication, Heavican said.

"Intelligence is largely wasted if not shared," Heavican said. "And task forces help that."

Task forces allow police to continue an investigation outside their normal jurisdiction, which is especially beneficial in drug-trafficking cases.

"We don't have to stop in Nebraska," Bullock said. "We can follow (an investigation) to the source even if it is in California, Arizona or anywhere."

Another advantage is that task-force officers work closely with local and federal prosecutors during their investigations, which helps more cases reach prosecution, Heavican said.

During the investigation, prosecutors advise officers on search warrants and how to seize evidence.

Then, when a case is presented to a grand jury or a judge to authorize prosecution, there are fewer problems getting evidence admitted in court and prosecutors are already familiar with the case.

In addition to enforcement, police attack the drug problem with education.

As part of the DARE program, officers teach elementary and junior high school students about the dangers of drugs and how to say no. Officers also speak to community groups about drugs and the problems in Lincoln.

Community involvement can be a vital part of drug enforcement, Bullock said.

Crime Stoppers tips are an important source of information.

"It is important to work with the community, so they can let us know where the problems are," Bullock said.

People in the community need to be observant and know what is going on in their neighborhoods.

Though education is important, Bullock said, it will not solve the current problem.

"Education has a long-term impact, but enforcement is what to do for the problem now," Bullock said. "And we do have a problem now."

Nebraska narcotics task-force drug seizures

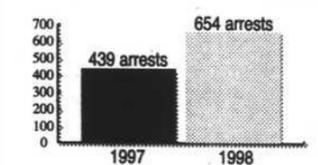
Statewide figures for drugs seized by grant-funded narcotics task forces. All measurements in grams.

	Cocaine	Crack	Marijuana	Methamphetamines / Amphetamines
1989	6,203.3	2.8	149.5	1,181.9
1990	4,252.9	2,135.1	914.4	7,203.7
1991	6,671.5	2,587.8	1,834.4	7,313.4
1992	27,560	2,769.2	1,867.8	1,547.4
1993	709,653	7,969.7	6,365.9	922
1994	18,208	5,228	399.8	11,150
1995	24,478	2,707	1,271.2	15,543
1996	157,915	851	2,195.5	67,912

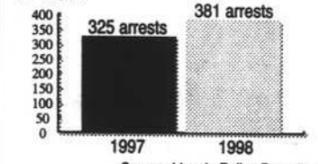
Source: Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

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Narcotics arrests in Lincoln



First quarter stats for 1999 compared to 1998:



Source: Lincoln Police Department

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many arrests are made, but big-time suppliers and dealers quickly are handed over for federal prosecution. At the federal level, offenders often get stiffer sentences because judges must adhere to mandatory minimum sentence guidelines.

The Rucker homicide was one of two drug-robbery murders within the last year.

On Feb. 18, 17-year-old Brandon Pickinpaugh was killed in the Van Dorn Plaza, 48th and Van Dorn streets, during an attempted robbery of three-quarters of a pound of marijuana and cash.

Though marijuana grows wild in the area, Bullock said, most of Lincoln's drugs are imported. Most methamphetamine found in this area is produced in the southwestern United States or Mexico, and then distributed nationwide, Bullock said.

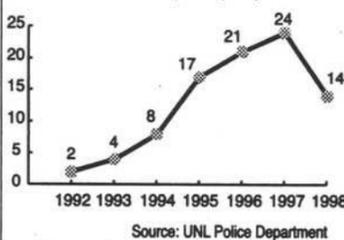
In Nebraska, Grand Island has become the center of methamphetamine distribution and production, Bullock said.

"I've seen a lot of people change to meth because there is so much available," Bullock said.

Although it's significantly cheaper than cocaine, methamphetamine costs \$100 to

Busted

Number of drug investigations that ended with arrests by campus police.



Source: UNL Police Department

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