

Academic Senate

Academic Senate looks for alternatives to program cuts

BY SHANE ANTHONY
Staff writer

After intense conversation with Chancellor James Moeser on Tuesday, the Academic Senate passed a resolution encouraging alternatives to program cuts to meet a budget shortfall.

The resolution says the university cannot afford to cut more core programs, and that the faculty should be "fully involved" in exploring alternatives. Senate members voted after Moeser spoke about closely examining programs and looking for creative ways to save money.

"We can't do it from the top," Moeser said. He said the university should try to increase enrollment, try to attract nontraditional students and try to look at cutting programs that are outdated or "producing bullwhips." He referred to the University of Phoenix as an example of a school that has successfully attracted nontraditional students.

Hugh Genoways, chairman of the museum studies program and professor of natural resources, took exception to Moeser's comments. He said the term "bullwhips" and the reference to being more like the University of Phoenix were demeaning to the staff.

In his 13 years at the university, Genoways said, he has never seen faculty and staff morale so low.

"It's rock bottom," he said. Both Genoways and John Lindquist, assistant professor of agronomy, questioned an \$886,000

"*I value faculty participation in the process of determining these hard issues. We're in this together, and we need to approach this as colleagues.***"**

JAMES MOESER
UNL chancellor

item on a sheet Moeser presented to explain the projected shortfall of between \$4,758,226 and \$7,636,883.

Moeser said part of that money, earmarked for an engineering program that was not funded during the 1997-1999 budget, will go to Omaha to support a partnership between UNL and the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Lindquist asked why the operating budget was increasing, but faculty members are being asked to make cuts.

Moeser said the university has to make difficult decisions and look for creative and proactive ways to improve.

"We need to ask hard questions about our programs," he said. "All our disciplines are undergoing enormous change."

He said he wants the faculty to be involved in answering those questions.

"I value faculty participation in the process of determining these hard issues," he said. "We're in this together,

er, and we need to approach this as colleagues."

In other news, the Academic Senate elected officers for next year. Sheila Scheideler, associate professor and extension poultry specialist, will continue serving as president elect. She took over the post this semester not long after President Gail Latta, associate professor of libraries, became president. Latta replaced Patricia Kennedy, who resigned to become associate dean of the college of business administration.

At the meeting's end, senate members presented the James A. Lake Award to Wallace Peterson, George Holmes professor emeritus of economics. The award honors dedication to academic freedom.

In his acceptance speech, Peterson talked about Academic Freedom's history and current threats to it. Those threats included assaults on tenure, the push for politically correct speech and a lack of diversity in economic ideology taught in classrooms.

Aliant employees uncertain in face of Alltel buyout

■ A local communications workers' union vows to fight Aliant's \$1.6 billion sale to Alltel Corp. of Little Rock, Ark.

BY BERNARD VOGELSANG
Staff writer

While 96 percent of Aliant Communications stockholders Tuesday approved the \$1.6 billion sale of the company to Alltel Corp. of Little Rock, Ark., union officials and Aliant employees said they were worried about future job cuts.

Mike Bell, vice president of the Communications Workers of America Local 7470, said at an Aliant stockholders meeting in the Cornhusker Hotel, 333 S. 13th St., that the buyout could lead to the future loss of 350 jobs.

Aliant has 1,250 employees in Lincoln. According to documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, Alltel wants to maintain 900 Lincoln employees for two years after the sale.

At the stockholders meeting, Aliant President and Chief Executive Officer Frank Hilsabeck said the sale could lead to personnel changes. But cellular phones and Internet service will also offer opportunities for employment growth, he said.

"Alltel doesn't buy Aliant to dismantle it," he said.

Bell said job cuts could lead to poorer service for Aliant customers.

But Hilsabeck said that like Aliant, Alltel also wants to deliver high quality service.

At the meeting, Bell asked Hilsabeck whether it is fair for four Aliant executives to receive \$10.7

million if the company's sale goes through, while Aliant employees are insecure about their jobs.

Hilsabeck, who will get \$6 million if the sale succeeds, said the bonus is meant to retain Aliant's senior management team.

Hilsabeck also said the reward is not excessive because it is less than one percent of the takeover price.

"This arrangement is useful and modest by everybody's mention," he said.

Many of the 500 stockholders who attended the meeting, laughed when Hilsabeck said the arrangement was modest.

After the meeting, Bell said Hilsabeck might think the bonus is modest.

"But I think it is ridiculous," he said.

After having received the stockholders' approval, Hilsabeck said the takeover could be closed by the end of June, pending the receipt of regulatory approval.

The Federal Communications Commission will decide in May or June whether it approves Alltel's acquisition of Aliant.

The FCC could block Alltel's takeover of Aliant if it denies Alltel's request to waive a price-cap rule for interstate access charges long-distance companies pay to local phone companies.

If the commission denies the request, Alltel would pay Aliant \$12 million and abandon the takeover.

At a protest of about 75 Aliant employees after the meeting outside of the Cornhusker Hotel, Bell said he hoped the FCC denies Alltel's bid for Aliant.

Bell said now that the stockholders have given their approval, the union will focus on the price-cap waiver to prevent the sale of Aliant.

"The battle is not over."

Dickey to fill Legislature seat

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"It is my hope and desire with the help of God to be a dedicated public servant," Dickey said. "I do have mixed emotions in filling this state senate seat. I'm saddened and unhappy about the circumstance."

Dickey was referring to the opportunity that opened up for him because of Schellpeper's unexpected death.

"Stan Schellpeper was a friend of mine," Dickey said. "He was a friend of agriculture."

Dickey, a third-generation farmer, also has strong agricultural roots. Dickey has served as chairman of the U.S. Grains Council. He is a

member of the Nebraska Corn Board, Gov. Johanns' Agriculture Advisory Cabinet and Rep. Doug Bereuter's Agriculture Advisory Committee.

He won the 1998 award from Farm Futures Magazine for having one of the top 100 best-managed farms in the nation.

Dickey and his wife, Mary, have two children who attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and one who is a UNL alumna.

Dickey will serve until a successor is chosen by voters in next year's elections. The District 18 representative elected in 2000 will serve the final two years of Schellpeper's term.

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New vice president of business, finance named

BY JOSH NICHOLS
Staff writer

The financial future of the University of Nebraska is in new hands.

David E. Lechner has been appointed the University of Nebraska Vice President for Business and Finance.

Lechner, who had served as NU's Assistant Vice President and Director of Finance at Central Administration since Oct. 1, 1998, will replace the late James C. Van Horn.

He will take over the position Aug. 1, 1999.

"I have been impressed with the expertise David Lechner has demonstrated since he joined the university last year," University of Nebraska President Dennis Smith said.

"He was largely responsible for the development of the university's first revenue and expenditure statement, which is designed to show where every dollar we receive is spent."

Lechner's new position involves all matters relating to business and financial management of the university.

"My goals include developing a close working relationships with the president, the board of regents, chancellors and other campus officials, state of Nebraska officials and other constituencies of central administration," Lechner said.

Lechner said his 20 years as Audit Director at Deloitte & Touche LLP, where he has experience in accounting, auditing and consulting, would help him in his new role.

While at Deloitte & Touche LLP, Lechner's clientele included the University of Nebraska, the University of Missouri, Hastings College and Midland Lutheran College.

He received his bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1975.

He is a certified public accountant and is a member of numerous organizations including: the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the Nebraska Society of Certified Public Accountants, the Government Finance Officers Association and the Association of Government Accountants.

As vice president, Lechner will supervise a staff of 18.

Lechner will replace John W. Goebel, who has been acting as the vice president since August 1998.

Goebel will return as a professor in the School of Accountancy in the College of Business Administration.

"David Lechner has made significant contributions to the business and financial operations of the institution, and has been instrumental in our efforts to identify administrative cost savings universitywide," Smith said.

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