

Ethnic studies program moves, plans new goals

BY DANE STICKNEY
Staff writer

The Ethnic Studies Institute recently changed venues, but the move is only the beginning of the institute's plans this year.

Ronald Stephens, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln assistant professor in communication and ethnic studies, said the additional room and convenience of the new facility at 420 University Terrace will help the Ethnic Studies Institute grow and achieve new goals.

"We now have space for a research room that will be centered around work stations," he said. "We will have a collection of journals and texts that we've accumulated, so students can further their ethnic studies education."

The ethnic studies office not only gained more space, but it has plans to expand the curriculum as well, Stephens said.

The eventual goal is to create an ethnic studies major, Stephens said.

Currently, there is a minor for Native American, African and Latino studies.

Those involved with the Ethnic Studies Institute are formulating solid curriculum and communications for a possible major.

Another goal for the institute is to open up ethnic studies to people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

"We hope to overcome all stereotypes," Stephens said. "For example, many students think African-American studies are only for African-American students. That may have been the case when this program started in the 1960s, but it is different now."

"Our goal is to educate anyone interested in ethnic studies regardless of their heritage or background."

In late August, ethnic studies moved, along with four other university offices, from Lyman Hall to the new location.

Stephens said the new facility gives the institute more space.

"I like the place better," he said. "There's a lot more space. For the first time ever, we have an office for each

specific area of focus, including Native American, Latino and African-American studies."

Previously, the heads of each division operated from their departmental offices, which were spread across campus.

Now, they are all grouped together in International Place.

Ret Pennell, secretary for ethnic, Native American and international studies, said the new facility makes life easier for everybody involved with ethnic studies.

"It is easier for people wanting to see the coordinators because we don't have to send them all over campus," she said.

"It is a lot easier for me because I don't have to run back and forth between offices."

Pennell said the old office at Lyman Hall was functional but crowded.

"It worked, but it was really crowded," she said. "We were stacking things on top of each other. There's more room now. It's a lot spacier."

Panel to examine packing plants

■ The group will address INS and its role in enforcing immigrant employment.

BY JOSH KNAUB
Staff writer

Gov. Mike Johanns has appointed a panel to examine how the Immigration and Naturalization Service enforces immigration laws at meat packing plants.

In a statement naming the task force, Lt. Gov. Dave Maurstad, who will head the group, said INS enforcement had created challenges for legal immigrants, agriculture and meat packers.

Current enforcement practices have resulted in plants being closed and workers, even legal immigrants, being scared away because they did not want to deal with INS agents, said Chris Peterson, press secretary in the governor's office.

The task force will have two goals: First, the panel will look at the impact of Operation Vanguard and other enforcement efforts by the INS.

Operation Vanguard is the name of an INS enforcement strategy that

includes sting operations focused on illegal workers at the state's meat packing plants.

Second, the group will develop recommendations for how the INS and meat packers can better work together.

One suggestion lawmakers have heard is that INS do more enforcement when meat packers are hiring, Peterson said.

"Right now, the INS works with packers little to none at the point of hiring," he said.

Peterson said the governor agreed to appoint a task force during a conference last year in Omaha about Operation Vanguard.

Participants said the issue could not be fully addressed in a conference. The governor agreed and offered to name a group to deal with the issue, Peterson said.

Dale Tinstman, who has been appointed to the task force, said the real issue is population.

"Right now there is a lack of people in Nebraska and Iowa to process the food we produce," said Tinstman, who is also on the board of IBP Inc., a large meat packer.

Therefore, immigrants are an important part of the work force, he

said.

He said he expects the task force to deal with "the whole picture of employment and immigration."

Cecilia Olivarez Huerta, another task-force member and executive director of the Mexican American Commission, said she expects to focus on working conditions at meat packing plants.

"(The task force) is going to take a look at workers, wages, health and safety issues and work shortages," she said.

She said the group will also look at what effect work shortages have had on the meat industry as a whole.

The 23 other appointees to the task force include other meat packers, representatives of the Hispanic community, lawmakers, immigration attorneys and clergy.

The task force will complete its work and release a report with recommendations by March 15.

Peterson said the final report could be used at different levels of government.

"This may be something the governor takes to Washington, it may be something the Congressional delegation takes up, or it may be something the INS implements," he said.

Plan would let police take cruisers home

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gram is a success in the first neighborhood, one or two police officers from each of Lincoln's five police beats may get to take their vehicles home.

The program is currently on the city council's pending list because of concerns about cost.

The city would spend about \$275,000 to buy 10 new police cars for the officers who live in the central Lincoln neighborhood.

The city also would spend about \$100,000 each year on operating costs for the vehicles. Because the officers would be driving city cars to and from work, the city would pay for the operating costs of gas, insurance and maintenance.

The take-home vehicle program has been used in the United States since at least the early 1970s.

About 40 of 220 police officers in North Little Rock, Ark., take their cruisers home.

Laura Estes, assistant manager of Lakewood Hills apartment complex in North Little Rock, said two police officers bring their cars home to her complex of 260 units.

Estes has lived in the apartment complex for three years and said the only major problem she's encountered was when a man who was fleeing from police broke into an apartment to hide.

She said the patrol cars attract potential residents to the complex.

"They feel more secure when we tell them there are police officers here," she said.

Jim Scott, North Little Rock pub-

lic information sergeant, lives in the Lakewood Hills apartment complex. He said the program increases public safety because police officers can respond quickly.

"Their equipment is in and ready to go," he said. "If they're coming to the office, they're already on the radio and ready for service."

The plan could help police respond to disasters, Mackey said.

In 1995, after terrorists bombed a federal building in Oklahoma City, Okla., police officers didn't have to drive to the police station and switch vehicles on their way to the disaster. They already had their cruisers with them.

"The chief was able to mobilize his entire police agency," Mackey said.

However, Mackey wasn't sure if the program can actually make cities safer by having a strong presence in some neighborhoods.

"You have a tendency to move crime from one neighborhood," he said.

Jeff Fortenberry, city council vice chairman, proposed the resolution to the Lincoln City Council last May after Mackey developed the plan.

Fortenberry said he thinks the plan will be removed within a year if the city council and Mayor Don Wesely's office doesn't give it more support.

Mackey said he hopes the police officers will eventually be able to bring their vehicles home to their central Lincoln neighborhoods.

"Lincoln has benefited from a low crime rate, but that's not to say there's not a fear of crime out there," he said.

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