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# Policy center opens doors

BY **KIMBERLY SWEET**  
Senior staff writer

A new center housed on UNL's campus is coming to the aid of Nebraska policy-makers.

The University of Nebraska Public Policy center, which is led by Psychology and Law Professor Alan Tomkins, exists to assist policy-makers by assembling university experts and resources from all four NU campuses.

Work on the center's goals began last winter, and the center began assembling researchers and starting projects to aid lawmakers last spring.

The center officially opened for business this fall.

Housed in the College of Business Administration, the center spans four offices.

The campus's close proximity to the Legislature makes it easy for lawmakers to take advantage of the broad expertise the University of Nebraska has, Tomkins said.

"We try to be a one-stop shop for policy needs and information," Tomkins said. "We do this not only for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln but for the entire university system."

The center originally was a vision of NU President Dennis Smith. Smith's office wanted to put the university's expertise to use, Tomkins

“There was a recognition that the university had a lot of public policy resources and expertise.”

**ALAN TOMKINS**  
psychology and law professor

said.

"There was a recognition that the university had a lot of public policy resources and expertise," Tomkins said. "Policy-makers in the state weren't getting to take advantage of it."

With funding from NU central administration and all four campuses, Tomkins was hired, and the center was created.

The office employs undergraduates and graduates who perform research on various areas.

One of the current projects includes a child-support customer service implementation study.

To be in line with a new requirement, Nebraska has to redesign the system of the receipt and disbursement of child support.

The center is researching customer service issues and how to deal with problems that will arise with a new system.

Another project the center is researching is the implementation of a new telephone number - 211.

The number, which would join its counterparts 911 and 411, would give the public access to health and human service information, Tomkins said.

Wendy Hind, a policy adviser in the Governor's Policy Research Office, said the center was helpful in organizing all the people involved in a project.

"The center does a fabulous job in gathering and organizing all the stakeholders that need to have input in the subject," Hind said.

The center also provides an alternative to hiring private, out-of-state companies to research on Nebraska.

"It provides us a place to go for expertise without having to contract outside the state," Hind said.

"There are so many experts in our state that it's good to keep it in Nebraska."

## Academic program offers students aid

A.C.E. from page 1

they assist students in planning events.

Curtis Olsen, a junior agribusiness major, said his responsibilities as a mentor included showing A.C.E. students the ropes of the university.

Teaching them small things, such as where to hang out on the weekends or where to do their laundry, makes them feel more comfortable, Olsen said.

"The students learn from you because you've experienced so many things here at the university," he said.

"Any activity you do with the people that you try to help and lead enables you to learn from them, too."

Julie Frey, a freshman agribusiness major, who joined A.C.E. after hearing good reviews, said she particularly enjoyed the social events.

She and her A.C.E. friends, she said, visited with their dean at the beginning of the semester and took a dip in his swimming pool.

Scott Braband, a freshman fisheries and wildlife major and A.C.E. member, said being placed in a group of students with similar career goals was encouraging to him.

"It's really helped me adjust to college," Braband said. "To know people in your classes or that you're around a lot of times makes college life that much more comfortable."

In addition to A.C.E., the university has nine learning communities, which are located on the city campus. The honors program in Neihardt Residence Center is the largest, with more than 400 students.

Deb Mullen, learning communities coordinator, said the programs were an excellent opportunity for students to better their grades and to establish connections with their professors.

"I think (the programs) allow students to become more comfortable with faculty since they have more contact with them than they would otherwise," she said.

Steve Waller, associate dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, said he was pleased with A.C.E.'s student retention and its faculty support.

"It's one of the programs that we uphold as innovative and responsive to the needs of the students," he said.

"And it's characteristic of our faculty's commitment to our students' success."

## Freshman enrollment grows again

CLASS from page 1

have attracted more qualified students to campus, Routh said.

Along with accepting more freshman, UNL deferred 102 more students than it did last year.

Deferred enrollment means that students will have an opportunity to enter UNL after fulfilling requirements at a community college, Griesen said.

Another enrollment boost is possible if the deferred students come to UNL.

However, this year, 34 fewer transfer students decided to come to UNL than in 1998-1999, Griesen said. Transfer students include those who have been deferred.

Griesen said UNL was going to try to boost enrollment of students who have been deferred.

"We're going to take a closer look at communicating with students at community colleges," he said.

Even though freshman enrollment increased, overall enrollment went down. In 1998, 22,402 students were enrolled. This fall, 22,142 students are enrolled.

The overall decrease was expected, Griesen said. He is expecting total enrollment to rise next year.

"I'm expecting this will be the bottom," Griesen said. "We still have a couple more years before we will replace larger graduating classes."

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