

Affirmative action examined

■ Speaker says all parts of society benefit from affirmative action.

BY GWEN TIETGEN
Staff writer

Affirmative action doesn't just benefit minorities, it can also benefit the entire society, a speaker said Tuesday.

Frank Wu, a law professor at Howard University Law School, spoke with students and faculty members Tuesday at the Wick Alumni Center about the positive effects of affirmative action.

Wu came to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a part of the Scholarship in Society series sponsored by the Office of Graduate Studies.

In Wu's presentation, Civil Rights and Racial Justice: Why we need Affirmative Action, he discussed problems, universal principles and pragmatic remedies for affirmative action in the United States.

People often ask Wu, who is Asian-American, why he teaches at the predominantly black Howard University

Law School.

This frequent question, Wu said, alluded to a larger problem in society.

The United States needs affirmative action, Wu said, because race affects everyone's lives. White people also benefit from affirmative action because more culture creates more viewpoints, he said.

Wu said that when affirmative action is implemented, it's good for everyone and creates less prejudice.

"I'm not here to give you the answers but give you the questions," Wu said. "The question with which we must focus ourselves is what will we do to strive for and achieve racial justice."

During his speech, an audience member asked Wu how UNL can develop its affirmative action policies.

In order to achieve this, Wu said the students and community members in favor of affirmative action should make sure administrators know about any grass-roots support.

UNL's student body is 9 percent minority students, according to U.S. News and World Report.

Some people at the event said they attended because they were interested in learning about affirmative action.

"I'm interested in what (Frank Wu) has to say about minorities and affirmative action," said Eugenia Hsu, a graduate student.

"It's an important issue that needs to be considered, especially in a predominantly white university."

Andy Knudsen, an undeclared sophomore at UNL, said he liked how Wu addressed affirmative action as a good thing for society rather than just its effect on a group of individuals.

"I enjoyed his arguments. They were very logical and coherent. It was especially impressive given the sensitivity of this issue," Knudsen said.

Anna Shavers, an NU professor of law, also attended the lecture.

"I liked how he said that affirmative action can benefit everyone, not just one select group of people but our country as a whole."

Wu said he was optimistic the United States would strive to learn more about affirmative action.

"I have faith in the American public and democratic processes," Wu said. "People want to do what's right. Affirmative action is all about figuring out how we can include everybody and achieve meaningful equality."

State prepares for funds from tobacco settlement

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then be distributed by grants to health-related projects.

In addition to anti-tobacco education and outreach for prevention of tobacco-related disease, the statute specifies that the grants may be used for school nurses, immunization, health education, pregnancy testing, screening for diseases, laboratory equipment and public health environmental services.

Dave Palm, a Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Financial Services representative, said the grants would be given by a five-person panel appointed by the governor.

He said the panel had already been appointed and was establishing a process of application for the grants.

Palm said his department had already begun to receive questions about the funds.

"We've heard from a lot of people interested in the grants," he said.

Palm said those requesting information about the money had plans to use it for nearly all of the purposes

specified in the state statute.

Grasz said the companies involved in the settlement represented those that produced 90 percent of the tobacco industry's profits. He said additional companies had the option of joining the settlement.

Jeff Santema, legal council for the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee, said the actual amount of money the state receives each year could change because the annual payments are tied to cigarette sales.

He said a state statute requiring tobacco companies not involved in the settlement to set aside profits in an escrow fund for future health care expenses left no competitive advantage for companies refusing to join the settlement.

Palm said his department hoped to have applications for grants available in January, with or without the tobacco money in the fund.

"This is a great opportunity to improve our health care system," he said. "(The money) will eventually help us reach underserved populations in the state that don't have access to health care."

Bank's idea for move rejected

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was tabled after a discussion during the Sept. 28 meeting.

The purpose would be to offer a recognizable name for the area, which could be a possible program site for student activities, said Daryl Swanson, Nebraska Unions director.

The name Union Square comes from an American/Mexican restaurant operated by the union from 1981 to 1987 in the space now occupied by Burger King.

Three bronze plaques saying Union Square had been in storage since the restaurant closed.

These plaques will now be placed on three columns in the designated area.

Swanson said the name would make it easier for people to meet in the union over the noon hour.

"If you do programming and put in the DN that it's 'across from The Bakery,' that just doesn't read."

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Interim UNL post filled while search is conducted

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directors, Lewis said.

"I don't want the ripple effect you get when you start moving people up along the line," he said.

One of the projects Lewis was heavily involved in before Jones' death was the construction of a baseball stadium to house UNL's baseball and softball teams.

Lewis served as the university's representative on the project, which also involves the city of Lincoln and NebCo, Inc.

While he hopes to have some involvement in the project, Lewis said he will be looking for others to take over the main responsibilities.

Lewis will fill the position of interim vice chancellor until an appointed committee completes its search.

Moeser said a search committee was recently appointed and will begin the process of a nationwide search in a couple of weeks.

Until then, Lewis said he will draw on what was done during Jones' tenure and build on it to fulfill some

goals that are uniquely his own.

"UNL is too big of an operation to sit back and simply try to keep things under control," Lewis said. "We still need to do things to move forward."

Lewis said the pulling together of the department since Jones' death has helped things go as smoothly as they can between the transition.

The transition is directly attributable to Jones' style of leadership, Lewis said.

"All of us are accustomed to the type of decision-making that has to be made and are ready to move forward," Lewis said.

"That's a tip of the hat to Dr. Jones - he had us in a position to continue."

The time it will take to hire a permanent vice chancellor is unknown, Lewis said. If the best-case scenario occurs, one could be appointed in time to begin July 1 next year.

Until then, Lewis said, he is prepared to take on the challenges the next months bring.

"I never expect things to go smoothly," Lewis said. "But if something goes wrong, we will deal with it when it comes up."

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