

Professor takes stand for benefits

BY DANE STICKNEY
Staff writer

When it comes to diversity, George Wolf said there is a little-known measuring stick that shows just how committed a university is to creating a diverse setting.

Wolf, an English professor at UNL, is a gay man that has been lobbying for years for domestic partner benefits.

Wolf said faculty members concerned about how the struggle for domestic benefits will be handled in the future will be meeting today.

"I don't know where it will go from here," he said. "Politics are very unpredictable, and anything involving gay people can be a very touchy subject."

Currently, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln provides benefits to employees and their spouses. Wolf said he feels that the university should provide benefits to gay faculty members' partners also.

The way in which the university handles domestic partner benefits is telling of how it views diversity, Wolf said.

"If I were on the market for a job, as a gay man, there is no question that domestic rights are too big a financial matter to ignore," he said. "If I were a straight professor, I would also look at domestic partner rights to see just how committed the university is to creating a diverse setting."

"They don't have to provide any domestic partner rights, but if they do, it shows they are willing to go above and beyond what is asked of them to make their employees happy."

Many gray areas surround domestic partner benefits. Currently, no state has the jurisdiction to perform same-sex marriages. Consequently, there is no real precedent to how domestic partner benefits should be handled.

Wolf said university officials have three choices.

They could stick to the policy that has been set and offer no benefits to the unmarried partners of employees; they could offer benefits just to same-sex partners; or they could offer benefits to all partners of faculty, regardless of sexual orientation.

Wolf said the university should offer benefits to partners of faculty who are unable to get married.

"There are restrictions on the gay community that prevent them from getting married," Wolf said. "We shouldn't be deprived of domestic partner benefits just because we can't get married."

The UNL and University of Nebraska at Omaha faculty senates

"To me, gay domestic partners should get the same benefits as heterosexual married partners."**"**

GAIL LATTA
UNL Academic Senate president

have formally expressed support for domestic partner benefits.

Gail Latta, president of UNL's Academic Senate, said faculty senate presidents at all four NU campuses have expressed support for the benefits.

"I view it as a human rights issue," she said. "To me, gay domestic partners should get the same benefits as heterosexual married partners."

Latta said many organizations, including the Academic Senate, the Human Rights Committee and some student organizations have joined to make sure gay partners are treated fairly.

"We're working together to form a coalition to speak together with the same voice to raise awareness," she said. "This human rights issue can't be ignored."

ASUN has also set up a sexual orientation subcommittee that is investigating the possibility of supporting domestic partner benefits.

The idea for the benefits was taken to the universitywide benefits committee, where the idea was tabled. The committee must approve the idea for it to reach the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

Only the regents can enact domestic partner benefits.

Three of UNL's 11 peer institutions have offered their employees domestic partner benefits.

Iowa State University, the University of Iowa and the University of Minnesota have all provided domestic partner benefits, including comprehensive medical plans, for gay partners at a relatively low cost to the universities.

Barbara DiBernard, a UNL English professor, said the precedent set by the peer institutions gave valuable support to the domestic partner benefits movement.

"I think the leverage from what our peers are doing is important," she said. "It shows the university that this is not a new idea. Institutions like ours are doing this, so why can't ours do it?"

UNL may get permission to allocate part of donation

From staff reports

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln could soon get the go-ahead to spend a portion of a \$125 million donation.

If the NU Board of Regents gives its approval today, UNL will get to determine how to spend some of the \$125 million dollar gift left by Donald T. and Mildred Topp Othmer.

Seventy-five percent of the income from the donation is earmarked for the chemical engineering department and Love Library.

The remaining money will go to the Board of Regents and to improving academic programs at UNL.

The regents' approval will allow UNL Chancellor James Moeser to decide how the 12.5 percent dedicated to academic programs will be spent, said David Lechner, vice president for business and finance for the

Regents

NU system.

The regents approved the donation in August 1998. The money came from Mildred Topp Othmer's \$570 million estate. She was an Omaha native and UNL graduate who made her fortune by investing with Warren Buffett.

In other business, the regents are set to vote on the name of the future home of the College of Journalism and Mass Communications.

If approved, the building will be named the Harold and Marian Anderson Hall. The college will move into the Security Mutual Building, 200 N. Centennial Mall.

The meeting begins at 1:30 p.m. at Varner Hall, 3835 Holdrege St. It is open to the public.

Helping the homeless

UNL participates in hygiene drive for Daywatch

BY VERONICA DAEHN
Staff writer

There are more than 2,000 homeless people in Lincoln right now, and for the next two weeks, UNL students can help them out.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is participating in a hygiene drive through Nov. 9 to donate personal items such as shampoo and soap to the homeless shelter Daywatch.

Daywatch, 1911 R. St., is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and provides care for all homeless or near-homeless people.

Daywatch Director Bill Roby said the shelter always needs donations to help offset the cost of operation.

"The donations allow us to continue," Roby said. "If I had to spend money on toothbrushes and toothpaste and whatever else, I'd be broke."

Daywatch is a day shelter and community center that services between 50 and 100 people a day, Roby said.

With that many people in the center and two showers that are always running, the center often runs out of supplies, such as shampoo and soap.

UNL's hygiene drive is sponsored by the ASUN Student Impact Team

"A lot of times, UNL isolates itself from the community. Students don't (always) have the funds, but they do have the power."**"**

JESSICA LOPEZ
co-chairwoman of the SIT service learning committee

whose members hope to put together 1,500 packets for the shelter.

Natalie Hoover, ASUN Arts and Sciences senator and a member of the Daywatch board of directors, said students could contribute hygiene products and blankets until Nov. 9.

The shelter always needs shampoo, soap, towels, washcloths, razor blades, deodorant, hair cream and tampons.

Roby said he encourages people to donate the little bottles of shampoo and lotion that are available in hotel rooms.

Students who have things to donate should bring them to their university housing residence assistant, their greek house or to the ASUN office, 136 Nebraska Union.

Jessica Lopez, co-chairwoman of the SIT service learning committee, said the hygiene drive was the main project for the semester.

"We decided this was a need in

the community that we could meet," Lopez said. "We were all definitely for it."

But not all students are as willing to volunteer as to donate. Hoover said Daywatch has had little student volunteer support.

Many students don't know how to get involved, she said.

"A lot of times, UNL isolates itself from the community," she said. "Students don't (always) have the funds, but they do have the power."

Most people don't realize the need Daywatch has, Hoover said.

By donating things to the homeless shelter, students will be helping a large number of people.

"The homeless are a hidden population that most students have never encountered," Hoover said. "There are between 2,000 and 3,000 homeless people in Lincoln. Right now, at night, there are people sleeping outside."

Billboard near stadium OK'd

■ The three-sided, 45-foot-tall structure is being built with an agreement that it will be removed in seven years.

BY JAKE BLEED
Senior staff writer

The view from Interstate 180 of downtown Lincoln and campus will have a new addition, thanks to an agreement reached Wednesday between the mayor's office and an Omaha advertising company.

Waitt Outdoor Advertising can begin building a 45-foot-tall, three-sided billboard immediately west of Memorial Stadium in return for \$80,000 and an agreement to take the billboard down in seven years.

Each of the billboard's sides will provide 672 square feet of advertising space, Waitt Vice President Rod Kestel said.

Kestel said some of the billboard's space might be made available to the university or the city before being sold to advertisers.

Mike DeKalb, of the Lincoln City Planning Department, said the spot, between Interstate 180, Memorial

"There was not much the city could legally do. The city was going to lose the case."**"**

DIANE GONZOLAS
mayor's office representative

Stadium and downtown Lincoln, was probably the best advertising location in the state.

Kestel said the large number of people who would drive by the billboard during home football games made the spot particularly attractive to advertisers.

"It's a very popular route, and it has a very high profile," Kestel said. "It has a lot of value during football season."

John Ingram, director of facilities for the UNL Athletic Department, said the new billboard was too close to the recently upgraded Memorial Stadium.

"Personally, I would rather not have (the billboard) there," Ingram said. "We're proud of our new facility."

Mayor Don Wesely put a temporary moratorium on billboard construction into place July 27. Kestel said Waitt completed its application to

build the billboard July 5 but still had the application denied.

The advertising company then went to court twice, asking Lancaster County courts to order the city to allow the construction of the billboard, Assistant City Attorney Rick Peo said.

The court ruled in the city's favor both times, but the legal ground on which the city stood was still shaky, Peo said.

"I think we might of had a chance to win," Peo said, adding that the outcome was far from certain.

Mayor's office representative Diane Gonzolas said the agreement was best for both the city and Waitt Advertising.

Both sides had spent a lot of money on legal fees, Gonzolas said.

"There was not much the city could legally do. The city was going to lose the case," she said.

Lauck surrenders to police on warrant

■ He was once convicted in Europe of spreading pro-Nazi information.

BY JAKE BLEED
Senior staff writer

Gary Lauck, a Lincoln man who spent four years in a German jail for spreading pro-Nazi information, turned himself into Lancaster Sheriff's deputies just before 2 p.m. Thursday on an outstanding warrant, Lancaster County Attorney Gary Lacey said.

A Lincoln judge issued a warrant

for Lauck's arrest Monday after he lied in June on a gun-permit application.

Lauck circled "No" next to a question asking him if he had ever been convicted in any court of a crime punishable by more than one year, Lancaster County Court documents said.

Lauck's attorney, Kirk Wolgamott, arranged for the 46-year-old's surrender, Lacey said. Lauck was arrested, arraigned and released on a \$10,000 bond before 7 p.m. Thursday.

He faces up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. Judge Jack Lindner scheduled Lauck to appear

for a preliminary hearing Dec. 1.

Lauck told the judge he was not sure if he could afford to hire a lawyer for the hearing, adding that his personal finances were "wiped out" by legal costs.

While visiting a neo-Nazi rally in Denmark, Lauck was arrested and extradited to Germany on a warrant of spreading pro-Nazi and anti-Jew information.

He was convicted and spent four years in European prisons.

He was released from German prison March 19 and returned to the United States.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.