

Fees could rise to pay for Wheels

BY VERONICA DAEHN
Staff writer

The Association of Students of the University of Nebraska added a new program to its budget Nov. 10 that could increase student fees.

The addition of NU on Wheels, a safe-ride home program available to all University of Nebraska-Lincoln students, will be paid for by student fees that are a part of the ASUN budget.

But Committee for Fees Allocation Chairman Jason Mashek said adding NU on Wheels might not make a difference.

"It very well could affect the amount of money other student fee users receive," Mashek said. "It might cause an increase in student fees, but it doesn't have to."

ASUN adopted the safe-ride home program last week when senators voted unanimously to make NU on Wheels a part of ASUN's bylaws.

Student fees going to ASUN will have to be raised, or money paying for other ASUN programs will have to be taken away to pay for NU on Wheels.

Programs that are under ASUN's budget include Student Legal Services, the Government Liaison Committee and Commuter Student Services.

Committee for Fees Allocation member Grant Vichich said he is not sure what will happen because committee members have not yet discussed it, but he said he thought student fees would see an increase.

"Obviously, fees will go up," Vichich said. "But if students feel they won't use (NU on Wheels), they can get a refund like they can now for the other (programs)."

If students do not want to pay fees for a program such as Student Legal Services, the University Program Council or the Daily Nebraskan, they can get a refund in exchange for the loss of those services.

ASUN Sen. Urrvano Gamez said using student fees for the program would be justified even if every student does not use the program.

Most users of NU on Wheels will be students who don't want to drive home drunk, Gamez said. But he thinks other students will use it to get back from studying at the East Campus library.

"Not everyone (will use this service)," he said. "But it is beneficial for

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JASON MASHEK
Committee for Fees Allocation
chairman

every student to get drunk drivers off the road and have a higher safety level on campus."

CFA is in the process of hearing presentations from every UNL fee user.

Mashek said presentations would be completed by the end of this semester, and fee users would come back with their proposed budgets early next semester.

Then CFA's job is to approve or reject the fee users' budgets or to request more student fees to pay for the increased proposed budgets.

There are two types of fee users, Mashek said.

Fund A fee users are student organizations such as ASUN, the Daily Nebraskan and the University Program Council.

Fund B users use a larger amount of money and include organizations such as the Nebraska Unions, the Campus Recreation Center and the Health Center.

Fund A fee users provide students with the opportunity to get a refund.

CFA is responsible for recommending a student-fee increase, but the final decision is not up to them, Mashek said.

Once CFA recommends an increase in Fund A fees, it must be approved by the ASUN senate and then by UNL Chancellor James Moeser.

For Fund B student fees, the increase must be approved by the NU Board of Regents.

Mashek said it has been more than 15 years since the Board of Regents has rejected an ASUN budget proposal.

Mashek and Vichich both said they were unsure how NU on Wheels would affect ASUN's budget, but Mashek said CFA would not approve a budget if there were not enough money to do so.

"The only amount of money we're restricted by is the amount of student fees we have," he said.

Tobacco settlement payout nears

BY JOSH KNAUB
Staff writer

Nebraska will receive the first payment of its \$1.165 billion tobacco settlement before the end of the month.

State Treasurer Dave Heineman said he thought Nebraska's first payment of \$14.3 million might arrive before Thanksgiving but would definitely be in state coffers before the end of the month.

The money is Nebraska's share of a multistate deal with cigarette makers.

Nebraska received notice Friday that the first installment of the settlement would arrive within 10 business days.

Steve Grasz, Nebraska chief deputy attorney general, said the initial payment would be followed by a \$38 million payment in January and another payment in April.

After the initial three payments, Nebraska will receive money from the settlement annually.

Grasz said the reason Nebraska

would receive the payments now was related to another state's settlement.

Eighty percent of the states involved in the settlement had to agree to the terms of the settlement before any state would receive money.

Virginia's acceptance of the settlement in mid-November triggered payments to all states involved, Grasz said.

Nebraska's money is in an escrow account established by the tobacco companies, Grasz said. It has been in the account, and inaccessible to the state, since Nebraska accepted the settlement in 1998.

Heineman said the money would be sent to an account Nebraska would use to fund health-care projects. He said the state would not receive a check, rather the funds would be wire-transferred from the tobacco companies' escrow account to the state health-care fund.

Grasz said the state received payments from other legal settlements, including one involving oil prices, on a routine basis.

He said the tobacco settlement was by far the largest.

"None come close to this much money," Grasz said.

Heineman said the state routinely dealt with large wire transfers. He said monthly state payroll expenses, many direct-deposited, totaled more than \$100 million.

Legislation sponsored by state Sen. Jim Jensen of Omaha last year established the fund tobacco settlement money will be transferred to.

Interest income from the fund will be used to pay for tobacco resistance education, school nurses, immunization, health education, pregnancy testing, screening for diseases, laboratory equipment and public health environmental services.

The money will be distributed by a panel appointed by Gov. Mike Johanns.

Public health officials will be able to apply for grants from the fund starting in January.

The state may receive more or less than the agreed \$1.165 billion if tobacco sales increase or decrease in Nebraska.

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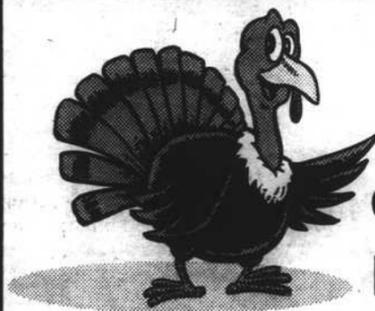
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