

UNO researches air travel

BY MICHELLE STARR
Staff writer

Making air travel more convenient and accessible is the goal of researchers at the University of Nebraska at Omaha Aviation Institute.

Researchers are working on a project that might help cut down on lost baggage, delayed flights and the hassle of connections. It could also provide improved service to rural travelers, said Tracy Cellan, NASA fellow at the Omaha Aviation Institute assigned to the Small Aircraft Transportation System research project.

It also might help revitalize the small craft airport industry, said Keith H. Henry, deputy at the office of public affairs at NASA Langley Research Center in Virginia.

Researchers at the Omaha Aviation Institute, along with NASA's Langley Research Center in Virginia and the Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in Melbourne, Fla., are trying to provide increased air travel service to rural areas and later enable citizens to use their personal small aircraft for transportation.

The program, called Small Aircraft Transportation System, which was initially sponsored by Bruce Holmes, manager of the General Aviation Program Office in the Langley

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Research Center, is attempting to provide a new method for commuters within the next 25 years, Cellan said.

Along with increased use of small aircraft for rural communities, the researchers envision a transportation system that makes it possible for someone to live in a city, such as Lincoln, and be able to commute to New York City for work, with the use of a small two- to four-person aircraft, Cellan said.

The airplane would cost about the same as a luxury car, such as a BMW or Lexus, and be about four times the speed of driving on highways, Cellan said.

The researchers have been compiling financial statistics, airway maps, airport policy information and small airports technology information since May 1999 to provide direct flight and increased airway usage, Cellan said.

The SATS program has progressed from research of the Advanced General Aviation Transport

Experiments program, or AGATE program.

AGATE, which began in 1994 and will continue through 2001, has similar goals as SATS – it is looking to increase technology, increase pilot training, make flying small aircraft more accessible and revitalize the aviation industry.

“Right now the trend is for small airports to close,” Henry said. “The market for small aircraft is going down because there are fewer pilots.”

The research at AGATE helped fuel the SATS program.

The SATS research is in the theoretical and testing stages, but the project will need state and federal funding, Cellan said.

The research hopes to create a 25 percent increase in airport service within 10 years and a 90 percent increase within 25 years.

The project in Omaha is funded from a grant by the Nebraska EPSCor Program.

NU looks at future of education

Academic Senate talks about distance and Internet education and what effect it will have on NU.

BY JILL ZEMAN
Staff writer

Members of Academic Senate pondered the possibilities of alternative forms of education in their meeting Tuesday.

University of Nebraska President Dennis Smith spoke about the future of UNL entering the millennium and how the university can better serve its students.

Smith mentioned two factors that would aid further evolution of the university – information technology and

demographic diversification.

Smith said UNL's student population is getting older, with 22 percent of the undergraduates over the age of 25.

Including graduate students, the number reaches 39 percent, Smith said.

UNL needs to discuss possibilities for distance education because of the increase in older students, Smith said.

“The kinds of students and the way we educate them is going to change dramatically,” he said.

Smith said UNL needed to decide whether or not to pursue further action regarding education over the Internet.

Don Jensen, a UNL professor of psychology, said the issue of distance education was not what materials to make available to students but how to monitor their progress and provide assistance.

Smith said if the distance education

system was constructed well, it could be more effective than large lectures.

Another issue discussed was how to ensure student interaction if classes via the Internet are used.

“If whether you go to MIT (the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), the University of Michigan or the University of Nebraska doesn't matter, what will happen to campuses as we know them?” asked Tice Miller, a UNL professor of theater arts.

Smith said UNL doesn't need to decide what to do about distance education, but it just has to decide whether or not to get involved.

In other business, the Academic Senate heard committee reports about UNL's Research Council, the Grading and Examination Committee and the University Appeals and Judicial Boards.

Study: Teen drinking, sex linked

Sexually transmitted diseases may increase, some say

WASHINGTON (AP) – Teenagers who drink or use drugs are much more likely than others to be sexually active, starting sexual intercourse as early as middle school and with a greater likelihood of multiple partners, a research group said Tuesday.

With condom use among teens being erratic at best, there is a fear that the combination of substance abuse and sex could increase the 12 million new annual cases of sexually transmitted diseases.

“In America, drinking and drug abuse are bundled with high-risk sex,” said Susan Foster, who directed the report “Dangerous Liaisons: Substance Abuse and Sex” for the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. “Yet despite the high coincidence of substance abuse and sexual activity, remarkably few public or private prevention, treatment and counseling programs deal with this connection.”

In its report, gleaned from a variety of data on 34,000 teen-agers in grades 7-12, the research center admits it's not sure what comes first – the drinking and drug-taking or the promiscuity. In its analysis, the group factored out other reasons – such as socioeconomic status or race – that are associated with either drinking or having sex but not necessarily both and could have made the connection look

weaker or stronger than it actually is.

But the report suggests there could be some lessons from adults: Adult heavy drinkers – defined as about seven drinks a day over two weeks – are five times more likely than those who don't drink at all to have at least 10 sexual partners a year.

Ben Smilowitz, a University of Connecticut freshman who often finds little social life on campus beyond drinking parties, said his peers are not only turning to drink because of stress, they also are imitating adults.

“People see drinking as way of relaxing because that's what adults do,” the 18-year-old said. “You go to a football game or hockey and see adults getting trashed.”

He says more kids are drinking and therefore engaging in riskier behavior all around.

The report said drug-using teens are five times as likely to have sex than nonusers, and three times as likely to have it with four or more partners, according to the two-year analysis of data.

A generation ago, the report said, fewer teens were having sex. In 1970, 5 percent of 15-year-old girls had sex; in 1972, 20 percent of 15-year-old boys said they had sex. In 1997, 45 percent of boys and 38 percent of girls said they have had intercourse in their teen years.

Joseph A. Califano Jr., the research center's chairman, and a former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare under President Johnson, says the report shows parents must realize that today's teens more than ever are forced to make decisions about drinking, illegal drugs and sex as early as middle school.

Califano said school counselors, parents, clergy and other adults should address whichever teen activity – sex or substance use – that first comes to their attention.

“Adults should be prepared to work with the teen on both matters,” he said.

The group urges middle and high schools to create comprehensive education programs that address the link between substance abuse and sex.

But students have a different view. “When society tells kids don't have sex, don't drink, don't use drugs, it's just creating forbidden fruit,” Smilowitz said. “Society needs to re-examine its way of dealing with kids.”

The report was funded by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Besides data from the teens, the report also relied on articles, expert interviews and examination of dozens of prevention and treatment programs for substance abuse, sex and sexual violence.

U.S. stops short of cutting aid to Russia

WASHINGTON (AP) – Defense Secretary William Cohen accused Russia on Tuesday of killing innocent civilians “on a rather substantial scale” in its stepped-up military offensive in Chechnya. But the administration stopped short of recommending that U.S. assistance to Russia be cut to punish Moscow.

“The world community is increasingly becoming very vocal and very critical of the type of activity that we have witnessed in the past several weeks,” Cohen told reporters at the Pentagon.

But both Cohen and White House officials stressed that the “heavy price” to Russia would be in loss of world esteem, not necessarily in economic or other sanctions.

He renewed an appeal to Moscow to scale back its campaign a day after President Clinton predicted Russia “will pay a heavy price” if it doesn't reverse course in the breakaway Muslim territory.

During an appearance in the White House Rose Garden, President Clinton would not take questions about Chechnya, noting he plans a news conference on Wednesday.

White House spokesman Joe Lockhart suggested cutting off U.S. aid could thwart efforts to promote democracy and reduce the nuclear threat in Russia.

“I don't think this is a situation where you would undermine your own national security to make a statement,” Lockhart said.

Moscow has warned citizens of Grozny, the Chechen capital, to flee by Saturday or be killed in a massive air and artillery attack.

Earlier, Clinton met with NATO Secretary-General George Robertson.

Robertson afterwards said the two share a concern “about getting over a strong message” to Russia.

“Although we can understand the tensions and the problems facing Russia at this time, this is not the way to succeed in dealing with these problems,” Robertson said. “What is happening there is unacceptable.”

Russian forces entered Chechnya in September in pursuit of Chechen-based Islamic militants whom Moscow blames for apartment bombings in Russian cities that left 300 people dead.

More than 200,000 Chechens have since fled the largely Muslim republic, and many are living in refugee camps in neighboring republics.

“The situation in Chechnya must be resolved diplomatically and not through military means,” Cohen said.

Cohen declined to say whether Moscow's conduct had violated Geneva conventions regarding protection of civilians during wartime, or whether its three-month military offensive amounted to an attempt at ethnic cleansing.

“I'm not prepared to make a judgment on whether they've violated the Geneva conventions. I'll leave that up to others. But it certainly is a policy in which they appear to be engaged in indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians and on a rather substantial scale,” he said.

Cohen spoke at a joint news conference with Patrick Lekoyta, South Africa's defense minister.

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