

Contraceptives not part of plan

BY ERIC RINEER
Staff writer

To the dismay of some University of Nebraska-Lincoln women faculty members, contraceptives won't be covered in the university's year 2000 health care plan.

Employees have started to enroll in UNL's new health care plan, which will add expanded eye-care coverage and long-term care packages but won't include coverage for contraceptives.

Women faculty upset with the plan said that by not including contraceptives, the university is unfairly leaving them with additional health care costs.

Health care officials said not covering contraceptives isn't new.

"It somehow seems to me that somebody thought we were doing away with some benefits," said Joe Rowson, associate to the NU president.

"We have never instituted that coverage."

Rowson said the reason for excluding contraceptives was primarily a financial one.

He said the benefits committee was already seeking aid from the Legislature to help fund the current plan.

"We have to look at the costs and benefits together," Rowson said.

"There is certainly a possibility that at some point the committee may forward it. Given the financial situation, they couldn't do it at this time."

Mary Beck, a professor of animal science and co-chairwoman of UNL's Women Faculty Caucus, said the exclusion of contraceptives added about 30 percent more per month for women's health care costs.

"It may seem like a small amount per month, but over a number of years it adds up a lot," she said. "Many other universities cover it or have covered it for some time."

Some of the Midwestern universities that do include contraceptive coverage are Ohio State University,

"Many other universities cover it or have covered it for some time."

MARY BECK
Women Faculty Caucus
co-chairwoman

the University of Minnesota and Iowa State University.

"It hasn't been an issue for us," said Diane Muncrief, a human resource specialist at Iowa State.

Mary McGarvey, an associate professor of economics at UNL, said she was upset the university was behind other institutions in providing contraceptive coverage.

"I don't know a good rationale for not covering it," McGarvey said.

"I guess it would indicate we as a university are insensitive to a basic need of women faculty and staff."

Keith Dietze, director of risk management and benefits, said a plan included in past health care packages enables women to purchase contraceptives.

The health care reimbursement account, he said, allows individuals to set aside money, which they could use to purchase medical supplies.

The university payroll system takes the money from the employee's account.

At the end of the 12-month period, the employee then gets the money back, Dietze said.

"We try to be very progressive, and we look at all benefit issues and concerns that are raised each year," Dietze said. "I'm sure we'll continue to look at (contraceptives)."

McGarvey said she hoped the university would change the policy as soon as possible.

"It's kind of annoying to me," she said. "I guess I haven't heard any good reasons for why they exclude it."

Renovations get mixed reactions

RENOVATION from page 1

The floor level seats were changed on both sides of the floor to come into better compliance with the American with Disabilities Act. In the process, the lower-level seats were slightly raised and changed from bleachers to chair-back seating.

But Athletic Department officials soon found a problem with that seating. When students stood - as they often do during games - the first three to four rows of the B section directly behind couldn't see. They, too, were forced to stand. The layout of the sports center then forces everybody to stand, all the way to the top rows.

Most of the B Section spectators are long-time season-ticket holders.

"I wasn't happy about it at all," said Lincoln resident Hank Baum, who has held season tickets since the Devaney center opened. "I didn't call, but I thought about it. A lot of people were upset. We didn't pay to stand up."

So at Friday and Saturday night's men's basketball games, the top two rows of that student section had red tarp over them. If more students would have shown up, they would have had to sit in the bleacher seats at the top of the arena.

At the women's game on Monday, the seats were not covered with a tarp, but most fans sitting on that side of the arena were non-student season-ticket holders.

John Ingram, NU's Director of Facilities, said the problem was apparent during the men's exhibition games when students would stand up.

Athletic Director Bill Byrne said he received "a ton" of complaints right away from fans.

"One lady almost followed me into the restroom," he said.

The main problem, Byrne said, was that students standing in the A section refused to sit when fans in the B section asked them to.

"It seemed to whet their appetite to stand," Byrne said. "The students made it a point to stand after people from the B section asked them not to. It shouldn't be that way because everyone has the right to watch the game."

Byrne said the two rows will continue to be covered with a tarp the rest of the season for men's games. At the end

of the season, the problem will be evaluated. Originally, the cost of the installing the seats cost about \$200,000.

The brunt of the renovation cost - about \$5 million in all - went into the scoreboard system, which included the two HuskerVision screens, the other 12 new scoreboards, television screens in the concession areas and a revamped sound system.

Like the other amenities, the scoreboard system has received a mixed bag of compliments and complaints.

Many fans said they liked the HuskerVision screens but didn't watch them that much while play was going on. One woman said she watched the screens sometimes because they provided a "better view" of the contest.

During time-outs, HuskerVision kicks into gear with features like Husker Happenings and a Nebraska Public Power District Husker Power Chant. Additionally, HuskerVision crews are dispersed through the arena to film crowd members, most of whom wave when they're on the big screens.

And once during each game, Runza Restaurants sponsors a feature called Runza Rex, where a green plastic dinosaur appears on the screens and shoots basketballs from its mouth. At the end of the 15 seconds, the baskets are counted up and a certain row in a certain section of the arena gets free Runza sandwiches.

Fans are encouraged to count along with Runza Rex when it makes a basket. Very few fans did on either night.

All the while, some UNL pep band members who play at the games are disappointed in their diminished role. Trombonist Eric Rogge, a sophomore finance major, said the band splits time with the screens during full time-outs instead playing most of the time. He pointed up to a session of Runza Rex during Monday night's game.

"When that stuff is on the screen, fans aren't into it," Rogge said. "It takes them out of the game. They just sit and stare at it. They don't cheer or anything." Siefert agreed.

"We have a great band," he said. "People like to hear them. They're part of the game."

Byrne said satisfying the band is something NU is working on. But first, he said, the band has to do its part.

"The game I was at, it sounded like only half the instruments were there," Byrne said. "And there was because half the band doesn't even show up. Before they jump to any conclusions, they need to show up."

Rogge did say he liked the statistics screen, which updated the points and fouls for each player on the floor. Most fans interviewed said this was the most positive and helpful change to arena.

Fans also gave a thumbs up to corner screens, which update team statistics during the game.

Ingram said he'd heard positive reviews about the television screens in C level concession areas, which let fans follow the action when they're getting something to eat or drink.

Surrounding the concession areas on C level is the yet-to-be completed Husker Walk of Fame, which chronicles famous athletes from all NU sports, plus some famous alumni, such as Johnny Carson and Willa Cather, who attended the university. It will be done in early January, Byrne said.

Fans can also hear the public address announcer in the concourses, thanks to the sound improvements, he said.

Another byproduct of that improvement is the regular playing of pop music before, during and after the games. So far, the music has been an eclectic mix of mostly 1980s music, with artists such as the Go-Gos and Tears for Fears.

Fans seemed to be in the dark about where the money for the renovations came from. Both Siefert and Baum assumed the renovations ultimately had an effect on the budget cuts that occurred within UNL earlier this year.

Actually, the money came through 12 private sponsors. No money was taken from the academic side of UNL to pay for the project.

But it's something that Byrne said he's been hearing for some time.

"People still believe we receive state tax dollars, no matter what you tell them," he said. "We had this same problem when we put the HuskerVision screens in at the football stadium. People asked: 'Well, why don't the sponsors give the money to the poor?' or 'Why don't we build some student housing?'"

"Obviously, sponsors aren't going to do that. They do this."

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