

## Partner benefits possible

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"domestic partner" has been the cause of controversy.

The issue of providing health care benefits has been a sticky issue because it provides benefits to partners of students or employees even if they aren't married.

Many groups on campus have lobbied for domestic partner benefits for UNL faculty and staff, mainly to benefit gay faculty who can't legally marry their partners.

The new health care plan, however, would provide benefits to UNL students and their partners regardless of sexual orientation.

They would only have to show some sort of financial dependence.

"If we are able to work this out, we're going to make it as broad as possible," Griesen said.

Joel Schafer, ASUN president, said the plan has followed an interesting path. Members of the ASUN Sexual Orientation Advisory Council, along with Griesen, Herrman and Schafer, have met many times to discuss the possibility of providing domestic partner benefits to students, Schafer said.

After the Chickering Group agreed, and Griesen voiced his support, Schafer thought the plan was good to go.

But Lincoln Regent Charles Wilson approached Griesen about the switch of health care providers, and the plan appeared to be unraveling, Schafer said.

"I was very concerned," Schafer said. "It seemed as if the administration went into a back-peddle. But right now, it looks like this plan is an all-go."

But Wilson said domestic partner benefits weren't the topic of discussion.

"I had an active dialogue with Vice Chancellor Griesen about deficiencies in the university's current health care plan," he said. "I am pleased by this new plan."

Wilson said UNL's current health care plan has too low a cap for students. The current plan UNL is under provides a \$1,800 cap for the first two days of medical coverage, which Wilson called unacceptable.

"I know of one girl at the university who broke her hip, and because of that one clause, she had to pay \$5,000 out of her own pocket," he said.

The new plan covers 80 percent of all medical costs after the \$200 deductible, Herrman said. Its annual premium is \$365, compared with the \$399 that students had to pay this year.

"It's a better all-around plan," Herrman said.

This year, 2,588 students were covered by the university's health care plan.

Wilson said he approved of domestic partner benefits for UNL students because the university's health care services are not funded by student fees or any other public money.

If UNL professors were provided domestic partner benefits, however, student fees and public tax money would be used, and Wilson said he has not formulated an opinion on that matter.

"This plan is a private plan, and I don't see a problem with that," Wilson said. "But using public dollars is a much different issue, and one that must be brought to the regents for approval."

But Schafer said UNL's new plan is an important building block toward domestic partner benefits.

"If domestic partner benefits are included in the health care package, it would be a positive precedent for achieving that same right for our faculty," Schafer said.

## Party lines blur after election

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appointed Electoral Commission director, Conley seems to be following his own advice.

"Joel and I express our thoughts to each other, and I'll help out with whatever he directs me to," he said.

"Everyone who's met with Joel walks away very impressed with his leadership skills."

Romero, former first vice presidential candidate for Empower, was also handed leadership reins by Schafer, as she was appointed Student Impact Team chairwoman.

Following the election, Romero said she attended LeaderShape, a leadership development program held over spring break each year.

The program gave Romero feedback, direction and encouragement in her leadership skills, she said.

"After the elections I wasn't sure what to do," she said. "It was definitely what I needed."

Despite spending countless hours planning, preparing and campaigning with the blue and orange of Empower, Romero said the party ties are insignificant now.

"I don't look at the senate and say, 'She's from Empower,' or 'He's with Impact,'" she said.

"I just think that we ended up with a great senate."

## Campus is home for some during the summer season

**By Veronica Daehn**

*Staff writer*

While most residence-hall students are preparing to move out of their rooms this week and next, at least 250 will be getting ready to stay on campus.

Every summer, some students opt to live on campus instead of going home.

Michael Hager, associate director of housing administration and information systems, said so far 250 students have turned in applications for on-campus summer housing.

The priority deadline for applications was April 14, but students are not being turned away, Hager said.

"Summer-school people tend to wait until later," Hager said. "We should be able to accommodate anyone."

The maximum number of students who could live in housing during the summer is 5,000, Hager said, but that number is never close to being reached.

"The demand just isn't there," he said. "It's rare to exceed two buildings. Students are our first priority."

Most students who stay in on-campus housing during the summer take classes or serve as conference assistants.

But there are special circumstances when a student who isn't taking classes can stay in on-campus housing, Hager said, though that is rare.

Jenna Venema, a freshman pre-medicine and communications major, will be staying in Smith Residence Hall this summer.

She will be a conference assistant and will take classes.

"I'll be working on campus, so it's convenient to live on campus," Venema said. "I'll have my own room, and I won't have to cook or clean."

Venema, who is from Fremont, said she never planned on going home for the summer.

"I knew all year that I didn't want to go home," she said. "I wanted to start working here in Lincoln. It's a bigger city, and I've got a good job with great benefits."

Hager said students taking classes this summer will be housed in Cather, Selleck, Fedde and Husker residence halls, with

most staying in Cather.

Students can move in right after finals week ends, Hager said. The halls don't shut down in between the academic year and summer school.

As a conference assistant this summer, Venema will be helping with more than 100 conferences and 15,000 people.

Hager said the summer conferences are good for the university.

"That's a moneymaker for us," he said. "We use that money to keep room-and-board rates low."

Freshman English major Kristine Olson will be living on campus this summer, but not in university housing.

Olson said she will be staying in Chi Phi Fraternity. The fraternity rents rooms for the summer on a weekly basis.

Olson lives two hours away in Leigh and doesn't want to go home.

"It's easier to get a job here," she said. "Chi Phi is close, and it's cheap. It seems easier to stay within the university rather than find an apartment. That would be a massive pain."

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