

Professors: Merger overcomes initial opposition

BY VERONICA DAEHN

Despite opposition last spring, professors in the departments of agronomy and horticulture say they are working together well as an integrated unit this fall.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln merged the two departments in July to enhance opportunities for students and the public and to more efficiently use research equipment and facilities.

After six months of working together, most initial fears have been erased, said Gerald Horst, professor of agronomy and horticulture.

"It depends on who you're talking to," Horst said. "But overall, it's going pretty good. Things are moving along."

Agronomy is a branch of agriculture dealing with raising crops and caring for the soil. Horticulture is the science and art of growing fruits, vegetables, flowers and ornamental plants.

Horst said he'd always felt change was good. The integration has opened opportunities for both agronomy and horticulture, he said.

With the fields of study in the same department, crossover of faculty expertise is much larger, said Kenneth Cassman, chairman of the new unit.

There is a movement to involve horticulture teachers in agronomy classes and vice versa, he said. But that is a process that will slowly evolve as the unit progresses.

"Sharing expertise - that's the first

step," Cassman said. "It gets faculty thinking in new directions."

Other than professors working together, the academic program of a horticulture or agronomy major is the same as it was before the two integrated.

The department wanted to ensure the programs stayed the same, Cassman said.

"That was a major concern of students in horticulture and agronomy," he said. "And it was a concern for us, too. We wanted to make sure the education they were expecting was still available to them."

There haven't been many problems other than making sure faculty and staff members know the plans for the unit, he said.

The department of agronomy and horticulture is one of the largest at UNL, so it's difficult to communicate with everyone all the time, Cassman said.

Stephen Baenziger, professor of agronomy and horticulture, said not much had changed with the integration.

Though somewhat different, the two fields of study are compatible because they deal with soil and turf, Baenziger said.

"We think it's doing OK," said Baenziger, who served on the integration team. "Sure, the people who didn't want the integration still want that. But the people who did want it, still feel that way, too."

Baenziger said the two separate units were stronger as one merged unit.

"There's a better cross-fertilization of ideas," he said. "We've got a larger, more vigorous teaching unit. I think our students will benefit immensely from that."

Down the road, the department will see the same improvement in research and extension as it already has in teaching, Baenziger said. The two units together provide new ways of doing things.

Cassman said opposition from the horticulture industry, which was a vocal opponent of the merger, had died down this semester.

"We're not cutting programs but enhancing them," Cassman said. "The industry realizes that, and they're giving us the opportunity to wait and see."

Athletes lift spirits at hospitals

HOSPITAL from page 1

and introduced themselves, and it was lots of fun," Borer said.

The athletes, who said James was the most serious case they had visited, gave him a card and exchanged phone numbers and e-mail addresses with him.

Swimmer Carlos Asarta went so far as to visit James every night he was in the hospital.

After James' stay was over,

Asarta invited James to tour the Hewitt Center and Memorial Stadium when he came to Lincoln to get the staples in his head removed last Tuesday.

"I have always had a high regard for athletes, and it was nice to see people who almost seem superhuman coming and talking to you," Borer said.

"It just makes you feel good."

Steve Borer, James' father and the activities director for Madison

High School, said he was impressed so many athletes came to visit his son.

"I know athletes don't get a lot of personal time, and they could be doing something else, but they chose to do this, and that's pretty impressive," Borer said.

Nebraska football wide receiver Ryan Ommert, who gave the Borers a tour of the Hewitt Center and stadium, said he's happy to do what he can.

"People think Husker athletes are the talk of the state, but people who go through what James did are the real heroes of the state," Ommert said.

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SMSU finds releasing records has little effect on campus

BY JOSH FUNK

Allowing access to student disciplinary records is a difficult issue for universities as they try to balance competing interests of personal privacy and public safety.

But at Southwest Missouri State University, where these records of crimes of violence and sex offenses have been subject to release for about two years, airing this information has had little effect, SMSU Director of Student Judicial Programs Mike Jungers said.

"I don't think it has had any negative or positive effect on our (judicial) office," said Jungers, who also is an assistant dean of students at the 17,000-student Springfield, Mo., campus.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln officials, however, maintain confidentiality must be preserved for these Judicial Affairs records to protect individual privacy and educate students about the wrongfulness of their conduct.

UNL has rejected the Daily Nebraskan's requests for the same information about crimes of violence and sex offenses this fall.

The newspaper has raised concerns that keeping these records confidential may create a safety risk on campus. If students

are unaware of crimes of violence, they may not take appropriate steps to avoid becoming victims.

The presidents of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska and Academic Senate characterized this as a difficult issue but said the current judicial procedures might need to be re-examined.

"Anytime you're dealing with a student's records it's a very difficult issue that needs to be looked at carefully," ASUN President Joel Schafer said. "I would always look at it from the perspective of trying to preserve a student's confidentiality."

Academic Senate's executive board discussed the issue for more than an hour Wednesday, said Sheila Scheideler, the group's president.

Scheideler said the executive board members agreed they would like to see the student code of conduct reconciled with the recommendations of a 1996 Task Force on Conduct Standards and Behavioral Expectations, which recommended more disclosure of Judicial Affairs proceedings, among other things.

"Without the reporting of these actions we are failing to educate students on the consequences of their actions," said Scheideler, who said she would support a compromise between

Judicial Affairs and the Daily Nebraskan to allow some release of disciplinary records information.

SMSU officials took their student newspaper to court after a reporter requested the records under Missouri's state law to get a clarifying ruling specifying exactly what should be released.

The court ordered the school to release all final results of disciplinary actions taken against students, the charge and punishment. Jungers said the records were released only when requested under open records law and have not been routinely published.

Jungers said some of his office's policies were similar to those in UNL's Office of Judicial Affairs such as a preponderance standard of guilt in most cases and an emphasis on educating students.

In the two years since SMSU began releasing these disciplinary records, Jungers said he thought his office had released the results of only seven cases.

Jungers said he was unsure whether making that information public had any effect on the campus community as a whole or on those seven individuals.

"I don't know that it's had any effect really," Jungers said.

Yet UNL officials remain apprehensive about releasing the student disciplinary records.

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs James Griesen said officials were concerned about the possible harm to a student if the records were publicized. As a result UNL policy emphasizes confidentiality over the public's right to know.

UNL's Judicial Affairs Director Rosemary Blum and Jungers stress their offices do not handle legal matters, they handle policy violations.

But they may differ in their philosophies of handling crimes of violence.

Jungers said when dealing with crimes of violence and sex offenses, the university should be more concerned about community safety than confidentiality.

"I don't think anyone is going to understand a primary focus on educating a student (in crimes of violence) ... People are going to question what you are doing for the community," Jungers said.

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