

Candidate outlines priorities

BY JILL ZEMAN

A self-described "old farm boy" who grew up in a village in India said Wednesday he'd love to be UNL's vice chancellor for research.

Prem Paul, associate vice provost for research at Iowa State University in Ames, is one of three candidates for the top research position at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

UNL seeks a replacement for Marsha Torr, who left in August to accept a position at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Paul grew up in India and obtained a degree in veterinary medicine from the Panjab Agricultural University in India in 1969.

He then came to the United States and got his Ph.D. in veterinary microbiology at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities.

Paul is a professor of veterinary microbiology and preventive medicine at Iowa State and has worked there since 1985.

While visiting UNL, Paul met with faculty members and outlined five priorities he would implement as vice chancellor:

- Commitment to academic excellence
- Increased research funding - from all sources
- Multidisciplinary research
- Improving grant-writing skills for faculty members

■ Innovations and technologies for economic development

The vice chancellor for research plays an integral role in UNL's development under the 20/20 Vision report.

The report outlines goals - specifically in graduate education and research - for UNL to attain by the year 2020.

Paul said he was impressed with the university for formulating the vision statement.

"It's a lofty goal. It's a good goal, but the question here is if it's attainable," he said.

"The answer is yes." Ed Schmidt, associate dean of the college of arts and sciences, said he was most impressed with Paul's dedication to academic excellence.

"It was the first thing on his list," he said. The arts and sciences college conducts a lot of research, so it's important the new vice chancellor is able to pay for the research, Schmidt said.

"We want someone in the office who will find funding and do the things (Paul) talked about," he said.

Two more candidates will visit UNL for the vice chancellor position. They are Brooks Keel, from the University of Kansas School of Medicine in Wichita, and Sheldon Marc Schuster, from the University of Florida in Gainesville.

Keel will visit Feb. 11-13, and Schuster will visit Feb. 14-16.

Train plan derailed for now

BY GWEN TIETGEN

Sounds of a 120 mph train gliding between Lincoln and Omaha won't be heard for awhile.

The plan to study the feasibility of installing a high-speed passenger train between Nebraska's two major cities sits and waits because of a shortage of funds.

"We haven't really been able to accomplish a lot without funding," said Allan Abbott, director of Public Works for the City of Lincoln and vice chairman of the Nebraska Transit and Rail Advisory Council.

The plan was a part of the priority bill from Shelley Kiel of Omaha, a former Nebraska state senator, introduced during the 1999 legislative session.

The bill passed swiftly through the Legislature, the council formed, but the hunt for funds has proven difficult after one and half years.

Last year, the council applied for a federal grant through the Federal Highway Administration, but was too late to cash in.

Also last year, the council was slated to receive money from the state, but the request was line-item vetoed by Gov. Mike Johanns.

To date, the council has collected between \$60,000 and \$65,000 from the cities of Lincoln, Omaha and South Sioux City and Pro-Rail, a group advocating the installation of a train between Lincoln and Omaha.

But the council still needs a lot more money.

This year, the council has again started applying for a \$350,000 grant from the Federal Highway Administration, Abbott said.

With the grant, the council could hire a consultant to start doing what the bill intended to do in the beginning - study the needs, costs and feasibility of running a train between Lincoln and Omaha.

"The council is optimistic that we're going to get more money," he said. "But it's frustrating not being able to move forward."

In 1999, Kiel envisioned the

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train running from the Old Market in Omaha to the Haymarket in Lincoln, and eventually statewide.

Kiel said she's still hopeful, and she thought installing a train between the two cities was better for the environment, people's health and was cheaper.

Installing another lane of traffic to each side of I-80 would cost around \$1 billion in each direction, but the cost of a train would only be around \$212 million, Kiel said.

"We need to figure out whether this is feasible before the land is completely developed between Omaha and Lincoln," she said.

This session, Sen. Curt Bromm of Wahoo proposed a bill, LB245, to extend the deadline for the NTRAC report to the Legislature from 2002 to 2004 because of the delays.

The bill does not contain any appropriation for funds to conduct the study.

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Offer is limited to one 25-word message per person. Must be current UNL student graduating in May 2001. The Daily Nebraskan reserves the right to edit or reject any message it deems objectionable. The drawing for the Bahamas trip will be on or near June 15, 2001.

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