

College could be free for seniors

BY JILL ZEMAN

It could soon be common to see residents over the age of 70 alongside college-age students in class if the NU Board of Regents approves a resolution in April.

The resolution, introduced by Regent Randy Ferlic of Omaha, would allow Nebraskans over 70 to take classes without credit for free.

Ferlic said he brought up the resolution for a number of reasons:

First, it would allow interaction between the elderly and youth.

Older Nebraskans could also provide feedback on professors and other faculty members, he said.

If the senior citizens have a good experience with the university, they may choose to donate money to departments, faculty members or NU as a whole.

Older Nebraskans wouldn't

pay for tuition, but would be responsible for books, lab supplies and parking fees.

The participation of the elderly is also dependent on class size. For example, an older Nebraskan wouldn't get into a class before a paying student, Ferlic said.

Ferlic said if someone was disruptive in class, he or she would be prohibited from taking the class for free.

Ferlic's resolution is one of the few that starts from the NU Board of Regents, he said.

Usually, Ferlic said, resolutions that come before the board are generated by administrators from within the universities themselves.

"I truly wanted to see whether something could start in the board and work its way backwards," he said.

If the program was successful, the age limits could be lowered to 65.

Don Swoboda, dean of continuing studies, said while the plan seems like a good idea, details need to be sorted out before it's implemented.

The university already has a program for adults 50 years of age and older.

The program, Sharing Across Generations for Enrichment, offers more than 40 learning programs to members with an annual membership fee.

Swoboda said he didn't know if there was a strong demand for the program.

"There's a continuing, increased demand for the mature learning to continue learning," he said.

The Board of Regents will discuss the issue at its April meeting, Ferlic said.



CLEARING THE WAY: Nebraska Cross Country Coach Jay Dirksen clears snow off the Ed Weir Track for the track team's practice Wednesday afternoon.

Nathan Meschke/DN

Journalists rally in support of Daily Nebraskan

stood. The newspaper's funding still lies in the hands of student senators, who voted Wednesday after more than three hours of discussion, to table a decision on the Daily Nebraskan budget.

More than 20 people attended Wednesday's meeting in support of the newspaper, and Daily Nebraskan editors submitted 14 letters from journalists around the country speaking against the cuts.

Tom Kelly, publisher of the West Point News and a member of the Daily Nebraskan Publications Board, said the figures on which ASUN senators were basing their allocation recommendations were not in line with those at professional newspapers.

Forcing the newspaper to operate at 6- or 10 percent profit margins could destroy it financially, and perhaps cause the Daily Nebraskan to cease to exist, he said.

The newspaper made about \$100,000 profit on a nearly \$1 million budget in 1999-2000, Kelly said.

Though it might seem like a lot of money, those kind of profit margins don't make for rolling-in-the-dough businesses, he said.

"That is not a very good profit. Most newspapers expect to do twice that," he said.

Cutting student fees, which for the Daily Nebraskan are \$1.19 per student, per semester,

would only eat into the newspaper's profit and cause drastic cuts in services the newspaper provides, he said.

Some student senators contended the Daily Nebraskan's savings, totaling around \$300,000, were sufficient to make up for any loss in profit or student fees.

But Assistant Professor Charlyne Berens said cutting student fees would simply penalize the Daily Nebraskan for saving and investing its money wisely.

"Cutting off the funding is punishing the Daily Nebraskan for being prudent with its money and resources," Berens said.

Daily Nebraskan General Manager Dan Shattil said if advertising revenues, which the newspaper relies on to fund the majority of its operations, dropped, the newspaper would have to make cuts in the number of pages it prints daily, staff salaries and technological advancements.

Also, Berens said, the student newspaper doesn't have traditional subscription revenues to make up for any possible losses in advertising.

Berens, chairwoman of the news-editorial department, said the entire College of Journalism and Mass Communications supported the full Daily Nebraskan funding, not just because it provides a valuable service for students in general,

but because it serves as a valuable training ground for student journalists.

The newspaper has consistently ranked among the nation's best, Daily Nebraskan Editor Sarah Baker said.

Baker said cutting the newspaper's funding could jeopardize students' voices being heard in the future.

"If you care about the students and the university, you'll give us this money," Baker said.

Daily Nebraskan Managing Editor Bradley Davis cautioned senators that cutting student fees could, in the long run, turn into a free press issue.

If funds are dramatically cut,

Davis said, and the newspaper starts to lose money and then has to ask ASUN for more money, the student senate might put editorial constraints on the Daily Nebraskan.

"If you don't think this is a freedom of speech issue," Davis said, "you're wrong. And when you start talking about limiting freedom of the press, a lot of people get really mad, really quickly."

Plus, Davis said, the newspaper covers a lot of issues other local papers don't.

Case-in-point, he said: The controversy surrounding allegedly racially insensitive remarks made by NU Regent

Drew Miller.

The Daily Nebraskan printed the comments and editorialized against them, Davis said, before any other local media gave the issue any serious attention.

"The Daily Nebraskan has been consistently unafraid to publish stories that might raise some eyebrows or be controversial," Davis said. "In fact, I question whether you would have even known about this whole Drew Miller business had it not been for the Daily Nebraskan."

Said Sen. Angela Clements, who sponsored a bill to ask Miller to apologize: "Point well taken."

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