

# Daily Nebraskan

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**SWEET WEATHER:** Spanish graduate student Eva Paris comforts agricultural economics graduate student Ramiro Garcia during a late lunch break Thursday afternoon at the Nebraska Union. Temperatures Thursday reached the upper 40s.

Derek Lippincott/DN

## Bill could pull plug on death penalty

BY GEORGE GREEN

It's a dirty job, but someone has to do it. Or do they?

If Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha gets his way, no one will have to pull the switch to execute inmates in Nebraska's electric chair.

His bill, LB18, is the next edition in a long line of bills introduced in past years to abolish the death penalty and replace it with life in prison without parole. The bill also requires inmates to provide restitution to the families of their victims.

Chambers' annual efforts have never been successful. But last year lawmakers passed a bill to temporarily halt executions until a task force could study whether Nebraska judges apply execution sentences equitably.

Gov. Mike Johanns vetoed the death penalty moratorium but allowed the task force to form; its report is due on Aug. 1.

Despite his prior failures, Chambers stepped up to the plate again Thursday introducing his bill to Judiciary Committee.

A slew of proponents flanked Chambers; not a single opponent surfaced during the 1-1/2-hour hearing.

Former Gov. Frank Morrison said the state's model of justice was "equity before

### Legislature

decades of government work, the 95-year-old governor said he noticed a consistent trend in court decisions where judges march minorities off to their deaths, while whites get shuffled away to prison.

Anyone who thinks differently, he said "is living in a dream world."

And Morrison said government-sanctioned killing buffered the country's "epidemic of killing" highlighted this week by school shootings in California and Pennsylvania.

Proponents of capital punishment say the state has to destroy its most dangerous members to insure the safety of its citizens.

Kelly Keller, a representative of the archdiocese of Omaha, said such a claim was simply false.

"We do not need to kill criminals to render them harmless to society," she said.

These murderers, she said, can be locked away in secure facilities for as long as they live.

Please see EXECUTE on 8

## MIT professor to speak on gender issues

BY SHARON KOLBET

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Committee on Gender Equity will present the second "Honoring Women's Voices" conference today.

The keynote speaker for the event will be Nancy Hopkins, MIT professor of molecular biology.

In the 1990s, Hopkins became nationally known for her study documenting gender bias against women at MIT's School of Science.

In 1999, in response to Hopkins' investigation, MIT released a report acknowledging discrimination against female faculty members.

Since publishing the report, Hopkins has become a national spokeswoman on gender discrimination in academia.

"The results of our study were presented in a faculty publication. Later that article got picked up by The New York Times and Boston-area papers," Hopkins said in an interview. "Afterwards we were completely overwhelmed with e-mail on the topic."

Hopkins said soon after being featured in the national press, her office was flooded with phone calls from female researchers who said they were facing the same problems of discrimination at their institutions.

An important part of Hopkins' discrimination study focused on the amount of laboratory space given to female scientists.

"In the early days, I went around to every lab with a tape measure," Hopkins said.

Please see MIT on 8

## Students fight to keep chinese courses

BY LINDSEY BAKER

Coral Su wants to make sure the Nebraska Union's Imperial Palace Express restaurant isn't the only bit of Chinese culture UNL students see.

When Su, a UNL graduate student, heard the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures would phase out introductory Chinese courses next semester, she set up shop in the Nebraska Union to rally student support.

Thursday, she and students in Chinese classes spent the day at a display, asking for signatures from students enrolled or interested in Chinese courses.

Su has been teaching the university's Chinese classes in the absence of a professor.

"Chinese culture has really influenced a lot everywhere," Su said. "I think that the university, at least, should keep any kind of opportunity for students to explore through language."

Su said while people may enjoy Chinese food or Chinese movies, they could never really "dip into the culture" without speaking the language.

"Once you know the language, you can really eat the culture," she said. "Language is a power."

Radha Balasubramanian, interim chairwoman of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, said the choice to phase out introductory Chinese - secondary Chinese courses would still be offered - was not an easy choice. She said the main reason for the decision was a lack of funding.

"It was not a decision of choice from the modern language department, but the budget we have has made us decide," Balasubramanian said.

She said the return of introducto-

ry Chinese to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln was possible if the department could get grants to hire a lecturer.

She said she would begin looking into grant programs in May.

Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Mike Steinman said the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures made a decision based on budget and student interest.

He said last fall, four students enrolled in Chinese 201; this semester, he said, one person enrolled in the same course.

He said while the department had a tough decision to make, administrators decided to put their resources into programs where there was more student enrollment, such as French, Spanish and German.

Sophomore international business major Jon Puett, who is taking introductory Chinese, said the course was fun and beneficial.

"It's a lot of fun," Puett said. "It's really good for people to (learn) Chinese to explore a culture that's pretty cool."

He said he was going to Beijing to study and hoped he would have somewhere to go for instruction when he returned to UNL.

"I think language is important and should be kept at the university level," he said.

Su said she hoped many student signatures would show university administrators the interest in Chinese.

"I want the student voice to be heard," she said.

Though money is an issue, Su said, the university should look at the long-term effects of not exposing students to the language.

It's especially important to offer Chinese, Su said, with the country



Jennifer Lund/DN

Graduate Student Coral Su asks passing students at the Nebraska Union Thursday to sign a petition to keep Chinese classes at UNL. The Chinese program is in danger of being cut from UNL's curriculum because of a lack of funding and low student enrollment.

developing as an important economic market.

She said she hoped the program

would return but with more courses to develop students' skills.

"Language is the power," Su said.

## High schoolers visit senators to discuss politics, generate ideas

BY LAUREN ADAMS

Although many of them aren't old enough to vote yet, Nebraska senators want to hear their opinions.

On Monday, Nebraska high school students will have a chance to debate and discuss political issues with their senators.

The Warner Chamber in the Capitol building will serve for discussion and debate among the students.

Sen. Marian Price of Lincoln said she was excited to hear the ideas of the participants.

"I find it exciting to be around young people," she said. "They help me be a better senator."

Susan Cassata, a world history teacher at Lincoln Southeast High

School, said the students had been studying four topics of discussion: the environment, immigration, international relations and trade.

"I think the discussion series offers an opportunity to discuss topics they'll be making decisions about in the future," Cassata said.

Brown University provides high schools around the country, including those in Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Rhode Island, with the curriculum as part of the Capitol Forum on America's Future.

Students at Southeast met for four weeks after school to discuss the readings. Jillian Savage, a junior at Southeast, said the series sparked her interest in world issues.

"I've gotten a lot out of listening and working with others," Savage said.

"It's really helped me gain a deeper understanding of the types of things that are going on in the world today."

Savage said her involvement in the group led her and a friend to start an environmental newsletter to promote environmental awareness.

"It helped me see things you can do on a smaller scale to affect what's happening within the bigger picture," she said.

Program Secretary with the Nebraska Humanities Council, Angie Kruml said the forum at the Capitol would wrap up the series on controversial issues.

"It's a culmination of a year-long program that students have been studying," Kruml said.

This is the third forum in Nebraska, and Price said the students came well-prepared for discussion.

"It isn't just a day off from school," Price said. "They've done their homework."

She said each year had been a success.

"I look forward to this event every year," Price said. "I can't think of a better pulse of the community."

Sen. Jon Bruning of Sarpy County said students would benefit from exposure to the workings of state government.

"Any time young people can see how the government works, it's valu-

"I look forward to this event every year. I can't think of a better pulse of the community."

Marian Price  
Nebraska senator

able," he said.

Price said the students weren't the only ones who learned from the event.

"They aren't just picking my mind," she said. "They get a chance to express what's on theirs. No one goes home without new ideas."