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Chancellor negotiates UNL priority programs

BY LINDSEY BAKER

According to an e-mail sent to university faculty members from recently appointed Chancellor Harvey Perlman, UNL's list of priority programs is still tentative.

The e-mail, sent March 8, said the chancellor's office was negotiating several things. They include allowing deans to revise priority program decisions, possibly combining programs with common goals and, for now, not including "infrastructure units" — university libraries, museums and science facilities — in the list.

When revisions are finalized, Perlman said in the e-mail, the Academic Senate's Academic Planning Committee will review the list before it goes to the Board of Regents for approval.

Perlman said he sent the e-mail to acknowledge the concerns raised by faculty members about the list.

"It's still being tinkered with," Perlman said. "I think it's a good list. It's probably not perfect, but it's a good start."

Perlman said he hoped faculty members had a chance to provide accurate input at departmental levels and at the two sparsely attended forums held on the issue.

"Faculty input comes in a lot of different ways," Perlman said. "I hope that there was considerable faculty input at department and college levels that produced the priorities."

Academic Senate President Sheila Scheideler said she agreed faculty members' opinions have been heard.

She also said when the priority list was finalized, it had to remain a "working document," allowing for programs to be added or dropped.

"It can't just be put away," she said.

Jim Lewis, chairman of the senate's Academic Planning Committee, said his committee would do its best to review and make recommendations for improvement when they got the list, expected to be sent around April 1.

He said he thought Perlman's e-mail was helpful.

"I think Chancellor Perlman does a good job communicating with the faculty," Lewis said.

Merlin Lawson, dean of graduate studies and international affairs, said he thought faculty members have seized the opportunity to better the university, and the list had been received well by staff members.

"I'm very positive about the entire process," Lawson said.

He said he was pleased to see three programs from his two colleges on the list: study abroad, museum studies and survey research and methodology.

"As dean of international affairs, this is one of my highest priorities," he said.

Radha Balasubramanian, chairwoman of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, said she was excited French and Spanish programs made the list, and she appreciated Perlman's "open ear."

She said her department could now focus on proving other programs deserved to be priorities as well.

"The priorities are well-chosen," Balasubramanian said. "Now it's up to us to make sure all our programs are (on the list)."

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