

UNL grads seek teaching careers

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only with recruiters from Southern California on Thursday.

"I like the people, and I like the Midwest. But the pay is just too low," he said.

Wicherski said everyone he talked to said they planned on going out of state to work.

"They're losing everybody," he said.

But Nebraska's teacher salaries - which rank 45th in the nation - haven't gone unnoticed by state legislators.

The Legislature's Revenue Committee recently passed a bill proposing to increase the sales tax from 5 percent to 5.25 percent, with the raise going to fund teachers' pay.

And with the Legislature looking for ways to boost teacher pay, coupled with the closeness to home, not all Nebraska graduates want to go far.

James Freeman, director of recruitment for the Omaha Public Schools, said he was pleased with the number of stu-

dents who showed up for interviews.

In fact, Freeman wasn't even scheduled to man the OPS booth at the fair - the crowd of students caused his colleagues to call in Freeman for extra help.

But Freeman didn't mind because he knew he'd be recruiting top-notch teachers, he said.

"I go all over the country, and I feel UNL is superior," he said.

Jan Gleason, personnel administrator for the Omaha Public Schools, said the day was "absolutely fantastic."

"It's one of the best days we've ever had," she said.

Students were lined up, waiting to talk to Omaha recruiters, she said.

And while much of Nebraska faces a teacher salary crunch, Gleason said Omaha schools offered solid benefits packages that graduating Teachers College students like.

Keith Crocker, a UNL senior music education major, said he hoped to stay near Nebraska after graduation.

"Most of my family's in this area," he said. "I'd like to stay close to them."

"No matter where you are, it's not going to be much more money."

Keith Crocker
UNL senior music education major

For Crocker, money isn't the issue, he said.

"No matter where you are, it's not going to be much more money," he said.

Gene Hughes, director of special education at the Browning Public Schools in Browning, Mont., said he came to UNL to recruit special education teachers.

Browning Public Schools, located on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, has about 1,800 students attending its district schools, he said.

Hughes said he noticed most of the students flocked toward the recruiters from larger cities, such as Omaha, Kansas City and Denver.

"But we hit their lines and stole some people out of them," he said.

Hughes said he thought many students looked at where

a school was located, not how large it was.

"It seems a lot of graduates want to stay at home," he said.

Suzi Thompson, an elementary school principal at the Denver Public Schools, said she interviewed 34 people Thursday.

About 70,000 students attend schools in the Denver School District; more than 45,000 attend Omaha Public Schools.

Most of the UNL students Thompson interviewed were comparable with Colorado-trained students, she said.

At the recruitment fair, Thompson offered four contracts to students to work in the Denver schools.

"This is the first time Denver has sent people to Nebraska," she said. "I'm going to recommend we return in the future."

Schafer reflects on former presidency

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college at Creighton University in Omaha, but he transferred because he didn't think it was the right place for him.

Like many students, Schafer overcame obstacles in his personal life.

Throughout his life, Schafer said, he's battled the blues. But his sadness grew when he got to college, and his grades were dropping.

"I went through depression my sophomore year, and it got so bad that I considered dropping out," he said.

Schafer said everything changed when he talked to English professor Bob Bergstrom.

The professor, as well as counselors at the University Health Center, helped Schafer work through his problems.

If it weren't for Bergstrom, Schafer said, he would have left college and entered the workforce.

Schafer said his bout with depression - and the fact he got through it - gave him the confidence he needed to run for ASUN president.

"I had dealt with something that was really bad, and I beat it," he said. "I had this feeling like, 'I beat this, and I can do anything.'"

Schafer decided to run for president while sitting at a coffee shop with UNL senior Casey Brown. Schafer and Brown were discussing their dissatisfaction with the university.

"Kind of on a whim, I was like, 'Well, I'll run for ASUN president,'" he said.

"I wasn't happy with my place on campus," he said. "I felt

like I was just a number."

Schafer said he wasn't expecting to win. On the night of the run-off election, Schafer got up and started to make a speech that prepared the crowd for a loss.

"I really didn't think we were going to win," he said, "but in the middle of that speech I got the call that we did win."

After he was elected, a lot of people - including himself - doubted whether he would be a good president.

But, during his year as president, Schafer said he gained new leadership skills, including listening and becoming a better public speaker.

Hal Hansen, Government Liaison Committee chairman, said Schafer caught on quickly to the world of politics.

"For someone who doesn't have a background in politics, he took to it like a duck in water," he said.

Schafer was good at relating to all types of people, Hansen said.

Hansen said he had seen Schafer turn countless people's frowns into smiles.

"Students walk in absolutely hating Joel Schafer, and they leave the office thinking that Joel Schafer is the greatest president that ASUN ever had," he said. "And I'm not exaggerating."

Bergstrom, the professor who helped Schafer out of his depression, agreed Schafer did an excellent job as student government president.

"I'm very proud of him," he said. "I think all the university students should be proud of him. He's a good example of a University of Nebraska stu-

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Hal Hansen
Government Liaison Committee chairman

dent."

Schafer said that although he had a hectic schedule between school and governing, he made it home to Omaha almost every Sunday.

"Home is a great place to be," he said.

Schafer said his family had been an important support group for him.

"I have a great family who cares a lot about me," he said. "They believed in me when things were bad, and I didn't believe in myself."

Being a student member of the Board of Regents was also an important part of Schafer's job, he said.

Schafer said he was always prepared for the meetings and wasn't afraid of the regents.

"I didn't feel like they could push me around," he said. "I was never really intimidated."

The job did have its low points, though, Schafer said.

"I think the biggest challenge is the job can be a thankless job sometimes," he said.

Keeping senators motivated was also a big task, he said.

Stress is also a big part of being ASUN president, he said.

Schafer endured the rough times by turning to friends, family and his girlfriend.

"I relied a lot on the people close to me," he said. "I had peo-

ple around me who were really supportive."

All in all, Schafer said the positives of being ASUN president far outweighed the negatives.

"It was worth it," he said. "It was definitely worth it."

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Infectious disease could hurt farmers

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know if the United States has been taking the appropriate precautions to prevent the disease from penetrating its borders.

On March 16, Nelson mailed a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman that expressed his concerns about the disease.

"With the cattle industry alone a more than \$4 billion industry in Nebraska, you can understand my great concern about the possibility of a (foot-and-mouth disease) outbreak in this country," he said.

In the letter, Nelson asked if the U.S. Department of Agriculture could "fully monitor" all of the country's ports.

David DiMartino, a spokesman for Nelson, said the senator hadn't received a response yet.

Dr. Larry Williams, Nebraska's state veterinarian, said his agency and the federal government were combining forces to make sure livestock owners like Alexander never had to deal with the massive consequences of an outbreak.

Specifically, he said, the groups are trying to reword federal legislation so the Federal Emergency Management Agency could release emergency funds to help lessen the economic impact on owners of diseased animals.

Currently, the agency partially reimburses livestock owners who lose animals in other natural disasters, like floods and earthquakes.

The Nebraska Legislature is beefing up the state's ability to handle livestock diseases by outlining specific plans and injecting the effort with money.

Also, Williams said, the state has drawn up its own contin-

"With the cattle industry alone a more than \$4 billion industry in Nebraska, you can understand my great concern about the possibility of a (foot-and-mouth disease) outbreak in this country."

Sen. Ben Nelson
D-Neb.

gency plan so it could begin battling the problem before the federal government starts reacting.

And moving quickly was crucial to minimizing the possible outbreak's economic ramifications, he said.

"The time makes millions of dollars of difference," he said.

Under the plan, he said, government officials would immediately quarantine infected animals and restrict the movement of livestock in surrounding areas.

The state can't execute infected animals without the federal government's go-ahead, he said.

Before culling herds, he said, the Feds have to approve indemnity funds used to reimburse livestock owners for their losses.

With more than 6 million cattle roaming across Nebraska that are worth more than \$6 billion, Williams said, the federal government could get stuck handing out huge chunks of cash.

"It runs into the hundreds of millions of dollars quickly," he said.

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New tests beneficial in real world

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person toward different careers.

Stuhr said the state had gone about its business differently in the past, but new conditions demand new programs.

"We have to look at changing the direction we're going," she said.

Sen. Bob Wickersham of Harrison said he wouldn't let new conditions isolate students.

"We should not use a testing method to set aside some students," he said.

Stuhr said the program would not pit student against student because all students in districts that request the funds would get the chance to take the test.

"These programs are available to all students," she said.

Students aside, Wickersham said, it wasn't wise to create another educational program when a massive, multi-million dollar teacher-pay proposal is looming.

Plus, he said, bumping up the state's teacher pay, which ranks 45th in the nation, is a more "compelling" need than creating the fund.

Not all of the senators, though, felt the state dollars would be

wasted.

Sen. Ray Aguilar of Grand Island said the program would help students decide whether technical schools - as opposed to colleges and universities - were a better fit for them.

"This is really a great idea," he said.

The University of Nebraska, which draws the majority of Nebraska students, is planning to raise tuition soon, he said. By letting students know if they need to shell out the extra bucks for an education, he said, the state would be doing its youth a great service.

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha wasn't ready to condemn the idea of guiding students to areas where they would excel.

But, he said, the program simply doesn't have the financial backbone it needs to be effective.

Originally, the fund was slated to receive \$1.5 million of state money. In committee, lawmakers reduced that number to \$500,000.

And, Chambers said, \$500,000 just isn't enough to do much on the state level.

A few thousand dollars might help a small, rural district, he said. In Omaha, though, he said, a few

grand is merely a drop in the bucket.

"Too little can sometimes be worse than nothing at all," he said.

More importantly, he said, teachers should already be teaching skills that are so fundamentally necessary.

If they're not, he said, perhaps they don't deserve the extra money the state is working to give them.

Chambers lambasted the Omaha Public School District for testifying in favor of the bill because by giving the bill its stamp of approval, it essentially admitted that it wasn't doing its job.

Chambers said every student should receive instruction in a variety of skills. If the state sends its students off on different "tracks," he said, it will push some students toward "any-and-all" opportunities while dooming others to limited jobs.

Stuhr said the state would simply be filling in a gap in instruction and helping students learn what was best for them.

Chambers questioned the size of the gap in instruction.

"If \$500,000 will solve the (problem), we don't have a problem," he said.



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