



The President's Year End Report 2007 - 2008

March 26, 2008

"I swore to myself if I ever got to walk around the room as manager, people would laugh as they saw me coming, and they'd applaud as I walked away."

-- Michael Scott

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Introduction

The 2007-2008 ASUN Senate compiled an impressive body of work. Over the course of a single academic year, the Senate considered 85 pieces of legislation, allocated some \$16.9 million in student fees, and approved the appointments of 123 students to various campus-wide committees, boards, and advisory groups.

The summaries which follow (in no particular order) are brief descriptions of some of the major achievements by student government in 2007-2008 but in no way provide a comprehensive picture. Most of the topics which follow involved considerable discussion, research, and involvement by many parties to whom the proper credit due will likely never be proffered.

1. Student Fees

University Program and Facilities Fees (UPFF)

Owing in large part to the outstanding work of the ASUN Committee for Fee Allocation (CFA), UPFF will only increase about 4% for the 2008-2009 academic year. UPFF funds historically grow at about 9% annually. Notably, each of the fee users (University Health Center, Recreation Center, Transit Services, etc) did an admirable job presenting conservative budgets. In total, ASUN allocated more than \$16.9 million in student fees to UPFF users.

The ASUN Senate did agree to increase the Daily Nebraskan printing and distribution fee by 50% to \$1.33 per semester to provide the newspaper an opportunity to pursue online ventures.

ASUN requested about a 6% decrease in fee funding yet was able to make progress nudging salaries of the staff in Student Legal Services toward peer averages and increasing funding to The Big Event.

Academic Fees

In February 2008, the ASUN Senate recommended no increase to the Technology Fee (\$7.35 / credit hour). A bill to increase the Library Fee from \$2 per credit hour to \$3 per credit hour to fund rising serials costs was vetoed. A subsequent bill to do the same but with a cap on the number of hours to which the Library Fee could be applied failed in the Senate. Thus, the ASUN recommendation is that both the Technology Fee and the Library Fee remain at their current levels.

In the March 2008 elections, students responded to survey questions regarding the Technology and Library Fees. Over 63% of those responding approved keeping the Technology Fee at its current level, while more than 66% of those responding opposed increasing the Library Fee from \$2 to \$3 per credit hour.

Mabel Lee Fields

After Chancellor Perlman and Vice Chancellor Franco agreed to appropriate \$700,000 and \$400,000 respectively, ASUN recognized the timeliness and opportunity of leveraging student fees to install synthetic turf athletic fields near Mabel Lee Hall and gave a qualified nod of approval to Campus Recreation to do so with SR #16 in November 2007 (thus circumventing the normal fee allocation process). Although the resolution supported spending \$600,000 in student fees, subsequent savings have reduced the student fee impact to \$500,000 to be paid by students over a period of 5 years. The impact per student is around \$2 per semester.

Campus Recreation and University Health Center Expansion

Both Campus Recreation and the University Health Center have expressed interest in renovating and/or expanding their facilities. Namely, the Campus Recreation facilities on East Campus and the University Health Center are badly in need of updates. In November 2007, the ASUN Executive Committee requested that the Health Center and Campus Recreation explore a joint facility and present a proposal before any decision to expand is made.

2. Tuition and Student Loans

In January 2008, the ASUN Senate passed GB #16, calling on the NU Board of Regents to revise the NU Strategic Framework such that the metric which guides decisions on setting tuition would be tied to an economic index such as the Consumer Price Index or the Higher Education Price Index. Realizing that tuition is growing at twice the rate of inflation, the Senate requested a more concrete guidepost be used when setting tuition increases.

In response to national attention on student loan abuses, the ASUN Senate passed SR #7 encouraging the UNL Scholarships and Financial Aid Office to provide better information regarding student lender preferences to graduate and professional students.

3. Civic Participation Project

Fundamental to the mission of ASUN (and indeed the University) is fostering a better informed, more civically engaged student body. This administration identified two components to improving civic participation: education and removing structural barriers. To this end, and driven in large part by the ASUN Government Liaison Committee, ASUN developed a number of proposals collectively identified as the Civic Participation Project.

Election Day Registration

The headline proposal of the Civic Participation Project was a landmark piece of legislation introduced in the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature by Sen. Ray Aguilar of Grand Island that would allow Nebraska citizens to register to vote on Election Day and remove the 10 day barrier that exists currently. This legislation was developed by ASUN and introduced at the request of students across the state. It received the Lincoln Journal Star's endorsement because of its potential to substantially increase turnout among young, mobile, and minority voters. The GLC worked tirelessly building statewide support and lobbying state senators for its passage. Unfortunately, the legislation died a quiet death in the Government, Military, and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Polling Location

The GLC successfully lobbied Lancaster County Election Commissioner David Shively to move the Lincoln Precinct 3D (City Campus) polling location from the Devaney Center to the Nebraska Union and also to redraw Precinct 3D boundaries to only include City Campus. The new location should be more accessible to students.

Voter Registration Cards

Voter registration cards are now available in the N-card office.

Get Out the Vote Campaign

ASUN sponsored registration drives in conjunction with the Lancaster County Election Commissioner's office and is pursuing federal grants to fund the recruitment and training of student poll workers for the 2008 primary and general elections. Several ASUN members have already been deputized as State of Nebraska Deputy Registrars.

Online Voting

In a watershed moment and after many years of discussion, ASUN advanced to the student body for a referendum vote a constitutional amendment to switch to online voting as the primary method of casting ballots in ASUN elections. The constitutional amendment received nearly 72% approval from the student body.

The vendor for the new online system will be selected by the 2008-2009 Electoral Commission whose duty it will be to revise new rules regarding campaigning and use of the online system.

4. Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA)

In late February 2007, the RIAA began targeting college students across the nation in a campaign to reduce the illegal downloading and sharing of music via peer to peer (P2P) networks. Targeted students at UNL receive an email notice from the RIAA via Information Services and are given the choice between paying a \$3,000 settlement or risking a lawsuit. Among the most targeted schools in the nation, to date some 156 UNL students have been singled out for illegally downloading music by the RIAA.

Identifying this situation as one of the most important facing students, in September 2007 the ASUN Senate passed a comprehensive package of legislation aimed at addressing the myriad impacts of the RIAA's campaign against college students. Components include the following:

Education

Informing students of the risks they face should they choose to download music illegally is at the heart of the ASUN package. The education component spurred the development of posters and pamphlets (distributed to residence halls and Greek houses), online notices to new campus network users, and notices to users downloading unusually large amounts of data.

Student Legal Services

ASUN requested that SLS develop a referral program so that targeted students have the ability to quickly and cheaply retain legal counsel. SLS also produced letters explaining the situation which accompany the notices sent by the RIAA to targeted students.

Legal Alternatives

ASUN directed the Special Topics Committee to review and recommend alternatives to downloading music illegally. This list of recommendations is available on the ASUN website.

UNL Network Policy Recommendations

ASUN made two recommendations to UNL administration regarding a reaction to the RIAA's campaign. First, ASUN does not support the implementation of a technological solution the problem, fearing that a knee-jerk reaction might stifle the flow of legitimate information at an institution of higher learning. Second, ASUN supports the current network policy and student code of conduct relating to network behavior and does not support the implementation of a "reconnection fee" for those students singled out by the RIAA.

GLC Directive

ASUN opposes federal legislation introduced at the request of the RIAA mandating that the worst offending schools implement technological solutions or risk losing funding. In September 2007, the ASUN Senate directed the GLC to contact Nebraska's Congressional representatives and express this opposition.

5. Housing

Freshmen Assigned to Live with Resident Assistants

Due to increased enrollment, at the beginning of the 2007 Fall Semester, students faced a severe shortage of on-campus housing. Many students were temporarily forced to live with Resident Assistants, in lounges, or on East Campus. This policy created tensions with new students, parents, and RA's. In October 2007, the Senate passed SB #8 recommending that University Housing exhaust all other options before assigning freshmen to live with RA's.

LGBTQI Students

Acknowledging the potential for discriminatory attention in the roommate reassignment process, in October 2007 the Senate passed legislation directing the ASUN Campus Life Committee to work with Dr. Zatechka, Dr. Tetreault, and Dr. Winrow to develop a confidential and expeditious process to reassign lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex students experiencing difficulties with their roommates.

Transgender and Intersex Student Housing

The ASUN Senate expressed its intent in SB #11 to work with Housing to provide safe and welcoming housing options to transgender and intersex students and also recommended that Housing provide information regarding such options to Residence Life staff.

6. The ASUN Government Liaison Committee (GLC)

The GLC continues to evolve as one of the most active and involved elements of student government. Charged with conveying student opinion to governmental entities off-campus and facilitating and encouraging civic activity among students, the GLC is organizing around local, state, and national levels of government and is now being replicated in form and function by schools across Nebraska and across the Big XII. Some of the 2007-2008 highlights include:

Big XII On the Hill

UNL participated for the first time in Big XII on the Hill, sending four students including ASUN executives and members of the GLC to Washington D.C. to lobby for affordability and accessibility in higher education. Meeting with the entire Nebraska delegation, ASUN representatives focused on increasing Pell Grants, decreasing interest rates on student loans, reducing unfunded mandates in the Higher Education Reauthorization Act, and promoting research. Funding for the trip was secured from the Office of the Chancellor, Office of Research, Student Affairs Division, and ASUN.

Local Issues

Connections at the local level paid off in 2007 as ASUN avoided \$450 in city fees relating to the Homecoming Parade thanks to lobbying by the GLC. GLC representatives engaged REOMA

officials on a number of off-campus housing issues and held discussions with the Lincoln Police Department on safety and behavior issues. The ASUN Senate also expressed support for the 2015 Vision Group and has continued to participate in public forums when possible.

State Issues

In addition to introducing and supporting Election Day Registration legislation, GLC members were directed by the Senate to research and support: deficit funding for the student information system, a sales tax-free holiday for school-related goods, and the proposed Nebraska Innovation Campus at the currently existing State Fair Park. GLC was directed to oppose proposed changes in Nebraska immigration policy that would bar children of undocumented workers from receiving in-state tuition rates at the University of Nebraska.

The GLC is also currently building an official relationship with the Nebraska Secretary of State to facilitate continued discussion around increasing civic participation among college students.

In February 2008, ASUN unanimously passed SR #18 opposing a proposed Nebraska constitutional amendment that would end affirmative action in higher education among other things.

Federal Issues

The GLC was directed to oppose changes in Medicaid subsidies increasing the price of oral contraceptives on college campuses and to support debt relief for married students. In addition, in response to fire safety concerns and numerous capital campaigns to raise funds for sprinkler systems in Greek houses, GLC supported changes in federal tax policy such that donations to non-profit housing entities (i.e. Greek houses) would be tax exempt.

Statewide GLC Conference

In the fall of 2007, GLC hosted student government representatives from UNK, UNO, and Creighton encouraging the creation of a similar government relations program at each of their respective campuses and future collaboration between the campuses on issues of mutual interest. The program included a briefing on structure, the 2007-2008 GLC agenda, and examples of successful GLC efforts.

7. Safe Assignment

After several semesters of negotiation with the Faculty Senate, the ASUN Senate finally passed a set of usage policies for the online plagiarism detection software known as Safe Assignment (or Safe Assign today). Although considerable discussion took place about potentially infringing students' intellectual property rights, the Senate ultimately felt it important to ensure regulated usage of this controversial software rather than leave students totally unprotected. The Senate also directed the Academic Fees Advisory Committee to explore how Safe Assignment was being funded. The AFAC reported no student fees were being used to purchase or maintain Safe Assignment.

8. Campus Tragedies and Emergency Response

Following tragic shootings at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University, ASUN passed resolutions offering condolences to those affected. In conjunction with Student Involvement, ASUN organized posters where UNL students could sign their names and send a short message to their peers at Virginia Tech and NIU. ASUN also sponsored a vigil in the wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy.

The ASUN Communications Committee subsequently worked with University Police to develop and test UNL alert, an emergency response system that works to inform students via phone, text message, email, or any combination of the three about potential dangers.

9. Entering the Twenty-First Century

Noting little progress over the past few years on the outdated ASUN website, in April 2007 ASUN contracted with a web developer to create a new website on the user-friendly Joomla platform. On top of conveying basic information about ASUN, the new site has the ability to podcast, post blogs, run polls, and do many other things. It promises to be a fantastic resource for ASUN well into the future.

Importantly, this year the Communications Committee undertook a complete overhaul of all existing ASUN literature and with SB #7 implemented a new ASUN logo.

Finally, the ASUN office was reorganized to provide more computers and work space for students. The ASUN Vice Presidents moved into the office of the President and space was created for a small conference room. Most importantly, a larger TV was acquired from Inventory and cable TV was introduced for the first time to the ASUN office.

10. The Big Event

In its third year, the Big Event continues to be the preeminent service project at UNL, bringing positive community attention to the University and introducing and emphasizing to students the importance of community service. In 2008 the Big Event will turn out 1,470 students to volunteer their time in the Lincoln community. The Big Event Executive Team is coordinating with 73 community service agencies to site students around Lincoln and has raised more than \$9,750 in cash and in-kind contributions to fund the project.

11. RSO Programming Costs

After the controversial Genocide Awareness Project visited campus in October 2007, several ASUN representatives met with Dr. Franco, Owen Yardley, John Wiltse, Chris Jackson, and Dr. Susan Poser and agreed to eliminate any charges accruing to RSO's for security purposes for campus programming. Eliminating these charges removed any potential for conflicts with free speech and served to further encourage campus programming and discussion around political issues.

12. Employee Plus One Benefits

Building on continued student interest in providing benefits to domestic partners of faculty members, in October 2007 the ASUN Academic Committee recommended to the Senate that research be conducted to explore the impact of an employee plus one benefits program at UNL. The Senate complied and passed SB #12 which spurred the Executive Committee to create and charge the Ad-Hoc Committee on Employee Plus One Benefits with the following:

- a. Do a thorough and critical review of programs, policies and practices that are similar in nature to an Employee Plus One benefits program.
- b. Develop a report to be submitted to the ASUN Senate

The finished report was distributed to the Senate and to the administration in February 2008.

13. Wheelchair Basketball

In March 2008, ASUN built into its bylaws an annual event to recognize and foster interaction with students with disabilities. Wheelchair Basketball, now in its second year, will raise money for an annual scholarship for a student with a disability. In 2007 the event raised more than \$1,000.

14. Focus the Nation

With GB #13, the Senate endorsed the local implementation of a week-long series of activities relating to climate change called "Focus the Nation." Co-chaired and executed by representatives from ASUN and the E.N. Thompson Learning Community, UNL Focus the Nation programmed lectures from various faculty members, national webcasts, a low-carbon footprint meal, an environmental fair, a discussion with policymakers, and film showings among other things during the week of January 31, 2008. UNL Focus the Nation was highlighted during a national NPR broadcast and served to spark further collaboration among environmentally-oriented groups and individuals on campus.

15. Chancellor's Commission on Environmental Sustainability

Capturing momentum gained during UNL Focus the Nation, in late March and early April both the ASUN Senate and the Faculty Senate called on Chancellor Perlman to create a Chancellor's Commission on Environmental Sustainability. Student and faculty driven, the Commission is charged with the following:

The Commission's primary responsibility shall be to recommend to the Chancellor, and other members of the campus administration where appropriate, environmentally responsible practices and policies. The Commission shall regularly assess campus environmental policies, solicit recommendations and advice from interested parties, foster campus discussions of environmental and ecological issues, and communicate to the Chancellor the environmental and ecological implications of University policies and decisions.

In exercising these responsibilities, the Commission shall consider the economic feasibility of its suggestions. The overriding purpose of the Commission is to search for policies and programs that are both environmentally sound and cost-effective.

16. Achievement Centered Education – Revisions to the General Education Program

After nearly three years of work by the General Education Advisory Committee (composed of 20 faculty members and 2 ASUN-appointed students), a new comprehensive general education program will take effect in the fall of 2009. ASUN expressed its support for the general education program in SR #17.

17. Freshmen Campus Leadership Associates (FCLA)

FCLA continues to introduce new generations of freshmen to student government. The FCLA program underwent major revisions for the 2007-2008 year. A solidified curriculum, ASUN 101, was developed and an internship program with ASUN executives and committees was created. FCLA continued to organize the Homecoming Parade, volunteer at the Big Red Road Show, and maintain the YearOne website. In March 2008, FCLA codified many of the changes and much of its programming in its own internal bylaws for the first time and ASUN adopted changes to its own bylaws with Bylaw Amendment D reflecting the new and much improved FCLA program.

18. Diversity Strategic Development Committee

Recognizing the need for a body to provide awareness to ASUN, student organizations, and the University community regarding enhancing inclusiveness on campus, in March 2008 the Senate passed landmark legislation in Bylaw Amendment E creating the ASUN Diversity Strategic Development Committee and adopting a diversity statement. The Diversity Strategic Development Committee will be composed of both students affiliated and students not affiliated with ASUN and will make recommendations on policy and structure to improve diversity within student government.

19. Husker Traditions Camp

During the summer of 2007, the ASUN executives traveled to Norman, Oklahoma, to observe Camp Crimson, a camp designed to instill tradition and ease the transition into college for participating incoming freshmen. The ASUN executives were accompanied by staff and administration from the Office of Admissions, Student Involvement, and University Housing. The trip to Norman initiated the development of a similar program at UNL that will take place for the first time in July 2008. Part of the mission of this camp will be to revive lost traditions and emphasize new ones to future Husker generations.

20. Student Email System

In February 2008 at the request of Dr. Susan Poser, a small panel of students was formed to meet with representatives from Microsoft and Google to discuss outsourcing the student email system. The ASUN Student Email Panel met privately with both representatives and issued a recommendation to Dr. Poser on March 3. For a number of reasons, the Student Email Panel recommended Google be selected to provide email services to the student body.

21. Bookstore Contract

Two ASUN representatives served on the committee reviewing contracts for the campus bookstore. After a rigorous review, the committee supported Follett primarily due to lower markups on new and used textbooks and higher buyback prices for used books.

22. Migration Game

After a statistical tie in the initial online poll between the University of Oklahoma and Kansas State for the 2008 Husker Football Migration Game, Oklahoma captured 60% of the vote in the run-off poll. GB #22 officially identified Oklahoma as the 2008 migration game.

23. NU on Wheels

Recognizing severe problems with the current NU on Wheels program, in the fall of 2007 ASUN ran a Blackboard poll in which the majority of respondents returned negative answers to the survey question. Owing to the cab companies in Lincoln not using computers and an overwhelming amount of hand-written data, detailed analysis of the program is difficult. To combat this data problem, ASUN is investing in a student worker for the 2008-2009 academic year to compile and sort NU on Wheels data. In addition, another 475-RIDE phone line was added at ASUN's expense.

24. Student Football Seating

In early November 2007, the ASUN Executive Committee presented two proposals to a Fan Behavior Committee addressing changes to the football student section. These proposals aimed to match policy to practice: one created a new hybrid "block" system and one specified a general admission system of ticketing based on class standing.

In February 2008, the Athletic Department notified ASUN representatives that one of the proposals (general admission) had been adopted but that other additional changes to the student section would take place for the 2008 season. Namely, the boundaries of the student section would be redrawn to address complaints from season ticket holders seated behind the student section about students standing during the game. The ASUN representatives opposed this particular change and privately made overtures to administration in the weeks that followed regarding removing this proposed change. In March 2008, the Athletic Department confirmed publicly all the above changes. The Senate responded with SR #22 supporting the switch to general admission and with SR #23 opposing the changes to the seats included in the student section.

25. Legislative Calendar

One of the major organizational innovations of this administration was the introduction of a legislative calendar. The calendar added an element of stability to scheduling major legislation and smoothed the ups and downs of legislative activity over the course of the year. In a move that paid dividends in facilitating communication and collaboration between the Executives and the Senate, the Speaker was given control over the legislative calendar.

26. ASUN Elections

On March 5, 2008, some 2,816 students (13.3%) turned out to vote in the ASUN elections. There were 132 different candidates on the ballot.