

MSA director a vital position now

Tuition is going up. A new health fee is in effect. Academic scholarships and financial aid are dwindling. Health insurance costs have increased. Yet despite the additional expense shouldered out by students, faculty positions are being cut and student services are suffering.

In light of a \$1.8 million state budget cut this summer, UNLV has wined and dined the budget in an attempt to compensate for this lack of appropriate funding.

However, our administration seems to be taking a survival-of-the-fittest standpoint and the under-represented minority population at UNLV is among the growing casualty list.

In the last two years, UNLV has been subjected to a \$12 million loss in state funds. As a consequence, the administration has raised tuition and imposed a hiring freeze to combat a shrinking budget. And like a university with its leg caught in a budgetary trap, UNLV is chewing off its limbs in a vain attempt to ration the precious amount of funding it is still allotted in the state budget.

Vice President of Student Services Robert Ackerman estimates that, to date, 70 positions have been affected by a hiring freeze. He encouragingly admitted that no one is being fired...yet. The freeze means that when an employee leaves their position, it is left vacant.

Tony Gladney, the former director of the Multicultural Student Affairs office, left his position to become a student academic advisor for the football program in early July. Gladney was a star player of the Rebel football team who went on to

play professionally.

He returned to the ranks of UNLV as director of MSA to strengthen UNLV commitment to minority student concerns. He revised and revamped a mentoring program and instigated a variety of valuable programs geared toward recruiting and retaining multicultural students. Sadly, a mediocre salary which he was and a promising job opportunity elsewhere drove him to the athletic department.

Initially, the administration formed a search committee to review applications and interview qualified applicants to replace Gladney. But within two weeks, the freeze was initiated and the office was slated to be closed.

Kris Miller, a former clerical assistant at MSA and a self-described student with "ethnicity," sounded the battle cry that led to a minor squabble with Ackerman's office and the administration because of their alleged disregard of minority student needs.

Student Services immediately responded by voicing concern over the closure of the multicultural office. However, the office remains closed.

To continue the services offered by the office an interim coordinator has been hired for the benefit of multicultural students. However, Velicia Haron performs these duties in conjunction with her full-time position as an academic advisor. She is credited with maintaining MSA services, especially the gains she has made with the mentoring program.

Nonetheless, Haron is taking on the responsibilities once filled by two full-time people. No one doubts her ability, but we

question the university's true commitment to minority students.

A Multicultural Student Affairs director is a vital position for promoting a more balanced university atmosphere. It should not be classified with the secretarial and assistant positions which are subject to closure under the current freeze.

"This office is responsible for enhancing ethnic diversity," said Haron. "It needs institutional commitment and institutional dollars."

In response to university claims that UNLV can't afford this position, the administration must realize that UNLV can't afford not to fill this position. The percentage of minority students at UNLV is dropping while overall enrollment is increasing. This is a detrimental trend that must not continue.

The multicultural office is scheduled for budgetary consideration in March 1993. Until then, it will continue to be administrated by Haron on a part-time basis.

Students dismayed by what they perceive to be administrative appeasement have formed the Multicultural Student Coalition, of which Miller is a member. She hopes the group will attract administrative interest in minority concerns as well as "form a cohesiveness among different ethnic people to combat stereotypes between cultural groups and desegregate different ethnic groups."

The above is the opinion of The Rebel Yell. All other inclusions on the opinion page reflect the opinions of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of The Rebel Yell staff.

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