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2-1-2006

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The Leading Object

The Morrill Act of 1862 established a Land Grant University in each state where The Leading Object would be instruction in agriculture and related fields.

IANR

February 2006

Perspectives

John C. Owens
NU Vice President and
Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR

As the Nebraska Legislature works its way through its 60-day session, the University seeks support for a bill concerning University buildings, and two other high-priority funding needs for which President J.B. Milliken and Regent Charles Wilson testified before the Appropriations Committee February 9.

The bill, LB 605, is a deferred maintenance initiative to issue revenue bonds necessary to renovate or replace 11 projects on NU's four campuses. Carried over from last session, the bill requests $154.5 million for renovations, including $20 million dollars for IANR's Animal Science Complex, and $14 million for Keim Hall.

Adequate buildings and infrastructure are key to carrying out our land-grant university mission for Nebraska. Everything on LB 605's projects list is central to University teaching, research, and outreach.

In the past few years, University researchers and extension faculty have been increasingly successful in seeking competitive research grants that bring millions of dollars of outside funding to Nebraska's University, and support hundreds of jobs. Yet we know this won't continue at its current level if we lack adequate facilities, including laboratory space, equipment, technology infrastructure, and a work environment that is safe, accessible, and usable.

University buildings represent 72 percent of all state building assets. As good stewards, we must protect and invest in those assets to ensure safety, accessibility, and usability.

Two high-priority funding needs for which the University seeks legislative action include a deficit appropriation request to help with rising utility costs, and funding for the University's remedial investigation and clean-up expenses at the Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead.

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Priority Legislative Bill Seeks to Renovate Animal Science Complex, Keim Hall

Brett Hampton

Animal Science Complex, East Campus.

Research and education done in the Animal Science Complex promotes Nebraska's livestock and meat processing industry, while that done in Keim Hall promotes crops production, feed, forage, and horticultural industries.

Deterioration of the buildings, however, threatens the advancement of research to keep those industries strong in Nebraska.

That's why IANR is happy to see the Nebraska Legislature show support for LB605, a measure that will result in renovation of those two buildings as well as nine other buildings on the University of Nebraska–Lincoln City Campus, the University of Nebraska at Kearney, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Senator Don Pederson of North Platte, Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, has made LB605 his priority bill this session, increasing its chances of being voted on this year. The bill was introduced last year by Senator Nancy Thompson of LaVista.

"There's a lot of support for it," said Alan Moeller, IANR Assistant Vice Chancellor for Finance and Personnel. "When the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee supports the bill, there is not much more you can hope for."

NU has made LB605 its highest legislative priority this year. Under the bill, bonds would be sold and paid for with $154 million in contributions from the state and the university from the 2006-07 fiscal year through 2020-21.

UNL Facilities Management identified the Animal Science Complex and Keim Hall as the two East Campus buildings most in need of renovation, Moeller said.

The bill pledges $20 million for the renovation of Animal Science and $14 million for Keim. Renovations would include heating, ventilation, air conditioning, electrical, and plumbing work in both buildings.

Animal Science Professor Roger Mandigo said the building's ventilation system has been wearing out over time.

Brett Hampton

Keim Hall, East Campus.

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Right now it's estimated the utility deficit for the University is $5.8 million. For the first six months of the fiscal year, utility expenses ran 22 percent ahead of last year. We're fortunate we had a mild January and February.

For the Mead clean-up, the University requests $6.9 million over two years. Project costs are estimates based on what's known to date.

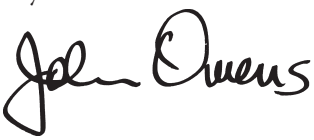
In the 1970s, UNL and the University of Nebraska Medical Center legally buried chemical and low-level radioactive waste at the ARDC. Now the Environmental Protection Agency says the University must conduct a remedial investigation/feasibility study to determine contamination extent, and what's needed to address the buried waste. Actual costs won't be known until EPA selects remediation methods.

The governor did not include this or the utilities request in his state budget, but did ask the Nebraska Environmental Trust to fund the ARDC clean-up. We are on the Trust's preliminary priority list, and we thank them for their support. Their final decision may wait until after the Legislature takes action on the deficit request because the question has been raised as to whether the Trust can fund remediation unless it is clear no other funds are available for this work.

We hope the Legislature will fund at least $3.9 million of the total remediation cost, which would address the concern of clarifying what other funds are available, and then ask the Nebraska Environmental Trust to fund any remaining amount.

If the University doesn't receive legislative funding for utilities and remediation at ARDC, we will face more permanent budget cutting to cover utilities increases, and UNL and the Medical Center will need to cover the one-time cost of the Mead remediation, which for us will mean still more budget cuts.

These cuts, on top of those recently endured, and cuts we'll see because of the UNL tuition revenue shortfall, will be very, very difficult to make if no financial help is forthcoming. We certainly appreciate the Legislature's thoughtful consideration of these needs so important to the future of the University.



Need to meet with the

Vice President/Vice Chancellor?
Drop-ins each Friday from 3-5 p.m.*

John C. Owens

NU Vice President for
Agriculture and Natural Resources
and Harlan Vice Chancellor of IANR

202 Ag Hall • (402) 472-2871

*Occasionally Dr. Owens will be called away on University business.

Cockrill receives February OEA

Cockrill

Kathi Cockrill, Staff Secretary III in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, has received the Outstanding Employee Award for Office/Service Staff for February.

Comments received in favor of Cockrill's nomination included, "Kat is able to juggle many projects at once, set priorities, and use her time wisely to complete projects." Another said, "she is a highly trained individual with exceptional organizational skills and a dedication to professional development that makes her indispensable to those she works with."

Cockrill received $250, a certificate, and a lapel pin.

NCTA Dedicates Calving Facility

The Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis has dedicated a new calving facility and thanked donors to the Andy Knepp Fund, which provided money for the facility.

The fund was created to honor the 50 years of service Knepp has given to the college as farm manger. Money generated is used to buy and update equipment and facilities used in NCTA's Department of Production Agriculture.

The new facility was dedicated on February 8. A plaque listing donors was placed in the NCTA Livestock Teaching Center Arena.

Priority Legislative Bill Seeks to Renovate Animal Science Complex, Keim Hall

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"The air-handling system is way beyond repair," he said. "A building that has this many animals and heavy use of classroom by students in it needs to have good ventilation not only for the animals but for the people who work here."

At Animal Science, repairs also would be made to the roof and exterior brickwork. At Keim, work also would include reconfiguring interior space, meeting standards for the Americans with Disabilities Act, meeting building codes, and repairing elevators and sprinklers.

"Those are the buildings through which new ideas will come that are going to have a huge part of the future economic development of Nebraska," said John Owens, NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor of IANR.

"Quite simply, we've just got to have our faculty and our students and our staff in the right kind of buildings to continue to conduct the great work that this land-grant university does for our state."

"The animal industry and the plant industry are core to agriculture in Nebraska," Moeller said. "Both these facilities are critical to the education of students and the generation of new knowledge through research. Without that research, you cannot expand that knowledge to citizens to enhance their daily lives."

– Lori McGinnis

Editor - Lori McGinnis • Layout - Anne Moore

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The Leading Object is published monthly for all IANR staff members by Communications & Information Technology. Questions or story ideas may be directed to the editor at 106 ACB, 0918; via e-mail (lmcginnis2@unl.edu) or via fax (402-472-0025).

Development Director Chosen Beef Council Chair

Nebraska beef producer Ann Bruntz is one busy woman.

She is completing her first year as IANR's Director of Development for the University of Nebraska Foundation. Last month, she was chosen 2006 Chair of the Nebraska Beef Council.

In her spare time, she and her husband David tend to their cattle feeding and farming operation.

Generating money for IANR, meeting past donors, and planting seeds for future gifts have highlighted her first year with the Foundation.

"The Institute is a great institution and it's for all of the people of Nebraska," she said. "It's not just bricks and mortar in Lincoln. It's across the state."

Many agree with her philosophy. She finds that alumni generally are more than willing to give back to the institution that has given so much to them, she said.

"I get to meet with the people who have attended the university and find out what the Institute has done for them. They are willing to give back, whether it is $25 or $25,000."

The gifts given to the Institute raise money for scholarships, professorships, and other programs. They could be "anything from a horse for Animal Science to a professorship and everything in between," she said.

She was elected two years ago to the Beef Council by producers in 16 southeast Nebraska counties. Last year she was Vice Chair and "I've risen through the ranks."

The Beef Council supervises the state's beef checkoff program. During her term with the council, Bruntz has seen the focus of the checkoff evolve. It is not just about advertising anymore. The beef checkoff has resulted in new, non-traditional beef cuts and more convenient beef products, some developed with the help of IANR research.

Bruntz

"Different factors drive the food-buying decisions of today's consumers, so the beef industry must respond accordingly," she said.

Annie's Project Helps Women Become More Integral Part of Family Farm Operations

A program facilitated by University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension is helping women learn to become more of an integral part of a family's farm operation.

Annie's Project is a six-week course for women that teaches a variety of aspects dealing with farm operation, said Beth Eberspacher, Administrative Coordinator for the North Central Risk Management Education Center in the Department of Agricultural Economics.

"It's spreading like gangbusters," she said.

Annie's Project started in Illinois and is named after the mother of an extension educator in that state. It has spread not only to Nebraska but to several other Midwestern states as well.

In Nebraska, the program received a $40,000 grant from the North Central Risk Management Education Center to begin the program. It started in February in North Platte and has been held in several other cities statewide.

Nearly 80 people have taken the program, held for three hours once a week for six weeks. The sessions are led by extension educators.

"There's such a great need out there," Eberspacher said. Women take the information they learn, for example on subjects like marketing and crop insurance, and use it in their operations, she said. They also share it with their husbands, and many of them have expressed interest in the program, which is open to men.

"We want women to become better informed partners in their organizations," Eberspacher said.

Dave Stenberg, Extension Educator based in Lexington, said he has received several letters of thanks for the program he facilitated in Lexington in August and September.

"We've had great response," he said, adding the participants "were real pleased." Some spinoff programs on marketing and other issues are in the works in the area, he said.

Eberspacher said women participating were appreciative of UNL Extension's efforts in putting the program together.

"I don't think they realized how many resources the university has for them," she said.

Judy Dixon of rural Pleasanton took the course in September in Lexington with her daughter-in-law.

"It was good to be able to exchange ideas from an intergenerational perspective," she said. "It's a really excellent program and well worth the time and effort."

– Lori McGinnis

Eight Receive Holling Family Awards

The 2006 Holling Family Awards will be given to four senior faculty members, two junior members, and two teaching assistants.

The senior faculty recipients include: Dennis Burson, Department of Animal Science; Andrew Christiansen, UNL Extension; Alexander Martin, Department of Agronomy and Horticulture; and Sharon Skipton, UNL Extension. They will receive $5,000 stipends.

Junior faculty recipients include: Loren Giesler, Department of Plant Pathology; and Kim Todd, Department of Agronomy and Horticulture. They will receive $3,000 stipends.

Teaching assistants cited include Timothy Huntington, Department of Entomology; and Corey Searle, Department of Biological Systems Engineering. They will receive $1,000 stipends.

The awards will be presented March 8 in the Nebraska East Union.

The Holling awards program was made possible by a gift from the Holling family to honor their pioneer parents. John Holling was a 1912 electrical engineering graduate and his brother, Gustave Holling, attended the College of Agriculture before farming the family's land in the Wood River area.

UNL Experience Aids Research Scientist in Career

Growing up on a walnut farm in California taught Dennis Baldocchi to appreciate climate.

"I grew up on a farm and drove tractors through the orchard," he said. "I formed my interest in links between vegetation and climate."

That interest led Baldocchi to the University of California at Davis for an undergraduate degree in atmospheric science.

For his graduate work, he decided among the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Iowa State University, and Purdue University. He selected UNL partially because a leading textbook in his area of study was written by Norm Rosenberg, who was on the UNL faculty at the time.

He spent 1977 to 1982 in Lincoln, achieving his master's and doctoral degrees.

This period, he said, "gave me all the skills I needed to be a research scientist in the field of biometeorology," said Baldocchi, now chair of the Ecosystem Sciences Division and Professor of Biometeorology at the University of California at Berkeley.

"I was lucky there was a strong contingent of professors who were experts in this field," he said.

He also praised the "state-of-the-art instrumentation" that aided in his research.

While at UNL, Baldocchi worked under Shashi Verma, who currently is the Charles Bessey Professor of Natural Resource Sciences in the School of Natural Resources. Baldocchi researched at the Center for Agricultural Meteorology and Climatology (CAMAC), which later became the Department of Agricultural Meteorology, then part of UNL's School of Natural Resources Sciences, now the School of Natural Resources.

Baldocchi's graduate work focused on carbon dioxide exchange in the water usage on alfalfa and soybeans. He studied the relationship between carbon dioxide and the atmosphere, and how the climate affects the landscape.

Baldocchi

Baldocchi was drawn back to California after his studies in Lincoln. His work consists of researching how the landscape is affected by climate changes.

"California is a nice natural lab. We have very wet and cool winters and when springtime comes it stops raining," he said.

Baldocchi continues to be fascinated by how biology interacts with the physics of land and atmosphere.

"It's places like Nebraska that started teaching the two processes (biology and physics) together," he said.

4-H Camp Assists Firefighters During Wildfire in National Forest

The Nebraska State 4-H Camp near Halsey was an asset to firefighters when a wild fire burned thousands of acres at the Nebraska National Forest in January.

Forest Service District Ranger Patti Barney called Camp Director Brad Mellema to seek assistance to provide meals for the fire crews.

"In the mid-winter, our facility does not keep a large supply of food on hand, but our Food Service Coordinator Leanne Coleman, along with our staff, were able to provide a roast beef dinner for 200-plus firefighters in one day," Mellema said.

Camp Assistant Connie Cox went to North Platte and Broken Bow for groceries, which were used to make sack lunches and meals over the next few days. The staff worked late into the night to make the lunches then returned at 4 a.m. to provide breakfast to the crews, Mellema said.

Camp Facility Assistant Chris Barney prepared cabins for the crews, set up tables and chairs and helped in food preparation. The Forest Service used the camp facilities as a staging area and command center.

The volunteers from 19 area fire departments responded as well as federal and state crews from Nebraska and South Dakota. The fire, pushed by 42 mph winds, burned more than 5,500 acres of grassland and timbered areas three miles south of the 4-H camp.

"I was so pleased that the University of Nebraska and the 4-H facility and staff could provide support for this event," Mellema said. "It certainly deepens the pride we have for our community."

Web Site Helps People Pay Down Debt

A Web site developed by University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension is designed to help people pay down debt.

The online program called Pay Down Debt is being piloted across the state by extension, said Kathy Prochaska-Cue, Extension Family Economist based in Lincoln.

"It's targeted to people who have decided they want to get their debt paid down," she said.

The site, at *www.paydowndebt.unl.edu*, is different from other sites designed to help people with their debt, she said. What makes it different is a link visitors can click on to ask a financial question to an extension educator. A team of six educators will monitor the questions and try to provide answers within 24 hours.

Prochaska-Cue decided about two years ago that an educationally-based debt reduction site was needed. The site will help visitors reduce their debt, cut unnecessary expenses, and meet financial goals.

The site will be piloted at least until summer. During the piloting, visitors will have free access to worksheets and the financial question link. After the pilot, those services will be subscription-based.

The pay down debt site is the first of a two-phase program, Prochaska-Cue said. Developers also are planning another site that will help people learn how to save money.

The project is an initiative of extension's Building Strong Families Action Team.

Verma Gets Award in Biometeorology

The American Meteorological Society has given its 2006 award for Outstanding Achievement in Biometeorology to Shashi Verma, the Charles Bessey Professor of Natural Resource Sciences in the School of Natural Resources.

Verma received the award this month in Atlanta during the 86th meeting of the AMS, the nation's leading professional society for those in the atmospheric and related sciences.

Verma was honored for his research into carbon dioxide and water vapor exchanges in the Earth's ecosystem.