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IANR Historical Background

Pertaining to the Creation and Operation of the University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources

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The University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR/Institute), established at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), was created by the Nebraska Legislature in 1973 through passage of Legislative Bill (LB) 149. The Institute was then activated April 1, 1974, to replace what had been known as the College of Agriculture since 1909. IANR was created following more than a decade of discussions, proposals, and controversies over the lack of prominence and limited voice of the College of Agriculture in the decision-making processes of the University of Nebraska. Individuals and organizations in Nebraska agriculture were concerned that the relative standing and budgetary support of agricultural programs within the University system were not consistent with the importance of agriculture to the economy of Nebraska. There was consensus by state agricultural interests that agriculture programs needed more visibility and a stronger voice within the University system.

At the time of IANR’s formation, Nebraska ranked sixth of all states on the basis of cash receipts from farm marketings. In recent times, Nebraska typically ranks fourth, validating the potential for growth anticipated by the industry in promoting the creation of IANR. Not counted in these rankings is the growth of the value-added sector, as well as the ever evolving significance of natural resource and human resource issues surrounding agriculture and rural communities.

Although there had been discussions of having the Agricultural program separate from the rest of the University, dating as far back as the Constitutional Convention of 1871, the stimulus for the successful elevation of the status of agriculture and natural resources at the University to today’s Institute probably began in 1959. It was then that the Nebraska Legislation passed Legislative Resolution 33 which created the Legislative Council Committee on Higher Education and commissioned a study of Nebraska Higher Education. In 1960, Dr. Lyman A. Glenny of Sacramento State College, an expert on
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educational organizations, was commissioned to conduct the study. Completed in 1961, "The Nebraska Study of Higher Education," referred to as the Glenny Report, included a recommendation which in essence said that perhaps the dean for the College of Agriculture should report directly to the Chancellor and not through an academic dean or vice chancellor. The rationale behind this recommendation was that the dean for the College of Agriculture was responsible for a large and costly operation geographically separate from the main campus of the University. The same recommendation was made for the College of Medicine in Omaha (now University of Nebraska Medical Center), which after the 1968 merger of the Municipal University of Omaha (now UNO) and the University of Nebraska (now UNL) was elevated to a campus of the new University of Nebraska system. However, no change in the status or reporting relationship for agriculture resulted from the merger. Instead, with the creation of a central administration and system Chancellor (later renamed President) the establishment of the multi-campus system added another layer of administration between the agricultural dean and the head of the University and the Board of Regents.

By 1969, it became apparent that going through added non-agricultural administrators was making it even more difficult to get the College of Agriculture’s budget needs approved, policies implemented, and personnel approved, etc. This difficulty resulted in the College of Agriculture’s administration developing a proposal to create a “Center for Agricultural Research and Extension” which was submitted to Acting System Chancellor Dr. Merk Hobson in 1969. However, Hobson did not act upon the proposal and asked that it be held by the College until the new System Chancellor (later retitled President) was appointed.

In 1970 an organization was formed which would have a huge impact on the formation of IANR, subsequent support for IANR and the University of Nebraska and Nebraska agriculture,
generally. After months of discussions and planning between Clare Porter of NC+ Hybrids and Elvin Frolik, Dean of the College of Agriculture, they invited a small group of agricultural leaders to a meeting March of 1970 to discuss a new organization. Their idea was the formation of a group of agricultural leaders, not organizations, to bring about broad leadership to agriculture in Nebraska. It was thought individuals could be more free to express their thinking on issues than they would representing an organization. Porter and Frolik felt that agriculture was not receiving the impetus nor exerting the leadership that was available to it. There was a general feeling in the agricultural industry that Nebraska ought to have a stronger College of Agriculture – one that could respond to the industry’s potential. As a result, on December 17, 1971, “Agriculture Builders of Nebraska” (ABN) was incorporated in the State of Nebraska with the purpose to “Improve and Enhance Agriculture”. The inaugural Directors were Clare Porter, Glenn Le Doyt, George David, Willard Waldo and Ralph Raikes. The first successful project was the attainment of funding for a new Home Economics Building on UNL’s East Campus. Many successful projects were to follow.

After the hiring of Durward (Woody) B. Varner as the new System Chancellor in 1970, the College turned the Center for Agricultural Research and Extension proposal over to him. After the College administration met with Varner in March of 1971, he asked for more details and a revised version was submitted to Chancellor Varner (later in 1971, the chancellor title was officially changed to President and the title of the campus’s executive officer became Chancellor). The revised proposal dated April 23, 1971 was entitled “A Proposal to Establish a University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture”. The Institute was proposed as an administrative unit of the University System parallel with UNO, UNMC and UNL with the chief executive officer reporting directly to the System President. President Varner then turned the proposal over to the Cresap, McCormick and Paget Consulting Firm who were retained by the
University of Nebraska Board of Regents to conduct a management study of the new University of Nebraska administrative structure. The proposal was also turned over to an Advisory Committee Varner appointed to assist with the administrative structure study. Neither the consulting firm nor the Advisory Committee made any recommendations for reorganization of the University administrative structure affecting agriculture and the Center proposal was generally regarded as dead by the College of Agriculture’s Administration.

Matters got worse when a subsequent University five-year planning process “Toward Excellence Two” excluded any agricultural representation, nor were inputs requested from the agricultural sector in the first draft preparation. The plan exhibited a general lack of consciousness of agriculture and proposed the merger of the College of Agriculture’s Cooperative Extension entity with the University’s General Extension program. Those issues caused the College’s external citizens Deans Advisory Council to get actively involved. The Council headed by William Krejci invited Varner to their February 1971 meeting to discuss the plan, resulting in the establishment of a committee to discuss their concerns further with Varner and UNL Chancellor Dr. James Zumberge. Subsequent meetings were held with the two University leaders and at first the Council thought progress was being made, however the second draft of the five-year plan fell short of the Council’s expectations and although complementary to agriculture, there was no specific plan to enhance agriculture at the University and the proposal to merge Cooperative Extension with University Extension remained.

More frustration ensued when the draft of the first bylaws for the new University system resulted in Agriculture being much less prominent than it was in the previous bylaws. Agriculture had but one representative on a 37 member commission to write the bylaws. A number of agricultural support groups testified to the Board of Regents during hearings on the new
bylaws and while some concessions were made, the final bylaws fell far short of giving Agriculture the prominence it had in the 1965 bylaws. In addition, miscommunication and a lack of understanding of the complexity of the Agriculture budget in 1971 and 1972, resulted in the substitution of USDA federal funds for state funds, or a loss of state funding for Agriculture which was contrary to the intent of the U.S. Congress.

Thus, for a number of reasons, it was perceived by the College Administration that Agriculture was relegated to a weaker position in the new University of Nebraska system along with the feeling of a general lack of concern for, understanding, and/or awareness of Agriculture by the system administration.

The lack of agricultural representation or prominence in University decision-making with the University administrative structure became increasingly apparent to several farm organizations and agribusiness groups. Even then Governor James Exon called for a higher place in the decision-making processes of the University for Agriculture in a November 16th speech at McCook, Nebraska. ABN initiated a meeting of representatives of several agricultural organizations on June 26, 1972, in Lincoln to discuss these concerns. In the fall of 1972 a number of statewide agricultural organizations passed resolutions endorsing either the Center Plan or other principle elevating the status of the College of Agriculture within the University.

During this time, another development that would have a profound impact on IANR was materializing. Because progress or improvement for the College seemed at a standstill within the existing administrative structure, Richard Gooding of the Nebraska Farm Bureau and John Klosterman of the Nebraska Livestock Feeders Association (now Nebraska Cattlemen) began to formulate an idea. As a result of their brainstorming, seventeen agricultural and agribusiness organizations joined forces and formed a group to take direct corrective action to
bring about a solution to the dilemma. While historically these various organizations often found it difficult to agree on agricultural issues due to conflicting positions of their organizations, support for the College of Agriculture was one issue that they could all agree. John Klosterman was very instrumental in the early leadership of this group, along with others like Richard Gooding, who took lower profiles.

In December of 1972, UNL Chancellor Zumberge came up with a counter proposal to the College’s proposal. The “Zumberge plan” as it was called, would create the position of Vice Chancellor who would head up an Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. However, there were some major concerns with this plan such as Resident Instruction was not in the Institute because Zumberge proposed that it report to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The plan was discussed by Agricultural faculty and agricultural organizations and while resolving some issues, it was not totally acceptable.

With the new group, (pre-Ag 40), being a combination of organizations and ABN a combination of individuals, together they would become a formidable force in the creation of IANR.

Organizational representatives of the pre-Ag 40 group, many of which were also members of ABN, provided the leadership and direction in working with Senator Maurice Kremer and Senator Gerald H. Stromer on legislation to establish a University of Nebraska Agricultural Center. Accordingly, on January 9, 1973, LB 149 was introduced by Senators Kremer and Stromer on behalf of the Nebraska Farm Bureau to accomplish this ambition. John Klinker of the Nebraska Farm Bureau was also a player along with Gooding, Klosterman and others in getting the legislation drafted and introduced.

This fledgling Ag 40 movement found its true rallying point with the introduction of LB 149, resulting in the various agricultural representatives who had been promoting the
establishment of the Agricultural Center deciding that LB 149 would be the vehicle by which the goal to promote the College of Agriculture to the highest level possible within the University system would be achieved. Other agricultural organization joined the pre-Ag 40 group, such as the newly formed Nebraska Soybean Association, headed by their inaugural President Eugene Glock, who would become another influential player. In 1976 the group adopted a specific name, i.e. the "Ag 40 group".

LB 149 was first read by the Miscellaneous Subjects Committee and referred to the Agriculture Committee. The hearing on the bill was held March 15, 1973. This bill provided for the establishment of a University of Nebraska Agricultural Center administered by a Chancellor including, but not limited to, three chief traditional divisions including the College of Agriculture (teaching division), the Agricultural Experiment Station (research division) and the Agricultural Extension Service (extension division) with a dean as chief executive officer of each division. At the time the College of Agriculture was headed by a dean with associate deans for Resident Instruction, the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service.

With LB 149 now before the Legislature and the University Administration’s “Zumberge Plan” proposing different scenarios for the College of Agriculture administrative structure, something needed to be done to reach a compromise.

On January 19, 1973, Clare Porter President of ABN pulled together a meeting of representatives of several farm group representatives and University officials in Grand Island to discuss the Zumberge plan. From this meeting, the representatives in support of the College of Agriculture agreed that a subcommittee of agricultural and agribusiness representatives would work with a subcommittee of the Board of Regents (members of a Regents Study Committee consisted of Rob Raun, Kermit
Wagner and J.G. Elliot) and University Officials (President Varner and Chancellor Zumberge) to reach a consensus on LB 149.

The subcommittee formed in Grand Island, chaired by John Klosterman representing both the pre-Ag 40 group and the Nebraska Livestock Feeders, held a number of follow-up meetings with the Regents, NU President Varner and UNL Chancellor Zumberge. The objective of the pre-Ag 40 Group was to provide constructive guidance to the representatives on each side of the issue in order to establish positions that all could support. Agricultural and agribusiness groups represented were the Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, Agriculture Builders of Nebraska, Stock Growers and the College of Agriculture Advisory Council. Acting College of Agriculture Dean Howard Ottoson also met with this special committee.

As a result of these meetings a consensus was reached regarding specific modifications to be made to LB 149. The College of Agriculture faculty voted in support of the proposed amendments to LB 149 and President Varner received authorization from the Regents to support a compromise to LB 149. Subsequently, amendments were prepared for the bill by Senators Kremer and Stromer, and adopted by the Legislature. After three rounds of floor debate, LB 149 was passed by the Legislature with 39 affirmative votes and approved by Governor Exon May 25, 1973. LB 149 was placed into law as Nebraska Statutes 85-1,104 and 85-1,105 which have been subsequently amended through other legislation.

LB 149 as amended, essentially encompassed the main points agreed upon by all parties included in the negotiations. The amendments meant the support groups withdrew from their stance a separate Chancellorship for Agriculture, but won a University commitment to maintain the three major components of the College in one entity at the University and insured that the leader of IANR would be a major figure in agricultural matters as they relate to the office of the NU President and the
Regents. The new entity was created as a University-wide institute, being named in law as the “University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources” recognizing it was the only entity in the University System generally offering programs in agriculture and recognizing the need for coordination of natural resource programs system wide. However, while IANR remained under the umbrella of UNL, the administrative leader of IANR was instituted as a Vice Chancellor and generally reported to the UNL Chancellor. The Legislation specified that the Vice Chancellor shall be responsible for providing leadership for all agricultural and natural resource affairs in the University of Nebraska as they involve the Office of UNL Chancellor, the President, and the Board of Regents. The law stated the Vice Chancellor shall coordinate agricultural, natural resources, and related matters of UNL. As senior agricultural and natural resources administrator in the University of Nebraska, the IANR Vice Chancellor and the UNL Chancellor shall together provide advice and counsel to and assist the President and the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska in agricultural, natural resources, and related matters.

The enabling legislation stated that the Institute was to embrace, but not be limited to the; College of Agriculture; School of Technical Agriculture at Curtis; Agricultural Experiment Station; Cooperative Extension Service; Conservation and Survey; and Water Resources Research Institute. Therefore, the formation of the IANR restructured the former College of Agriculture. The Institute replaced the College of Agriculture and the title “College of Agriculture” was assigned to the former Resident Instruction Division (now called the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources or CASNR). Consideration had been given to Home Economics becoming a division within the Institute, however, the dean at the time requested that the teaching programs of the College of Home Economics (renamed the College of Human Resources and Family Sciences and now the College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS) after the merger with the Teachers College),
remain under the administrative leadership of the UNL Academic Affairs Office. However, the departmental research and extension programs of the former college of Home Economics continued to report through IANR’s Research and Extension Divisions. The Conservation and Survey Division and the Water Resources Research Institute were added to the Institute because a large part of the natural resources of the state are devoted to agriculture. Later the Water Resources Research Institute was removed as a division and restructured into a Water Center and the status of International Programs was elevated and headed by a Dean and Director, subsequently eliminated during budget cuts and since resurrected as Global Engagement.

For the new IANR, a Memorandum of Understanding spearheaded by John Klinker of the Nebraska Farm Bureau, was enacted March 27, 1973 between the Agricultural Groups involved in lobbying for the IANR and the University Administration. This Memorandum documented the agreement concerning the implementation of LB 149, 1973, and the selection of a Vice Chancellor of the University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. It addressed several issues specifying: the role of the Vice Chancellor regarding budgets and personnel, agricultural industry representation on the search committee for the Vice Chancellor, a post review process on the effectiveness of LB 149 to incorporate possible improvements, to include the IANR deans on the Chancellor’s Council and lastly that the title “Vice Chancellor” will be used sparingly in the University implying senior status in the University Administration.

As agreed upon in the negotiation process, a separate budget program was established for IANR. Utilization of a separate budget program was felt important by the proponents of IANR to ensure that dollars intended for IANR were received and expended by IANR. This program was set up and numbered in the State accounting system as Program 715. Until the
University began receiving a lump sum appropriation from the Legislature in the early 1980’s, appropriations had been made directly to IANR as a line item in the appropriations bill under the program 715 designation. After this appropriation process change was made, IANR received a direct allocation from the University’s Central Administration. However, that allocation method changed over time and for several years now IANR has had to negotiate its annual budget allocation with the UNL budget office. However, Program 715 continues as a separate budget program in the University and State accounting systems and certain budget identity is retained. Although adding challenges at the campus level, the separate budget program still allows for joint programming, as evidenced by the College of Education of Human Sciences which has programs under both IANR (Program 715) and Academic Affairs (Program 711). There are also IANR faculty with joint appointments in the College of Engineering and Technology, College of Architecture, College of Arts and Sciences, and at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the University of Nebraska at Kearney. While it does increase complexity in budgetary processes, it provides for accountability and a form of responsibility-centered management as intended by the supporters of the Institute.

In 1988, following an effort to close the University of Nebraska School of Technical Agriculture (UNSTA) school at Curtis, the School was removed from IANR, where it had been a component of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, and reconstituted statutorily with a new role and mission as a college. Renamed the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA), the legislation placed the College under the control and management of the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska. In 1991, LB 663, the implementing legislation for the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, directed the Commission to review NCTA by July 1, 1995 and make recommendations regarding whether management should remain under the University of
Nebraska Board of Regents or be transferred to Mid-Plains Community College. After their study, the Commission recommended to the Legislature that administration and management should remain with the University. As a separate campus under the Board of Regents, NCTA is headed by an on-site dean who reports to the IANR Vice Chancellor as Vice President of the University, and not as Vice Chancellor for IANR. Although not statutorily a component of UNL/IANR, NCTA works closely with IANR administration, academic units and its faculty in accordance with a Board of Regents Executive Memorandum of Understanding number 12 as revised. IANR and NCTA have many common disciplinary relationships and issues.

While Ag 40 and ABN together were pivotal to the creation of IANR, in the years to follow they have been very instrumental in support of capital construction projects and operational and improvement budgets for IANR and on occasion the total University. In particular they have been crucial in protecting the appropriate position of IANR within the organizational structure of the University. In 1981 these two parent organizations formed an “Action Committee” made up of representatives of each to enhance their working together on common goals. For the most part, ABN is actively involved in general issues surrounding IANR and the University, whereas the Ag 40 group is principally involved when there are significant issues jeopardizing the spirit and intent behind the creation of IANR.

Post LB 149 reviews have been conducted by Ag 40 and ABN with the first conducted by Ag 40 and reported to President Ronald Roskens. December of 1977. The major improvement recommended in this report was that the IANR Vice Chancellor become a member of the Presidents Executive Council to ensure equal status of the UNL Chancellor and IANR Vice Chancellor when matters related to Agriculture are discussed by the Council.
While in 1978, President Ronald Roskens invited the IANR Vice Chancellor to sit as a member of the University Executive Council, the title of the Vice Chancellor was not changed to reflect this new role. Moreover, as time passed and the President and members of the Council changed, the status of the IANR Vice Chancellor on the Executive Council became unclear to members of the Council, and the Board of Regents.

ABN conducted a post IANR study in 1991, and in their December 18, 1991 report stated that they were concerned that IANR had lost budget identity in the allocation process and that the UNL share of the University-wide budget was deteriorating. This was concerning because with IANR being part of UNL’s budget allocation, its budget had deteriorated as well. They requested that the IANR budget request not be intermingled with that of the City Campus, that the Vice Chancellor of IANR obtain the title of Vice President of the University and that the University return to the previous process of having the University Budget Director determine the budget allocation for IANR after the legislation appropriation was signed by the Governor.

Finally, in order to more clearly articulate and authenticate this University-wide responsibility, the Board of Regents in 1992 designated that the IANR Vice Chancellor would also carry the title of Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources in the University of Nebraska system. The IANR Vice Chancellor, as a Vice President, became an official member of the President’s Council which includes the President, Provost, the four campus Chancellors (who are also Vice Presidents), and the Vice President for External Relations.

As a result of the passage of LB 149 in 1973 and subsequent Regents’ actions, IANR is uniquely structured and administered within the University of Nebraska system. In addition, the research and extension programs in IANR have a unique relationship to the U.S. Department of Agriculture in that the
Deans for the Cooperative Extension Division (now called University Extension) and the Agricultural Research Division both hold federal titles through a cooperative agreement relationship. These federal titles recognize their program management responsibilities through federal formula dollars allocated to the state. University Extension also has partnership agreements with Nebraska counties through interlocal agreements which provide some local funding for extension programming within the counties. These federal, state and county relationships result in unique national affiliations and interstate consortiums and programs. These different relationships cause IANR to have unique budgetary and human resource needs which can be more complex than other entities within the University.

IANR has been a national leader among its peers in adopting closer working relationships between teaching, research, and extension. IANR is made up of college and college-equivalent divisions. However, these college-like units are organized primarily around the functional responsibilities (teaching, research, and extension), as compared to disciplinary responsibilities common to traditional academic colleges. Therefore, the academic/discipline departments report to multiple deans. A typical department head is responsible to three deans and the faculties generally have joint appointments in more than one college or division. In addition, there are other non-academic administrative units which report to either an individual dean or some combination of the three deans.

While the deans, under the direction of the Vice Chancellor for Agriculture and Natural Resources, generally operate their divisions independently, they do so in a team framework. Driven by the IANR Strategic Plan, the deans work together as a team in making decisions on the allocation of resources and management of faculty and staff because of the cross-functional nature of programs and people. While maintaining separate budgets for the college and each division, once a team decision
is made on a program priority, the dollars are shifted seamlessly to the applicable budget. All vacant positions at the faculty level are pooled Institute-wide for reallocation by the team utilizing a priority setting model which is strategically and programmatically driven.

IANR operates as a statewide network. A significant portion of IANR’s faculty and staff are located off-campus (outside Lincoln) at the four District Centers, research sites and at county-based Extension Educational Programming Unit offices. The Agricultural Research and Development Center near Ithaca, Nebraska, serves as the field site for most of the campus-based research and outreach programs although this structure is currently under review. With the land-grant mission and the statewide network, IANR is active within the University in outreach and on-line education.

References

Note: So many people were involved in bringing about the creation of IANR and should be credited, however it is impossible to mention them all.

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