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APC Hearing

John Owens

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, jowens2@unl.edu

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Thank you!

**APC Hearing
West Central Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
L.W. Chase Hall, Room 116
1:00 -4:00 p.m.
Friday, October 11, 2002
John C. Owens
NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR**

Members of the Academic Planning Committee, and others present, I appear before the committee this afternoon to speak about a "vertical-cut" proposed for the West Central Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, a cut we in the Institute would not choose to make unless "forced" by circumstances to do so.

After three rounds of budget cutting there are no budget cuts we can make that will not "adversely-affect" someone, somewhere. Whatever cuts we make, worthwhile programs are gone, our constituents are less well-served, and someone affected will think we should have cut something else. We are recommending these cuts because, in our best judgment, the alternatives are worse.

In the past year legislative action has cut the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resource's budget nearly \$4 million – \$2,028,767 following the most recent special session. Funding for "vital programming" across our state is permanently gone.

The North Platte "Veterinary-Diagnostic-Laboratory" is a worthwhile program, and in our last round of cuts we were able "to spare" this laboratory, even as, with

much regret, we closed a similar laboratory in Scottsbluff. Had we faced no more than the first two rounds of legislatively mandated budget cuts, we would not be here today.

Those of us who must make the final budget-cutting recommendations within IANR and at the university have done our very best to carefully weigh all programs offered by the Institute. We have looked at a large number of different scenarios, seeking ways we can best meet as many of Nebraska's needs as possible with our permanently reduced funding. Some of those needs we must meet differently than we did before, as is the case with the West Central Veterinary Diagnostic - Laboratory, which is a \$211,370 cut in which one tenure-track and 2.5 FTE staff positions are proposed to be eliminated. In our best judgment, vertical cuts are a "better" long-term solution than across-the-board cuts which some persons have suggested as an "alternative" to what we have come to term "Round 3" of the Legislative budget cuts. Our vertical budget-cutting proposals are ~~PROPOSITIONS~~ we think will do the least permanent long-term damage to Nebraska, to our constituents, to IANR, and to the university overall. Closing this laboratory "diminishes" the Nebraska Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory System; however, we still can provide "veterinary diagnostic services" through the Veterinary Diagnostic Center in Lincoln.

Nebraska has been especially fortunate in the past to have a Nebraska Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory System, with satellite laboratories in North Platte and Scottsbluff and the full-service Veterinary Diagnostic Center in Lincoln.

Traditionally, our laboratories outside Lincoln have offered a limited-scope of services, with more sophisticated testing referred to the full-service Veterinary Diagnostic Center in Lincoln. Most of the states surrounding Nebraska have only one such laboratory – Kansas, Wyoming, Iowa, South Dakota, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Minnesota.

Closing the West Central Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory clearly "diminishes" the Nebraska Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory System, due to overall reductions in staff and personnel, but work will go on. The West Central Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory does not conduct any unique tests not conducted by the Veterinary Diagnostic Center in Lincoln. The location of the North Platte laboratory is a true convenience that will be missed by those in the surrounding community; however, essential veterinary diagnostic services still will be available in Nebraska.

The Institute's Deans and the Head of the Department of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences "currently" are investigating "different ways" in which IANR can offer programs in veterinary extension education. We anticipate establishing a

veterinary extension advisory committee in the West Central region, similar to what we've established in the Panhandle region, where the committee is composed of three veterinary practitioners, faculty in the Panhandle district, and Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences Department Head, Dr. Jack Schmitz. Through this advisory committee, it will be possible to coordinate the Cooperative Extension education programming and activities of the extension veterinarians in Lincoln and Clay Center, as well as other Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences faculty.

The Panhandle Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory closed at the end of June 2002. I've been asked how that affected the West Central laboratory. From July through September 2001 the laboratory at North Platte received 120 cases and from July through September 2002, it received 244 cases. While that is a doubling of cases, the total case load is still very low, an average of 81.33 cases per month, even with the increase. Part of that increase is due to an increase in the number of forage samples tested for nitrate, due to the drought conditions. These data don't seem to provide a strong debating point either against or for closing the laboratory.

Two other budget cuts affect university work conducted at West Central – we are proposing eliminating a vacant family life position, which never has been filled and for which a search did not produce a suitable candidate. We have been university partners with the University of Nebraska-Kearney and the now-eliminated

Division of Continuing Studies in funding the Learning Center at North Platte, and
" all partners agree in terminating the funding for the Center, which has no classroom
students registered this semester.

Even after these three cuts, the West Central Research and Extension Center,
" a mainstay " in the Nebraska research and extension system as " the oldest " of our
centers, remains " the best-funded " with a general budget of \$4,543,607.

As I mentioned yesterday when I spoke about " the proposed closure " of the
South Central Research and Extension Center, we cannot make cuts of this
magnitude and continue " all the work " our faculty and staff have conducted before.
When funding is permanently gone, there is " no way " to continue all the programs the
Legislature once funded. In making our proposals in the Institute we have looked
" hard " at where we can cut and still preserve some – and I emphasize *some*, not all –
of the work done, but in another manner. "

I want to be very clear today, as I was yesterday, that in the Institute of
Agriculture and Natural Resources we do not make decisions about our budget cuts
based on whether a program is located in Lincoln or outside Lincoln, a question that
has been raised. We make " cut proposals " based on what we think will do the *least*
long-term damage to Nebraska, to our constituents, to IANR, and to the university.
We make " cut recommendations " based on what " important needs " we can continue to

meet, even if we are forced to meet those needs in different ways. We make cut proposals based on how we can best protect the very core of our programming, so we'll have that core to build on when better times return – as they will. We do that because we think that approach is of the most long-term benefit to ALL Nebraskans.

These days I hear from people that they understand the difficulty we face in making cuts to balance our budget, but – . Everyone wants us to cut something that doesn't affect them. The fact of the matter is, every cut we make affects someone.

In fact, every cut we make affects *every one of us*, because these cuts affect Nebraska's future.

I think everyone here today realizes the dismantling we've experienced of the valued university programs as the result of three legislatively-mandated budget cuts in less than a year hurts down to the bone. I am frustrated by what we might face in January, when the Governor and Legislature next meet to set our state's budget. We hear constantly that more budget cuts will occur in the Legislature's regular session. When I think about how painful the cuts we already have endured have been, I am deeply concerned for what yet additional cuts would mean to this university, and to our state.

These cuts affect every one of us. These cuts affect Nebraska's future. I hope in the next several months that concerned citizens and public officials will take

"the opportunity" to reflect on what Nebraska needs and what Nebraska wants its university to be, "as-well-as" what Nebraska is willing to do "to-support" that university. There are "tough-decisions" ahead for all of us and I hope that "working-together" we can find solutions that are-in-the-overall long-term best interest of all-Nebraskans."

Thank you.

REGENTS MEETING -

Agenda ITEMS THERE -

Dean Danell Nelson
IS present -