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Testimony to Appropriations Committee

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TESTIMONY TO APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

March 8, 2002
John C. Owens

Chairman Wehrbein and members of the Appropriations Committee, I am John Owens, Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska. I am present today to speak ⁴ on behalf of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture located in Curtis, Nebraska.

I appreciate the opportunity to be present today ⁴ to visit ⁴ with you about the impact ⁴ of the proposed ~~budget~~-rescission on the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. For this fiscal year, the Legislature appropriated approximately \$2.3 million from the General Fund to operate NCTA. The amount of the proposed 3% budget rescission is just over \$73,000. While this is a relatively small amount of funding, when compared to the budget of the State of Nebraska, this amount is ⁴ extremely ⁴ important ⁴ to the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. *ALL OF THE RECENT RESCISSIONS WOULD EQUAL OVER \$199,000 WHICH IS A HUGE AMOUNT FOR NCTA.*

As you know, NCTA is a two-year, degree-granting institution which plays an important role in educating young people from across Nebraska. NCTA is the largest employer in the town of Curtis and is the major economic engine for the city and the surrounding rural area.

There are 59 employees at NCTA, of which just over 22 FTE are faculty. Because NCTA has a ⁴ very ⁴ small ⁴ operating ⁴ budget, the rescission would require a further elimination of faculty positions, as well as a ⁴ major ⁴ reduction ⁴ of salary increases for faculty and staff. The elimination of faculty will ⁴ severely ⁴ impact ⁴ the quality of the college curricula offered at Curtis and could ⁴ well ⁴ force ⁴ the elimination of specific educational programs and activities. This would have a negative ⁴ long-term ⁴

impact on student enrollment, as well as negative economic-consequences for rural Nebraska.

NCTA fully recognizes that the State of Nebraska finds itself in a difficult financial position, and this request is not to ask for total protection from any budget rescission that the Legislature must enact. But we do ask the Appropriations Committee and, ultimately the entire Legislature, ~~to continue to support the~~ *TO CONSIDER RELIEVING NCTA FROM* ~~rescission rather than the proposed~~ *AS MUCH OF THIS RECESSION AS POSSIBLE.*

The Nebraska Legislature and the Executive Branch have been extremely supportive of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, and we thank-you for that. NCTA is a unique college which serves a highly-specific need in Nebraska, and presently finds itself in a time of transition. The college is working to realign its curriculum and instructional-offerings to better serve the educational needs of Nebraska students and to better serve the occupational-demands of a highly important Nebraska industry. The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools has recently advanced the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture to candidacy-status, and the college is poised to achieve full accreditation on its own merits, rather than being accredited as a part of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, as has been done in the past. Achievement of full institutional-accreditation will be a major accomplishment by NCTA, and it is highly-important that NCTA receives adequate-funding to retain a minimum-number of faculty necessary for accreditation.

Again, thank-you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you might have.