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## Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory Open House

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**GUDMUNDSEN SANDHILLS LABORATORY OPEN HOUSE**  
**GUDMUNDSEN SANDHILLS LABORATORY**  
**AUGUST 28, 2002**  
**JOHN C. OWENS**  
**NU VICE PRESIDENT AND HARLAN VICE CHANCELLOR, IANR**

What a tremendous gift "Pete" and Abbie Gudmundsen gave to the university, to the people who live throughout their beloved Sandhills, and to the entire State of Nebraska when they donated their 12,817-acre ranch, the Rafter C, to the University of Nebraska Foundation in 1978. And what tremendous work our faculty and staff have accomplished here over the past 20 years. UNL faculty and staff research and educational efforts have truly made this ranch the "Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory."



every time my travels take me to Nebraska's Sandhills, I am struck anew by the ABSOLUTE wonder of this Nebraska treasure. These Sandhills have an estimated 700-800-million acre-feet of water beneath them, and an estimated 720 unique plant species growing throughout this natural wonder. Of those approximately 720 plant species, 670 are identified as native. We find ourselves, today, in the middle of an ecosystem managed by ranchers and farmers in a sustainable way that provides tremendous plant diversity while supporting, usually, over a half-million grazing CATTLE.

Only Nebraska can proudly claim these Sandhills, the largest sand dune formations in the Western Hemisphere, stretching across 265 miles of our state, encompassing approximately 19,300 square miles of sand dunes, and containing almost 13-million-acres of rangeland. I'd find it pretty-hard to understand how anyone would not find this impressive!

The Gudmundsens gave their gift of the Rafter-C-Ranch, now known as the Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory, because they wanted to "improve, advance, and support agriculture in the State of Nebraska in ways that have relevance to the Sandhills area of the state through added research, improved teaching, continuing education, and service to the agricultural industry."

This far-sighted vision and their generous gift make it possible for us to be here today, and to have the research-based knowledge that backs today's discussions on topics such as ranch-management during drought – and isn't that a topic we'd all rather-not have such first-hand experience with these days? Yet it is so important that when Nebraska needs it, we have the research, education, and information available that can tell us what's most efficient and effective, to help us see this-through. The Gudmundsen is important to the industry. The Gudmundsen is important to Nebraska. And the industry and Nebraska are important to the

University of Nebraska ~~at~~ Lincoln.

I suppose "one" of the reasons I so much enjoy coming to Gudmundsen, and to UNL's ~~Research and Extension Centers~~, "as well as" the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension offices "throughout" Nebraska, is because each of these locations is a dynamic, constantly-evolving "example" of your land-grant university-mission "at work". Each brings the resources, the riches, and the technologies of UNL to Nebraskans.

Every land-grant university "worth its salt" is engaged in a give-and-take-  
"exchange of ideas, <sup>of</sup> vision, and <sup>of</sup> concerns with the citizens of its state, and Nebraska does "that" in a remarkably-successful way. That's why it's "so important" ~~that~~ those of us at UNL "work together" with you, exchanging ideas and knowledge, identifying needs, and figuring out how, "together," we can meet those needs. In the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, we see ourselves "as partners" with Nebraska. As our partners, we look to "you" to tell us how we're doing.

I am a "big believer" in land-grant universities. I see the Morrill Act of 1862 that created them "as key" to democratizing higher education in the United States. Before the Morrill Act, higher education belonged "mostly" to the rich and colleges

did not "concentrate" on practical solutions based on science and technology.

I think of my maternal great-grandfather, Heinrich Englebrecht, who immigrated with "no money" and "no education" from Germany to this country just as the Civil War broke out here. He left Germany "to escape" military conscription and, with remarkably "bad timing", landed at the port of Galveston "just in time" to be rounded up and "sworn", under gunpoint, into the confederacy.

After the Civil War, he began farming and "accumulated land" both in Central Texas, where he lived, and on the High Plains, where "no one" in his family was willing to live! Ironically, part of great-grandfather Englebrecht's farm in Central Texas is in the news "a great deal these days as the Crawford, Texas, ranch" of President George W. Bush. Great-grandfather's farm "grew up" to be a ranch when George "bought" 1400 acres from my cousins in February of 2000.

"Now", my great-grandfather never had the opportunity to go to college. But his grandchildren and great-grandchildren "did" in fields ranging from electrical engineering, to veterinary medicine, to English, to nursing, to law, and to agriculture. I'm "firmly convinced" I can thank this nation's land-grant university system for "opportunities" in my family. And we can "thank" land-grant universities for "the education" they've provided "legions" of people down through the years, "people" who've made valuable and important "contributions" to our world "because" they had

"access" to the higher-education" needed" to provide them the knowledge" and the – opportunities to excel. I have been associated with land-grant universities most of my life, and I can tell you "without reservation" that all of us in Nebraska have a land-grant university" of which" we can be "especially proud."

Right now we are going through some "extremely difficult times" at the university. We are not "alone." There are hard times "a plenty" in our state and in our Nation "right now," and many of us are sharing in them.

At the university, Nebraska's continuing revenue shortfall has led to cutting our budget "three times" in less than a year. In those three "budget cuts" the university had its current budget – the one that began July 1 – cut \$31 million dollars.

\$15.3 million of that \$31 million university cut came in the special session "cuts" that occurred this month in Lincoln. Of that \$15.3 million cut "assessed the university," the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources will be assigned roughly \$2 million that we "must cut" from the Institute's budget. That comes on top of \$1.9 million the Institute "lost" in the two previous rounds of cuts. When this round is finished, within the Institute we will have cut "nearly \$4 million" from our current year budget.

Folks, we can't cut nearly \$4 million dollars and "not bleed." That's not a whine – that's a fact. It's a fact I "share" with you today because every Nebraskan

here is a stakeholder in ~~UNL~~. There is no university that belongs so completely to the citizens of its state as your land-grant university, and because you are our stakeholders, a stakeholders' report is due. In the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, as with the rest of UNL, we are cutting deeper and deeper into muscle and bone with each successive round of cuts we must make.

In the second round of cuts, which followed the Legislature's regular session this spring, we in the Institute made the very difficult decision to make vertical cuts, rather than to continue to try to cut across-the-board until we'd weakened the entire Institute to a point from which we could never recover. It was extremely painful to us, and to our constituents, when we closed the Panhandle Research and Extension Center Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. Our Panhandle constituents were unhappy. So were we. We did reason that the services of the laboratory would be handled by the Veterinary Diagnostic System which is headquartered in Lincoln, ~~so~~ so services and education do remain available to our constituents in the Panhandle, although in a different way.

Frustratingly, I know our next cuts will cause pain and unhappiness, too. Our faculty and staff are providing needed education and research. When we can no longer provide it because the funding for it is no longer there, great unhappiness is created both internal and external to the university. That demonstrates the value of

"the work" we do, but it only makes people frustrated and hurt when their <sup>greatly</sup> needed program or their "key" person no longer is available.

However, This is the hand we're dealt, and we'll play it the best we can. I know that each of you here today understands that completely. I <sup>also</sup> know there have been a lot of cattle sold in our state this year when no one really wanted to sell them. They were sold because drought also is the hand we've been dealt, and without the necessary resources there was no way to keep them. It hurts to the bone to be forced to such actions, and to know that the actions we must take affect both today and tomorrow. But when that's the hand we're dealt, we play it the best we can, and we move on.

Within the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and throughout the entire university, we are working to make the *least bad* choices from a *list of bad choices* as to what we must cut. We are struggling to preserve as much of the seed of future harvests as we can, knowing this literally does affect Nebraska's - and Nebraskans' - future. When we are done we will be a different Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and a more narrowly-focused Institute. We are determined, however, to remain a strong Institute, focused on the quality work needed to fulfill our partnership with our state, and the people who make it possible for this great land-grant university to exist.



Having said that, I also must say – in fact, “I must stress, ~~THIS POINT~~”

~~Any young person~~ Any young person – or any older person, for that matter! – enrolling in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will receive a first-rate education in a place that cares about its students and works right alongside them to help them succeed. Our budgets may diminish, but our commitment to our students does not.

I’ll also tell you that the harder any student studying with us works to learn-  
and succeed, the better their education will be. Excellence is there, if you step up to it. In that way, education is somewhat like feeding cattle. A rancher can lay good-hay out there, but if the cow doesn’t step-up to eat it, it doesn’t do her any good. Same with education.

We have some of the finest-professors you could ever meet and work with in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources – scientists known nationally and internationally for their expertise. Researchers with a passion for the work they do, researchers who are pioneering the future. Classroom and laboratory faculty with an enthusiasm for helping their students grow. Students who arrive at UNL with the desire to learn can receive a superb-education in the college, and a rock-solid foundation on which to build a career and a life. That’s one of the things I’m extremely-proud-of in our Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources – our

faculty and staff recognize the importance of our students building their own life skills, as well as their study skills, and preparing themselves to be part of both the small and the world-wide communities that will make up their lives.

I want to end my remarks today with several "thank yous" I think really are important.

First, I thank each of today's speakers, for your dedication to your work and for your willingness and your enthusiasm to share the results of your research efforts. And for your commitment to go out and discover and share even more.

What you do is invaluable, and I thank you for it.

*I WANT TO THANK THE WCL FACULTY + STAFF FROM THE RESEARCH EXT CTR AT NORTH PLATTE.*

I thank our co-sponsors and exhibitors for being part of this day. And I

especially want to thank Don Adams, who is the coordinator of today's

Gudmundsen Open House. Don is a beef range systems specialist for us at ~~the~~ WCL's

West-Central Research and Extension Center in North Platte, and he's the faculty-supervisor of the Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory. And Don, I hope I'm not

going to embarrass you here, but I want to brag about this man a bit, because he

exemplifies the strengths of truly excellent land-grant university faculty. His beef cattle systems research and ~~extension~~ <sup>EXTENSION-EDUCATION</sup> efforts alone are estimated to have saved

producers nearly \$1 million. In 2000, he received our Hollings Family Award for

teaching, a high honor we present to innovative educators within the Institute. In

2001, he was named a "distinguished-extension-specialist" by University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension – he was instrumental, with others, in "starting" the Nebraska Ranch Practicum in early 1999. That Practicum "teaches" ranchers an integrated systems approach to managing cattle, forage, and economics. Participants from the 2000 Practicum "alone," who "in total" manage about 1.5 million acres of range crop and hay land and about 131,000 head-of cattle, "estimate" the value of the knowledge they gained in the Practicum at \$34 per head, indicating an "average-benefit" of \$35,313 per participating rancher.

Don "also" is the recipient of the second Wendell Burgher Beef Industry Award, which "honors" longtime Nebraska cattleman, the late Wendell Burgher. It is a two-year stipend award, and Don is in the second year of that award. "Thank you," Don, for all you do, and for all "you've done" to make this day a success. Also, let me add a very special "thank you" to the Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory "crew," whom I know "have put in a tremendous amount of time and effort" to make this day successful.

Last, but in no way least, I want to thank "each of you" who has come to the Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory open house. You're the reason we're here, and we highly value your support. Thank you.

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