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Agriculture Builders of Nebraska, Inc.

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AGRICULTURE BUILDERS OF NEBRASKA, INC.
MORNING SESSION
Cornhusker Hotel
January 14, 2004
John C. Owens
NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor

What a "pleasure" it is to be with you here this morning! And how "startling" it is to realize a whole year has passed since we last gathered at this meeting. "So much" has occurred in that year.

In the Institute we've seen students graduated. Grants won. Research, teaching, and extension education accomplished. So much "good-work" on behalf of Nebraska. This good work, this "business" of making a difference, is the reason we all come to work each morning. This is "what" keeps us going in good times and in hard times.

Certainly the past year has "had" its hard times, as everyone in this room knows. Drought continued to "haunt" us in much of Nebraska, and a fourth-round of state budget cuts took its toll "across" our state. Cuts definitely took a toll on "the programs" within the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. And

just last month, when the economy seemed to be looking up in Nebraska, mad cow disease was discovered in Washington state, bringing "new concerns" for us all.

In the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, our budget has been reduced almost $6.5 million in four difficult, "draining" rounds of budget cutting. Fine programs of value to Nebraskans are "gone," and excellent people are negatively affected. Each round of budget-cutting brings us nearer and nearer to the very core of our programming, often making it difficult for many people to sleep nights. These are the things that make a person "NOT" want to get up in the morning. Sometimes it really does seem it would be a real temptation to pull the covers up over our heads and leave a wake-up call for "Half-past-when-everything-is-straightened-out-and-humming-smoothly-along." Of course, if we waited for "*that*" moment, we might not get up for a very long time!

At present in the Institute and throughout the university system, we are "waiting" to see what the budget situation will be for Nebraska and for the university in this legislative session.

While we know the state has a "projected" $211 million deficit going into the session, we hear that a strengthening economy "may mean" that deficit could shrink, and the Governor and the Legislature might be more likely to look to "rainy day" funds to meet "at least some" of that shortfall, rather than slashing budgets as "severely" as they have been slashed in the past two years.

We will see "what" the Governor recommends tomorrow when he reveals his budget proposal, and we will see "what" the Nebraska Economic Forecasting Advisory Board "predicts" when they meet in February. Hopefully by then it will be apparent to "everyone" that our nation's consumers and our INTERNATIONAL trading partners remain convinced of the quality and safety of one of Nebraska's "prime" agricultural products – beef. Certainly the beef industry is a "huge contributor" to Nebraska's economy.

Several state senators have said they expect the Legislature will take up budget discussions "after" the Economic Forecasting Advisory Board's February projections. Right now we wait, "hopeful" we will not see cuts like those of the recent past, yet

knowing more hard-decisions may await us in the next few months. In all things it is better to hope than to despair.

If we must make further cuts at the University, we again will cut vertically, continuing our efforts to preserve the strength and impact of those programs that remain.

As I talk about the budget cuts of the past few years and the uncertain days in which we find ourselves today, I cannot do so without expressing the genuine-gratitude all of us in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and indeed the entire University of Nebraska system, feel for Agriculture Builders of Nebraska. Your support for our work, and for the entire university, and your tireless-efforts on our behalf through these budget cutting days have been invaluable in preserving as much of our programming as possible. Your dedication to the future of Nebraska agriculture and your willingness to stand-up for that future is a gift you give our state, and we thank-you for it. I continue to be profoundly grateful personally for the wise counsel and thoughtful perspective I receive from ABN members. Your

support has helped me, as well as the entire Institute, through some especially difficult days.

I do not want to talk today just about the hard times, however. That is not what we are about. While budget cutting has been in the spotlight the last two years, because of its difficult and far-ranging effects on Nebraska, there has been much good news in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, as well. Today I would like to celebrate with you the fact that, despite these hard times, there are many, many exciting accomplishments occurring in the Institute that add value for our state, and contribute to Nebraska's future.

Some of those accomplishments are captured in the deans' reports you have received today, and I encourage you to read through those reports at your leisure. They are wonderful examples of how our faculty and staff remain focused on and dedicated to our land-grant university mission in Nebraska, despite the budget turmoil that has swirled around us.

Other highlights of our work we've put together in a video I'm pleased to show you this morning. I must tell you, it's really

hard to decide what to include in such a video, because there are so many terrific stories we'd like to tell of how the Institute values and benefits Nebraska. Unfortunately, time only permits us to share a few of these stories.

What you'll see this morning are just a few examples of the diverse, important, exciting work we're involved in on behalf of our state. While all of the people you'll see in the video aren't able to be present with us today, I'm pleased to tell you a number of them are here. They will be glad to answer any questions you might have about their work. We've set aside a period for discussion following the video, and we all welcome your questions and comments.

Excellence is a byword in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and we strive for excellence in all we do. You'll see excellence exemplified in each of the programs and people in this video today. Certainly that is true in the Nebraska Center for Redox Biology, for which one of our researchers received a $10 million grant from the National Institutes of

Health to establish. That researcher was awarded this grant through a national, peer-reviewed NIH grant competition to establish Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence, and she now directs the Nebraska center.

We'll also hear about a $1.8 million grant from the National Science Foundation to study our Nebraska Sandhill's ecosystem, an exciting project from which we eagerly await the new knowledge to be discovered.

Last, but definitely not least, in this first segment of our video we'll hear about the National Academy of Sciences, and the work by a distinguished member of the Institute faculty who, last year, was elected to membership in the academy. Membership in the National Academy of Sciences is considered one of the highest honors accorded a U.S. scientist. We are extremely proud that all of the University of Nebraska faculty members ever elected to the highly esteemed National Academy of Sciences are from the Institute.

First, a video definition of redox biology.

VIDEO OF DARRELL NELSON, RUMA BANERJEE, DAVID WEDIN, JAMES VAN ETTEN – ends with Van Etten talking about undergrads "... and so forth." (FYI, HE SAYS "AND SO FORTH" A COUPLE TIMES IN A ROW AT THE END, SO BE SURE AND GET THE SECOND ONE AS THE END OF THIS SEGMENT.)

I cannot tell you what a bonus it is for our undergraduate students to have the opportunity to work with a scientist the caliber of Dr. Jim Van Etten. At any one time you'll find undergrads, graduate students, and postdocs at work in his laboratory. Students say that his enthusiasm for science is contagious. And while he is known professionally for discovering a new family of viruses at the University of Nebraska, he also is known as the professor who has signed student lab coats hanging in his lab. After Jim had been here awhile and had mentored a number of students, he ran out of space to hang their retired lab coats, which have characteristics of the students written on them, so he started hanging photographs of his students, instead. I don't know about you, but I'd find it pretty uplifting as a student to

have a National Academy of Sciences "scientist" think enough of me to hang my picture in his laboratory as an "important part" of his work at the university.

Research, teaching, and extension education go hand in hand in the Institute, and the three are thoroughly intertwined in what we do for Nebraska. In the next segment of our video we'll discuss "the partnership" of the Cooperative Extension Division and the Agricultural Research Division, as well as "several" of our diverse projects of benefit to Nebraska. The projects include outstanding work to control *E. coli* 0157:H7 in feedlot cattle, pioneering work to turn corn-husks into "fiber" for use in the textile industry, and "valuable" food-safety-aspects of work that benefits both consumers and the food industry.

THIS SEGMENT STARTS WITH ELBERT, ENDS WITH SUE HEFLE, WHOSE LAST WORDS ARE "... for food allergic consumers."

As I noted earlier, classroom-and-laboratory "teaching" go hand-in-hand with extension education and research within the

Institute. "Leadership" for Nebraska is a given in the work we do and the students we teach. In this next segment, we'll hear about "the merger" of the former College of Human Resources and Family Sciences and the former Teachers College into the "new" College of Education and Human Sciences. We'll also hear "exciting-news" for the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis. Finally, we'll hear about "experiences" in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, and work conducted by the Center for Applied Rural Innovation that helps move our state forward and keeps it strong.

SEGMENT STARTS WITH MARJORIE KOSTELNIK, ENDS WITH JOHN ALLEN, LAST WORDS ARE "... and focus on higher value products."

As we look to the future we do so "mindful" of what we heard in the over 30 listening sessions we held across the state in this past year as "part" of our process to update the Institute's strategic plan. We will be putting "additional-focus" on two areas in which

we're already working because of the concerns expressed to us in those listening sessions. Those two areas are: 1) economic development and community vitality, and 2) water.

As our deans look to the future of Nebraska, this is part of what they see.

STARTS WITH DON WOODBURN, ENDS WITH MARJORIE KOSTELNIK, LAST WORDS "... with the help of both our old friends and the new friends we are making."

As you can see, there are a number of exciting and highly valuable programs occurring within IANR. Because of time limits we have been able to give you only a brief glimpse of a few of them. I would invite you now to give us your comments and your questions. To facilitate asking those questions, I'll ask the people with us today who appeared in the video to take a seat toward the front of the room if you aren't already up here so our Ag Builders friends know who is present today. I'll also ask you to move to a microphone when asked a question so your answer

easily can be heard. Please do repeat the question in cases where everyone in the room may not have heard it.

Thank you.