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New Faculty Orientation Welcome

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New Faculty Orientation Welcome
Wednesday, August 18, 2004
John C. Owens
NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor

(DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT AT BEGINNING; PROBABLY GOOD TO START AT BOTH SIDES OF ROOM AND THEY CAN PASS ON.)

I've got a handout I'd like to share with you today, and I'm going to start it circulating before I begin my remarks. (DELIVER TO THOSE TO START CIRCULATING.)

Now that we've got that going, let me say that it is a real pleasure this morning to add my greetings to those of Chancellor Perlman as we "welcome you" to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. It is exciting to think about "the work" you will do here this year, and in the years to come, to advance the world body-of-knowledge. We look forward to great things from you. And when I say "we", I mean not only those of us in this room today and those who will be your "colleagues" across the campus, but also the citizens of Nebraska.

If you have been in Lincoln since the first of August, you have had the opportunity to read and hear media stories about our new President's journey across Nebraska as he began his first week as head of the University of Nebraska system. If you missed those stories, and would like to know "more" about the people of this great state in which you've joined us to work, I suggest you seek them out. Stories of J.B. Milliken's "stops" in various towns across Nebraska, from Scottsbluff through Grand Island, ^{to Nebraska City} offer clear insights into how much Nebraskans care about their land-grant university - and how much they expect from it.

We *are* Nebraska's land-grant university, founded in 1869. We also have the distinct honor of "membership" in the Association of American Universities, granted us in 1909. Today I would like to spend my few minutes with you discussing "what it is to be a land-grant university, and what that honor and responsibility means to us, and to Nebraskans.

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No one has to be around me very long before realizing I am a "great-fan" of Justin Smith Morrill and Abraham Lincoln. It was

Morrill's vision and persistence that resulted in the Morrill Act of 1862. President Abraham Lincoln signed the act into law, bringing land-grant universities into being.

I often think of how easy it would have been for these ^{two} men, in the midst of the Civil War, to focus only on the events around them. How easy it would have been for them to be so mired in their bloody here-and-now that they could not see beyond the tremendous struggle to save the union.

Instead, they raised their vision far above the battlefields of the day to consider what the country would need *after* the war was fought and won. What it would need to heal, and grow, and prosper. What it would need to outfit people with the tools to grow their lives and this country.

Before the Morrill Act, higher education was largely the privilege of the wealthy. Land-grant universities made higher education available to those of much more modest means – and an educational revolution was begun.

Land-grant universities take the resources of the university to their state. It is our responsibility and mission. We teach, we do research vital to the well-being of Nebraska and Nebraskans, and we "extend" the university's knowledge to those who cannot be campus students. "One" of the ways we do that in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources is through "Cooperative — Extension," which I consider the best out-of-classroom teaching experience ever yet devised for delivering education to people in "other" than our traditional classroom settings.

While we have city and east campuses with faculty office buildings and teaching classrooms, and laboratories here in Lincoln, it is "vital" to remember that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is actually a statewide campus. The handout I've distributed today "shows you" where we in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln have UNL faculty and staff located "throughout" Nebraska. They're in our Cooperative Extension field offices, at our Research and Extension Centers in Norfolk, Scottsbluff, and North Platte, and at various "other" research sites around the state.

As of June 1, we had 144 Cooperative Extension educators, who are non-tenured faculty, working throughout the entire state, and 35 extension specialists, who are tenured or tenure-track faculty, working at our "three" Research and Extension Centers.

These, too, are your colleagues, taking the resources of the university to the people of Nebraska, working with residents to meet Nebraskans' concerns through research and teaching, "both" on and off-campus. Nebraskans expect this of their land-grant university. As they should.

You are called to "exciting work" here in Nebraska; needed work, valued work, "work" that can echo down the years. Welcome! We look forward to all your contributions to this great land-grant university and the state that supports, sustains, and expects great things from it. Thank you.