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Liaison Committee's Brown Bag Update

John Owens

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, jowens2@unl.edu

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Liaison Committee's Brown Bag Update
East Campus Union
Wednesday, October 25, 2006
John Owens
NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor

In my update today I'm delighted to start off with some truly good news: student enrollments are up in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, the College of Education and Human Sciences, and the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture.

This is tremendously good news for the University and for the students studying with us. We provide an outstanding education that leads to an exciting array of careers.

It's "good news" for Nebraska. As we talk about revitalizing communities, we know those communities must have young people who return to them "equipped" to provide the skilled workforce and leadership so absolutely necessary to remain vital.

For the second year in a row, our College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources' undergraduate enrollment increased. It's now 1,303 students, up 3.1 percent, compared to

UNL's overall undergraduate enrollment which increased 2 percent. Graduate student enrollment in CASNR also is up, to 494 enrolled graduate students.

This year, CASNR's incoming class was smaller than last year's, but CASNR has more continuing students this fall, which made "the difference" in increased enrollments. Recruitment and retention both are key.

College of Education and Human Sciences undergraduate enrollment also gained for a second year, rising to 2,476 students, a 4 percent increase. CEHS graduate and professional enrollment also saw a 4 percent increase, to 956 students.

We've seen large percentage increases in Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture "enrollment" for several years, with enrollment this year rising to 272 students. That is "good news," as well.

I'm also pleased to report that we had 48 Nebraska students "apply" to be among the 25 students admitted to our UNL/Iowa State University cooperative program in veterinary medical -

education when the first class starts its studies on our campus next fall. That's more students than applied for the traditional program last year, and that is tremendous news.

Another piece of good news for everyone in the Institute is found in the number of awards for research, public service, and teaching received at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the past fiscal year. Those awards, of course, include IANR grants and contracts, and I am very pleased to report to you that IANR accounts for about 40 percent of UNL's total: \$56,457,594 of \$141,564,729. Our Agricultural Research Division ranks first in awards received and our Extension Division is fourth; in between are the College of Arts and Sciences, second, and the College of Engineering, third. The College of Education and Human Sciences is fifth in this strong line of recipients. This, also, is very good news.

In my remaining time – and I may borrow a few minutes from Alan Moeller, who follows me on today's agenda, to talk about this – I want to address a question I recently was asked

that suggests there may be some lack of information or misinformation in the Institute that I would like to inform.

The question is: Why is it taking so long to fill some vacant positions we'd normally expect to see quickly released and advertised?

The answer: Folks, it's the budget. And, it has been the budget for some time. As you know, the Institute went through some very difficult permanent cuts in the past few years. We are hoping to avoid still more.

You'll remember that just when we thought we could breathe more easily following the painful rounds of legislative cuts made because of Nebraska's budget crises, we found UNL tuition shortfalls created a university budget shortfall on the entire Lincoln campus that we must address.

Right now in IANR we are cash flowing \$1.7 million, the amount assigned us over two years as our share of the UNL tuition shortfall, in the hopes that in time, as student enrollments increase, we can work our way out of this situation. The

alternative is permanent cuts, and permanent cuts are just that – permanent. Good programs and good people go away, and we can't get them back. We saw that happen in the much-too-recent past, and we are trying especially-hard to avoid that happening again.

The university also is anticipating another "overage" in utility costs, which have exceeded the projections for utilities built into the university budget. Last year, the Legislature provided a one-time only appropriation to help us meet these unexpected utility overages. The Legislature will be asked to make a utilities appropriation again, but we won't know until late spring whether that will occur. In the meantime, we need to make certain that the Institute has the \$1.6 million required to meet our obligation on the utilities overage if UNL's \$5.8 million in projected utilities overages must come solely from the UNL budget.

We traditionally have built a budget that exceeds revenue, assuming turnover in people, as a safeguard against funds not being fully appropriated for expenditures. That's about a 1

percent overage, and it has worked well for IANR in the past in covering expenditures when they weren't fully appropriated. In our current situation, where we are working hard to cashflow our funds rather than make permanent cuts, it makes another million dollars we must account for in our budgets.

As you know, we are putting in place a program with Iowa State University that will provide veterinary medical education for 25 Nebraska students per year who will study their first two years on our campus starting fall 2007, and their last two years at ISU. I truly believe that long term, this partnership will be very good for Nebraska and for the Nebraska livestock industry. In time, we will receive revenue from students studying their first two years with us to support the program. Right now, however, we are cash flowing the necessary start-up costs. Among those costs is the support of a traditional program of veterinary medical education for two classes of students now studying at Iowa State University. We also have roll-down costs as we fund two classes of Nebraska students now finishing their studies at Kansas State —

University.

When we ended our veterinary medical education agreement with Kansas State, we promised the Nebraska students covered by the agreement at the time that we would honor the agreement made regarding their tuition until they graduated. We did that because it is the right thing to do. It does, however, complicate our budget. With two classes finishing up at Kansas State and two classes at Iowa State, for the next four years we will be honoring traditional program agreements for the students in those classes.

Altogether, given the things I've discussed here, we are looking at approximately \$4.3 million of budget deficit we are working hard to cash flow. Salary savings are the major way to accomplish that. This is why vacant positions are being held, or released slowly. It is a time of all for one, and one for all in the Institute. I know that means the shoe pinches sharply in several units where positions are requested, and I am sorry for that. I truly am. Yet your administrative team is required to take the

long-term view to see that the Institute has a "whole shoe," if you will, and the entire foot remains shod. Looking out for the entire Institute is our job and our responsibility.

All positions released we release extremely judiciously. We require that all faculty position requests contribute in some meaningful-way to teaching, knowing all positions can, whether directly in the classroom, or through opportunities for students to take part in research or internships. Chancellor Perlman has made it very clear he is tying enrollment to funding, and that is "the reality" with which we work and live.

Barring a cataclysmic event, I do think we will work our way out of this budget situation. Until we do, we will continue to hold positions, not because we want to do so – I personally would like to fill them all as quickly as possible, and several more besides – "but" we will hold vacant positions because we need to put the salary-savings vacant positions provide toward the budget deficit. We do that so we can retain the programs and people we have, and avoid more permanent cuts if at all possible.

If you have any questions, or ideas on how we might
otherwise meet this \$4.3 million obligation, please do let me
know. The Deans and I are very open to ideas. And I thank you
for your time.