

2007

ABN Morning Session

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**ABN Morning Session
Cornhusker Hotel
Wednesday, January 10, 2007
John C. Owens
NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor**

Folks, I've been asked to talk with you today about my vision for the future, so let's get right to it.

First, my vision is this: Agriculture will remain Nebraska's leading industry. It's importance will grow in our state. It already has. In 1990 one in four Nebraskans depended upon agriculture in some way for their livelihood. Last year Dr. Charles Lamphear told us it's one in three in his study for the Nebraska Policy Institute.

Lamphear found 31 percent of Nebraska's jobs – nearly 366,000 full- and part-time – result from agriculture. Expect that number to grow. Biosciences – renewable resources for fiber, fuel, and food – along with value-added products for Nebraska's tremendous agricultural-commodities are naturals for growing this state's economy. My vision? They will.

Smart people know you build on your strengths, and agriculture is a Nebraska strength. You know it. I know it.

Chancellor Perlman knows it. AND PRESIDENT Milliken knows it.

We know - and if you didn't know it before, you know it now, too - we **know** the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources will lead in providing the knowledge and education needed for Nebraska to grow, and grow, and grow this strength. Over the past year, we've been working with a national, nonprofit research and development organization that specializes in 'global' science and technology on a study that ~~examines~~ ^{EXAMINES} the Institute's ~~contributions~~ contributions to Nebraska, and provides "recommendations" for the future. We're working with that information now, and you'll be hearing ^{MUCH} more about it in the weeks and months ahead.

"Second," my vision is this: The recognition and stewardship of Nebraska's abundant and "highly precious" natural resources, such as water, "will grow." I envision a state of "thoughtful citizens" "passionate" about sustaining and preserving these resources because they understand it is Nebraska's natural resources that are "the base" of our state's wealth. It will take research and -

education to get us there – I see the Institute and the entire university as a fundamental-part of that.

Third, my vision is this: Individuals, families, and communities of all sizes will thrive in this state. Not merely survive. Thrive.

That's my vision for the future, and the Institute, as Nebraska's primary-provider of agricultural-and-natural resources programs, is critical to Nebraska's future.

We've been working toward that vision ever since I came to the Institute in 2001. Our blueprint is the IANR strategic plan. The Institute has a strong-legacy of strategic-planning, and that legacy in large part was fostered by my predecessor, Irv Omtvedt. Thank you, Irv, for all you did laying the groundwork for strategic planning within the university.

The Institute's strategic-plan is based on issues identified by Nebraskans, concerns expressed by Nebraska citizens in conversations, and the ongoing listening sessions we hold throughout our state. Between 2003-2006 the Institute held 39

“listening sessions” to gain valuable-input into Nebraskans’ chief and abiding concerns-and-questions for the present and for the future. We’ll hold four-more listening-sessions this year, as well. As we continue to develop our strategic plan, we are responsive to not just a few, but to the many who compose our constituency. This is our responsibility.

Our current strategic plan has three program-themes:

1. To improve natural resources management and promote environmental quality;

2. To enhance economically viable and sustainable food and biomass systems;

3. To strengthen the quality of life of individuals and families and contribute to community viability.

Now that’s written in academic-speak. Let me boil down my vision of what that really means for Nebraska:

First, we’re going to see that Nebraska’s natural resources – our wildlife, our grasslands, our very soil, and water – are preserved and sustained so they, in turn, can sustain our state

and remain key elements in growing Nebraska's future.

"Second," we're going to build on our strong heritage of agricultural expertise to help grow Nebraska's economy and keep our food supply safe-and-abundant. We're going to help "grow" Nebraska's future in "biosciences," providing naturally-renewable fuel, food, and fiber for the future.

"Third," we're going to continue to work for and with Nebraska's families and communities to preserve and strengthen the "very fabric" of our society. When we talk about the good life of Nebraska, we're intent on making Nebraska's-good-life better, from our most-rural communities to our most-urban.

Now. Let us be very clear here: When I say "we," I don't "just mean" the Institute of Agriculture-and-Natural Resources. I mean "everyone" in this room, and all the others throughout Nebraska with whom the Institute is "a partner," working-together for the betterment of our state.

IANR does - and will - lead in generating and delivering knowledge to grow Nebraska in a wide-variety of ways, from

value-added products, to entrepreneurial youth and adults, to yield increases, and the biosciences. That's our job.

I expect the Institute will lead the way in research in these key areas so important to Nebraska. I expect we will continue to lead UNL in research-funding-awards so important to meeting Nebraska's research needs. While you may hear at times that some folks are concerned that more and more research will follow research dollars rather than Nebraska needs, I tell you straight out that the Institute will remain firmly-focused on Nebraskans' needs through both applied and appropriate basic research.

I expect UNL Extension will remain a leader in connecting Nebraskans with the resources this tremendous land-grant university offers our state. The need for all of us to constantly learn, to update our knowledge, to envision new-answers to new questions, only grows as the pace of change accelerates. I am firmly-convinced our country needs land-grant universities today more than ever, as we make our way through the 21st century.

I know without question we will do our jobs.

Your job, and the job of all our partners, is to support the development-and-distribution of the knowledge Nebraska needs so you and others can take it and, with Nebraska ingenuity, skill, and determination, build Nebraska's future for all generations.

This is not new. We have a century-plus legacy

clearly demonstrating just how well this works for Nebraska.

When we say we are partners with Nebraska in the Institute, we are serious. Deadly serious. Partnership to us is a two-way-street of give and take, of each partner bringing our best skills and talents to the partnership, of help, and honest communication that thoughtfully identifies, discusses, and resolves issues, and builds for tomorrow's success.

Partners may disagree - I can't conceive that most partners who work closely and care passionately about what they do will not ever disagree - but good partners work through those disagreements. Good partners know when to disagree internally and when to close ranks to external threats for the common good

good.

When I arrived here in 2001, the Institute had this vision:

"IANR will be the premier provider of educational, research, and outreach programs essential for shaping Nebraska's future as a leader in the 21st century in the areas of food, agricultural and agribusiness systems, natural resources, and human resources. IANR is dedicated to providing the highest quality programs that are ecologically sound, economically viable, socially responsible, and scientifically appropriate."

The focus of that vision is internal, on the Institute. That is not uncommon among universities in our nation.

My vision focuses externally, on Nebraska. Nebraska is why we're here. Nebraska is what this great land-grant university is all about. We serve the State of Nebraska.

There are people who flinch at the word "serve" because they equate it with servant, being considered less than grand guests. My view is different. Service is a highly honorable ~~word~~ ^{CONCEPT} to me, and I hope for you. In my view, if we are not about

service to this state we are not fulfilling our land-grant university mission.

Just last week we buried a servant leader in this country, President Gerald Ford. If the outpouring of tributes to this good and decent man who served his country at great personal cost to himself did not ingrain in every mind the honor and priceless value of servant leadership, I do not know what would.

We drafted a mission statement for the Institute in 2004 that is outwardly focused, and of course the Institute's mission informs our vision. Our mission is to focus research, teaching, and extension education expertise in agriculture and food programs, natural resources, families, and communities to help Nebraska grow an environmentally sound, economically viable, socially responsible future.

It's about Nebraska. It's about Nebraska agriculture, Nebraska natural resources and Nebraska people. That's what we do. That's why we're here. And that's why we'll stay here. That's why we're critically important to Nebraska, and to

and PRESIDENT MILLIKEN

Nebraska's land-grant university, as Chancellor Perlman ~~will~~ will attest.

With agriculture Nebraska's leading industry, your university MUST cultivate and provide cutting-edge research, teaching, and extension education programs so vital to the "one" industry that supports and leads the state's economy and so "greatly influences" the good life for Nebraskans. To not do so would be irresponsible.

Providing a tremendous education for students, an education that leads to lucrative, fulfilling careers is without question part of my vision. We will see continued increases in our student-credit-hour production because we must, for the betterment of Nebraska. I expect to see our traditional ag majors, such as animal science, agronomy and horticulture, and agricultural economics "grow and prosper." I expect to see these departments set ambitious goals and ^{then} meet those goals. Then I expect those goals to be the basis for even more ambitious goals, and on we'll grow. Our commitment to classroom education, to

research, and to extension education in agriculture, natural resources, and human resources does not change. It is bedrock solid.

"How we go about fulfilling that commitment, however – that very well may change as the needs of our constituents change. When we add value to our traditional educational programs to meet new needs, we preserve and we build our ability to best-serve our traditional audiences, as well.

We must constantly assess how that which we do well can expand and grow – and we do *so many* things so extremely well in the Institute. Our tremendous science-based Professional Golf Management program, for example, builds on our existing strengths in turf science as it meets new needs and expands students' understanding of how agronomy-and-horticulture skills contribute to their lives.

Nebraskans have long talked about producers diversifying and adding value to their product. That's what we're doing with our new majors and options, such as the joint-program with the

College of Education-and-Human Sciences in hospitality, restaurant, and tourism management, the new insect science major, our new agricultural finance and banking option, and many more exciting opportunities for students.

One important point I need to make in talking about new majors and options: When we talk about increasing CASNR enrollments, we're not talking about doing just anything to increase the College's numbers. We're talking about providing students the knowledge and skills they'll need to lead and to grow Nebraska's future. That's what we do in ~~the~~ CASNR, which historically averages over 70 percent of its graduates taking their first job in Nebraska after graduation. That's a brain gain for our state.

I can't talk about vision for the Institute without talking about the cooperative program in veterinary medicine that we are collaborating with Iowa State University to offer. We really look forward to welcoming the first class of 25 Nebraska students who will join us on campus this fall for this exciting new program.

A program ^{that} builds on the considerable strengths and assets of "two", high-quality land-grant universities. With Nebraska's large livestock industry, well-trained and ^{and livestock-focused} educated veterinarians are "vital" to our state and to the industry's well-being. We are excited about the opportunities this collaborative-program offers Nebraska.

And when we talk about vision, I also want to "note" that at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis several new initiatives for the future are being considered, including "infusion" of entrepreneurship principles throughout the NCTA curriculum, development of an Entrepreneurship Center, and development of "new" academic certificate programs for traditional and non-traditional students.

I must bring my remarks to "a close" now to allow adequate time for the Chancellor, and our Deans' panel discussion following his talk. I "welcome" your questions and comments during ^{and after} that panel discussion, as do the deans. I welcome comments and questions throughout the day, and, of course, in the following

^{and weeks}
days, as well.

We in the Institute highly value ABN, and your support of our work, of Nebraska agriculture, and of the university as a whole. Your support of LB 605 in the last legislative session, and of UNL's utility deficiency request, and the Mead clean-up deficiency request, was extremely important to us. Your effectiveness on these issues has been noted and mentioned by both President Milliken and Chancellor Perlman.

We are gratified you have made the \$14.3 million Greater Nebraska Project and the \$6 million Programs of Excellence ABN priorities for this legislative session. Both truly are investments for Nebraska's future, and both are extremely important to agricultural research and education for that future.

We are grateful, also, that you've made assisting CASNR in increasing enrollment an ABN priority. We need your wisdom. We need your leadership in helping Nebraska's key-decision-makers understand the importance of Nebraska's leading industry to future of Nebraska, and the importance of the Institute to your

industry. We need your partnership, and the partnership of all our constituent groups - give-and-take partnerships built on mutual trust, respect, and common interests - in building Nebraska's future.

On behalf of all the IANR representatives here today, I thank you for this opportunity to be with you. Thank you.