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ABN Noon Speech (Short version)

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ABN Noon Speech (Short version)
Cornhusker Hotel
Wednesday, January 10, 2007
John C. Owens
NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor

Folks, because we find ourselves in a time crunch, I'm going to forego the terrific speech I planned to give today and quickly make five key points. Please know I will be happy to provide additional information on any of them at any time:

Key point 1: Agriculture is Nebraska's leading industry.

One in three Nebraska jobs – in both rural and urban settings – depends on it. Nebraska's dependence on agriculture is growing. In 1990 the number was one in four jobs.

With so much of our population living in urban areas, people may not always grasp the significance of agriculture in Nebraska.

The significance is this: One in three jobs depends upon it.

Whether you live in Harrison or Omaha, whether you are on

Mountain Time or Central Time, agriculture affects your life – and

not just in the sense that we all have to eat, although a safe and abundant food supply seems to me a powerful inducement for

valuing an industry. Yet it goes beyond that here. As Nebraska's chief industry, agriculture supports Nebraska's economy.

Key point 2: When you're looking to grow success, you look to your strengths. Agriculture is a definite Nebraska strength. Value-added industries that use the tremendous commodities Nebraska produces are an absolute natural. Biosciences are one of our country's dynamic growth areas. Nebraska is well-positioned to build that industry here.

Key point 3: The Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources is Nebraska's primary provider of agricultural and natural resource programs in support of Nebraska agriculture. When we say agriculture, we mean everything from the farm gate to the restaurant plate. Production. Food safety. New product development. Resource management. Water. Rural development. Families-and-youth development. Nutrition. Animal care. Some of the greatest science anyone could ever dream. The Institute is a primary-engine for economic and social sustainability and growth in Nebraska.

Key point 4: The University returns, with interest, dollars Nebraska invests with us. The handout at your tables titled "Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources – at work for Nebraska," outlines a number of ways we do that. One example notes that work done ^{at UNL} ~~at UNL~~ has added \$50 to \$70 per head for cattle in this state over the past seven years. At the \$50 rate per head that was \$130 million more for Nebraskans in 2006 alone. That's not a one-time gain. The gain is yearly. While the number of cattle on feed differs some from year to year, in this beef state it is always significant. For today's purposes, let's multiply \$130 million per year by seven years. We're approaching **\$1 billion** more in less than a decade for Nebraska producers because of just this one research project that added value to their product. You will find other impacts in the handout entitled: "At Work for Nebraska" on each of your tables.

Yes, our work provides good return on investment. Which brings me to **key point five:**

Both Governor Heineman and many of you senators have

been clear that while you intend to develop a tight state budget, you do value key strategic investments for Nebraska's future.

This ^{Legislative} session the university seeks two strategic investments in keeping Nebraska agriculture competitive and promoting economic development.

The Greater Nebraska Project seeks a one-time investment of \$14.3 million to enhance or replace 30- to 40-year-old buildings at three research and extension centers all located away from Lincoln. These buildings can't support today's research and education needs, and they certainly won't be able to support tomorrow's needs.

The University also is requesting \$3 million for each year of the 2007-2009 biennium for academic Programs of Excellence.

Research and education are vital to Nebraska remaining an agricultural leader, and to providing the skilled workforce so critically necessary to power a growing biosciences industry. The Greater Nebraska Project and the Programs of Excellence requests are key investments for Nebraska, vital to the research

and education [']necessary ["] to grow and sustain Nebraska's economy and its good life.

As productive partners with and for Nebraska, we in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources [']know ["] these investments *will return interest* to our state. We have a long and proud history of doing just that.

Thank you.