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Distinguished Fellowship Awards Luncheon
East Campus Union
Noon Thursday, Sept. 27, 2007
John C. Owens, NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR

What a great pleasure it is to see everyone gathered for this distinguished fellowship awards luncheon. My heartiest congratulations to each of you who is a fellowship recipient. I know all of us here today are so pleased for you, and so pleased to have you with us.

These awards recognize accomplishments already achieved in your life, and signal the great expectations we hold for you in the future. We look forward with real anticipation to all you will achieve in your careers, to all you will contribute to the world's body of knowledge, your fields and communities. The potential in this room is exciting, and so important to our world.

We're delighted you've chosen to study and work with us in your various departments here in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. When you are here you

work and learn with some of the leading agricultural researchers in our world. And in case you think I'm just prejudiced on our scientists' behalf, let me hasten to tell you that while I *am* indeed prejudiced on our scientists' behalf, that isn't just my opinion!

The ISI Essential Science Indicators Report for 1994-2004 indexes nearly 9,000 journals, and tracks how often articles are cited by other authors. It reviewed the agricultural science articles published by 298 institutions worldwide and found our agricultural scientists rank 8th among U.S. universities, and 16th in the world.

To illustrate the company in which we stand, let me tell you the U.S. Department of Agriculture tops the list. The University of California-Davis is the top U.S. university cited. We are standing – and you are learning and working – in some very good company here!

Another thing I want you to know about this university in which you're studying is that, as a land-grant university, we take very seriously our "responsibility" to our state. J. B.

Milliken, President of the University of Nebraska system, says repeatedly that his goal for the University of Nebraska is that we be the best university in America in terms of serving the interests of the people of our state. That's what land-grant universities do – we take the resources of the University to Nebraskans.

A recent independent study of the Institute found that for each state tax dollar invested with us, we provide a "conservative" 15-to-1 return for Nebraskans. As part of Nebraska's land-grant university, we "are" at work for Nebraska, and we take that work "very seriously". It's the reason we're here. I'm glad you have "this opportunity" to experience the land-grant university tradition with people who further it everyday.

Land-grant universities truly are universities of and for the people, and have made such tremendous contributions to science over the years. Land-grant universities first came into being in this country to provide higher education for people for whom higher education had, until then, been

largely unattainable. Until the Morrill Act, signed by President Abraham Lincoln, brought land-grant universities into being, higher education was largely the privilege of the rich.

Today land-grant universities remain vital – in fact, the independent study of the Institute stated, *"In the 21st century, challenges such as globalization, competitive market pressures, technological advances, and the preeminent importance of innovation and talent are restructuring the economy. Against such a backdrop of rapid and dramatic change, can a system such as agricultural research and extension, established in the late 1800s, be relevant? The surprising answer – that agricultural research and extension institutions may well be* ***more*** *necessary and relevant than ever before – is a testimony to the foresight of those who ensured the creation of IANR ..."*

I urge you, while you study here, to take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way, to explore your

science and exchange views and questions with the very fine minds who are here. Explore the scientific issues that concern you, the ethics of science, with these people who have asked such questions before you, and who remain open to – and eager to – learn all they, too, may learn.

As we celebrate with you today, as we celebrate your fellowships, we remember with gratitude the people who made your awards available through their generous gifts to the university.

These are people who believed in the promise of the future, which is you, and all the good you have the opportunity to do in your lifetime; people who keenly understood and appreciated the importance of research and study. Those people backed their understanding and their appreciation with their dedication to supporting such work down through the years. We are grateful to them.

We also celebrate today, and my congratulations to, the third recipient of the Darrell W. Nelson Excellence in Graduate Student Advising award. This is only the third

time we've given this award, named for Darrell Nelson, former dean of our Agricultural Research Division. It honors outstanding contributions to graduate student mentoring. It emphasizes the importance of graduate education to the well-being of Nebraska and, I would say, our world.

Again, congratulations to each of you, and all best wishes for your future endeavors. How we look forward to them!

Please join me in giving everyone being recognized here today a hand.

(Lead applause)

Thank you.

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