

2008

ABN Morning Session

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ABN Morning Session
Cornhusker Hotel
Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2008
John C. Owens, NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR

December's wintry weather started me thinking about the December seven years ago when my wife Virginia and I slid into town looking forward with real enthusiasm to our new adventure with the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The temperatures were frigid, the ground white, but the welcome was warm. ABN is the first group I spoke to, shortly after beginning the job, and we've been talking ever since. Thank you for that. Your support for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, as well as for the entire university, is absolutely vital to us. And the wise counsel I've received from ABN members over the years has been invaluable to me.

It gave me 'great pleasure' that first time we met to tell you 'how much' I think you have to be proud of in your Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. It gives me great pleasure today to say I think 'the reasons' you have to be proud of your Institute and yourselves only continue to grow.

I said that first year that three things influenced-my-decision to come to Nebraska, and I repeat today it is those ^{SAME} three that have kept me here.
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First, I came because the Institute has such terrific, quality faculty, staff, and students. I was so impressed with them when I interviewed.

"These are the people who help grow Nebraska's future. I came to be part of that future.

The second reason I came is because of you, and people just like you – because of the support the Institute and the university enjoy all across Nebraska. This is Nebraska's university, and it is a very real pleasure to work with constituents and stakeholders who take that personally, and who expect us to do those things you need your land-grant university to do.

President Milliken says repeatedly that he wants ours to be the best university in the country in serving the interests of the people of our state. I say amen to that -- I think that's what land-grant universities were designed to do. You don't have to know me long to know I am a strong believer in the land-grant university mission, that I believe this great land-grant university exists to serve the people of Nebraska, that I think any land-grant university whose service to just regular folks gives way to pursuit of prestige or exclusivity is in trouble. Being part of a land-grant university that fulfills its mission by helping Nebraska fulfill its potential and ^{also} secure its future is important to me.

Third, I came here because agriculture, natural resources, and human resources **are critically important** to the success of Nebraska, and working with people in agriculture is important to me, *both personally and professionally*,

When I arrived here, I told you I knew you had every reason to be "proud" of your Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. I already knew the strengths the Institute, UNL, and the entire university system bring Nebraska **are invaluable**. I said I intended to build on IANR's strengths and **increase them**, to discover and grow new strengths **to meet the needs of the future**.

We have done that. Despite five rounds of **extremely painful budget cuts** in which \$6.6 million was cut from the Institute's budget; **despite an** additional \$1.9 ^{*mostly*} in UNL tuition **shortfalls** "billed" to the Institute; despite having to "carefully cashflow" our funds to **faithfully meet our obligations**; despite "our frustrations" at "not being able" to fill positions **as quickly as we would like to**, or as quickly as our faculty and constituents would like us to — **we have discovered and grown new strengths** to meet the needs of Nebraskans and to help build and secure Nebraska's future.

We say repeatedly in the Institute that **we are at work for Nebraska** -- in fact, "At work for Nebraska" is "what" we call the independent study that found the Institute "returns" Nebraska \$15 for each state tax dollar invested

with us – and that 15 to one return is, **the independent reviewers told us,**
“conservative.” Today I want to review for you **just a few of the many, many**
ways we’ve been at work for Nebraska in the past seven years – ways for
 which I think you, **as members of the ABN and solid supporters** of the
 Institute, **can be so very proud** of all you’ve supported. For instance:

*After eight years of declining enrollments, in 2005 we saw College
 of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources **enrollments begin to climb.**

Many of you had **a very big hand in that,** and we **thank you** for your help and
your support in turning that around. This year CASNR **led all UNL colleges in**
enrollment growth, with an overall enrollment gain of 11.7 percent.

That’s not **just good news** for CASNR, it’s good news for the Institute
and for the entire university. Research, **teaching** and extension education
 are so closely entwined in the Institute **that what raises one boat raises all.**

We must see **these enrollment gains continue.** We will. I look forward with
 great anticipation **to seeing those** which are traditionally our largest
departments – animal science, **agronomy and horticulture;** agricultural
 economics – grow their student numbers to acceptable levels.

Our Agricultural Research Division **remains** UNL’s leader in
 garnering external grants and contracts. And, when we add together grants

and contracts earned by all parts of the Institute, IANR accounts for nearly 38 percent of all grants and contracts earned at UNL this past year.

Since I arrived in 2001 we've seen **two new doctoral programs initiated in IANR**. The School of Natural Resources was established in 2003. **We created the Department of Statistics**. In 2004 we established a **new federally-funded Nebraska Fish and Wildlife Cooperative Research Unit** here on east campus, something that had been tried **unsuccessfully several times before**. Nebraska is the only state in which Congress has established a Co-Op research unit **in the 21st century**.

MICHIGAN
ILLINOIS
NEW JERSEY

In 2005 all CASNR baccalaureate degree programs were restructured to more appropriately describe the breadth of academic undergraduate degree offerings across the college. We created the 15th PGA accredited program in the U.S., building it on UNL's strong tradition of excellent turf research here in the Institute. This fall that major enrolled **over 130 students**. Other exciting majors and options **with potential for significant growth** for our students and for Nebraska also have been implemented, and let me say again and with great certainty – our new programs and options are built on the traditional agricultural strengths of the Institute. **Through them** we reach more diverse student interests, and in doing that **we bring in more** students and more tuition dollars, which support our traditional agricultural programs

and keep them strong. It is not new programs instead of old with us; it is new programs built on traditional strengths that help protect our traditional programs. And that is important to all of us.

In 2007 Hardin Hall became the School of Natural Resources new home, through a multi-million dollar renovation of the former Nebraska Center for Continuing Education. I suggested to Harvey Perlman that use of the former Kellogg Center would help the school prosper, something I was concerned would be impeded if faculty and staff continued to be scattered across two campuses in eight or nine different buildings.

I've said repeatedly I consider extension education the best out-of-the-formal classroom learning experience ever yet devised, and I am delighted to report to you this morning 135,000 youth – one in three eligible – took part in Nebraska 4-H programs last year.

During the past seven years we've seen the multi-million dollar Kimmel Education and Research Center built and dedicated in Nebraska City; the Wagonhammer Education Center, with its Ray Bohy Conference Room, built at the Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory near Whitman, providing outstanding educational facilities there; and the first-rate Barta Brothers Ranch Headquarters built near Rose.

ALL WITH PRIVATE FUNDING

We formed the Water Resources Advisory Panel, made up of key Nebraska leaders **with a keen interest in water** who are advising us on important water issues. Water, both quantity and quality, is vital to our state, and a major area of interest for the Institute.

We entered into an agreement with **Iowa State's College of Veterinary Medicine** to provide veterinary medical education for Nebraska students.

Together Iowa and Nebraska **have one of the largest livestock concentrations in the world;** this is the very best way to develop and encourage food animal practitioners for Nebraska and beyond. Twenty-five veterinary medicine students **started on our campus this fall.** It's an exciting time in the Institute where veterinary medicine is being taught **for the first time in the history of our state.**

But then – **it always is exciting** in IANR. We deal with the very basics of life – food, water, people. **We are at work for Nebraska**, in tune with our state, and there is so very much to do. So much good work occurs daily, across Nebraska. I hope you saw **the recent story** about work conducted here on the potential **for switchgrass-based ethanol** – it was **ANDIS** international news.

Then last summer, our researchers unveiled their **Biofuel Energy Systems Simulator** – BESS for short – that assesses **greenhouse gas mitigation** and energy efficiency of corn-based ethanol plants.

And, of course, **when we think of ethanol**, we think of how our animal scientists were pioneers in proving the feasibility, **benefits**, and economic advantages of **feeding byproducts** wet instead of drying and shipping them to dried feed markets, **a finding instrumental** in encouraging the nearly 10-fold increase in **Nebraska ethanol production-capacity** since the early 1990s.

It's estimated that **from 1992 through 2006** the cumulative benefit to Nebraska **from feeding byproducts** from Nebraska's expanding ethanol and grain processing industry wet instead of dry was approaching **half a billion dollars**. Add that half billion dollars **to the cumulative** – and continually accruing -- **\$1.5 billion benefit** to Nebraska beef producers in less than a decade that comes **from the muscle profiling research** of IANR scientists and colleagues at the University of Florida **that led to new beef products** adding \$50 to \$70 in value per head, and it magnifies **two billion times** the importance of the Institute **as an economic engine**, at work for Nebraska.

You can be very proud of that. I am. I'm even prouder **that \$2 billion figure** comes from just two of the many, many examples of how **the Institute** is **strengthening** our state's economy and way of life.

One more thing I want to say about our research. We hear concern "nationwide these days **that as state research dollars shrink**, more and more researchers' work **will be on issues of importance to grantors**, not state's needs. Let me tell you right now – **that is not and will not be the case in IANR**. We are your land-grant university. Our focus is on Nebraska, and the "research-and-education" our state needs. I shared my vision for the Institute with you last year, and as we look to the future we see ^{GREAT} such opportunities for Nebraska – in the biosciences, **in value-added products**, in molecular life sciences, **in global change**, and quality environments and economies, **in human capital**. There is *so much* we *can* and *will* do.

You can be proud, also, that your Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources isn't just following the national agenda – "we're helping set it." Your support helps us do that, just as it helps us accomplish all the things I've named today, and so many others **for which there is no time to name** this morning.

Now I'm going to turn the microphone over to our IANR deans, **the** associate and assistant vice chancellors; as well as Weldon Sleight, dean of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, **for brief comments** "highlighting how they and their faculty and staff **are at work** for Nebraska.

- 1) SUSAN FRITZ -
- 2) ALAN MOELLER -
- 3) MARJORIE KOSTELNIK - EDUCATION + HUMAN SCIENCES
- 4) STEVE WALLER - Agrical Sciences and Natural Resources
- 5) GARY CUNNINGHAM - Agric. Reseach Division
- 6) ELBERT DECKERTY - UNL EXTENSION
- 7) WELDON SLEIGHT - NCTA

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I also can tell you, without any reservation, that I think **the entire administrative team of the Institute**, as well as the IANR faculty and staff, **lives and works each day** so this place, **this industry**, and, indeed, all of Nebraska can prosper, not only now, but also in the decades to come.

Thank you.

After we've heard from each of these folks we're excited to show you our dynamic new *At Work for Nebraska* video illustrating the diverse and important ways we are at work for our state.

When the video ends – it runs about 10 minutes – we're looking forward to taking questions from you all, and hearing your comments. This discussion time is very important to us. I look forward to it each year, as well as to the discussions we have throughout the year.

Again, thank you for your support of and your pride in your Institute and university, and agriculture in Nebraska.

My hero Abraham Lincoln once said, "I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live so that his place will be proud of him."

I can tell you without reservation that I am proud of the place in which I live, proud of the work done here, proud that the beliefs that brought me here – belief in our faculty and students, belief in the support afforded the Institute by you and others, belief in the importance of agriculture and natural resources in Nebraska's future – all have been confirmed.