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NN21 Project Team

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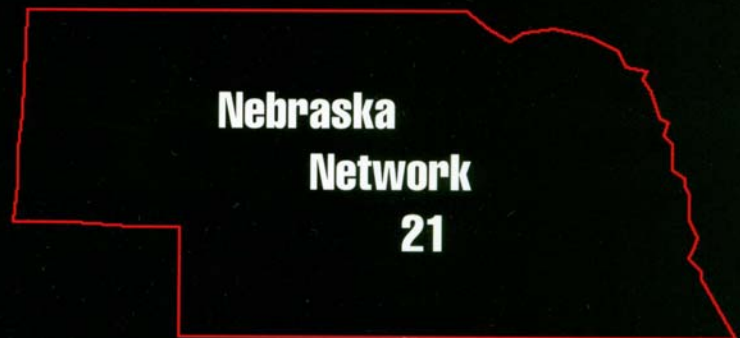
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A Vision for 2020:

Communities of Learning for Food Systems Education in Nebraska



**University of Nebraska
Lincoln, Nebraska
October 1995**



What do we want Nebraska's communities, educational institutions, and programs of study to look like in the year 2020? What is the ideal vision of food systems and food systems education in Nebraska for the twenty-first century? In 1994, with the support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and with leadership from the University of Nebraska, we initiated a process in Nebraska to discover our individual and collective dreams and aspirations for the future.

Over 800 Nebraskans attended workshops in Scottsbluff, North Platte, Grand Island, Norfolk, Omaha, and Lincoln. Business people, educators, producers, and students—people of diverse ages, ethnicity, and cultures met together to design their preferred visions for the future.

The Vision Statement for 2020 “Communities of Learning” embodies the themes heard in these sessions and follow-up conferences. In implementing this vision, many partners are needed: faculty and students in the university, leaders in Nebraska's community and state colleges and from other educational institutions; men and women from business, agricultural production, and government; and people of all ages bringing a wide variety of perspectives. Our hope is that the actions we take together will lead Nebraska toward achieving this vision.

NN21 Project Team

A Vision for 2020:

Communities of Learning for Food Systems Education in Nebraska

In our vision of Food Systems Education in Nebraska in the year 2020, we see a network of *Communities of Learning*

- Composed of a diversity of *lifelong learners* brought together by a strong desire to learn in traditional educational settings, as well as the workplace, the marketplace, and the home;
- Offering *comprehensive and interactive educational opportunities* that respond to specific needs among communities, business and industry, and educational institutions throughout the state; and,
- Energized by *partnerships* and linkages through distance education and educational technology to ensure wide *accessibility and affordability* of education.

The Goals of the Vision

The dynamic global changes we anticipate in the next quarter century will place tremendous demands on both our food systems and the educational structures that prepare individuals for the food systems professions. To meet these demands, the educational structures we build by the year 2020 must enable us to:

- ensure sustainability of quality food systems;
- be responsible stewards of the environment;
- develop and use human resources effectively; and,
- create quality economic opportunities for all Nebraskans.

When Nebraskans envision food systems education in the year 2020, they see images of interconnection and linkage, focusing on people united in Communities of Learning, who can generate the interactive energy needed to meet the challenge of change. Food systems education in Nebraska in 2020 will be open to every player in the food supply cycle, from resourceful producer to wise consumer, and will be grounded in our collective obligation to manage our food systems reliably and efficiently.

Communities of Learning will be connected with each other, with educational institutions, with business, and with resources statewide, regionally, nationally and globally. The Communities will create a network of multifaceted individual communities strongly linked to each other.

Key Components of Communities of Learning

■ Lifelong Learners

Communities of Learning will recognize the diversity and needs of lifelong learners, and acknowledge that all members have an impact on the food system. The framework of the community will create opportunities for individuals of all races, ages, and cultures to form strong bonds for learning. The real influence of the growing “global culture” and the strong links forged by communication and trade will allow both ideas and products to flow within communities in all directions.

Lifelong learners aren’t cast from a single mold. Their needs and motivations are individual and special. They may play numerous roles, sometimes simultaneously, and may, at various times, be both teacher and learner, client and supplier. Educational programs designed to serve Nebraska’s Communities of Learning will take into account and capitalize on these strengths of community members:

- diversity in culture, race, ethnicity, age, gender, and income;
- individual and collective responsibilities to the community; and,
- desire to form bonds with others, based on mutual need and common interests.

What We Value: Foundations of Community

- Respect for all individuals and all cultures
- Family strength
- Commitment to quality of life
- Human compassion
- The right of all community members to be safe and secure
- Responsibility for wise use of our resources; environmental, economic, and human.

The Fragile Food System

The food that sustains our world is provided by a complex system, comprised of scientific, economic, social, and political dimensions. To function effectively, our global food network relies on cooperation between a myriad of people and organizations.

Acts of nature and humanity—such as droughts, deforestation, population shifts, farming practices, and global trade policies—can easily disrupt this fragile cycle. Therefore, today's food system professionals must be able to clearly understand and articulate issues in the context of 21st century needs, for their decisions will determine how tomorrow's world will feed its people. To address these issues wisely, food systems professionals need new insights, new abilities, and new opportunities for growth and knowledge.

— *W.K. Kellogg Foundation*
Battle Creek, Michigan

■ Educational Opportunities in Food Systems

In 2020, opportunities for education at all levels will be available to prepare learners to anticipate and solve problems related to global food systems. Especially important will be programs that integrate the diverse stages of the food system—growing, processing, packaging, marketing, distributing, trading, and consuming—into an interactive chain. The educational programs that develop within, between, and among Communities of Learning will be characterized by:

- debate and discussion about the types of food systems that balance the wants and needs of consumers and producers alike;
- open lines of communication with community members;
- cross-disciplinary, integrated learning;
- generation and dissemination of knowledge through research and technology, in such areas as value-added and bioengineered food products;
- experiential internships;
- awareness of issues of food safety and nutrition;
- emphasis on sustainability of agriculture, the environment, and life;
- focus on quality economic development in global contexts; and,
- exploration of ways to enhance opportunities for family farming and businesses in rural communities.

■ Partnerships and Accessibility

Educational programs related to food systems will be accessible and affordable. They will not be confined to classrooms and laboratories. Partnerships that cross community borders will offer unique opportunities in experiential education and individualized programs of learning. The significant influence of technology and the promise of lifelong learning through distance education will provide dynamic new channels for educational programming.

Distance Education. Integral to food systems professions education in Nebraska in the year 2020 will be awareness of the distance education needs of Communities of Learning statewide. Distance education programs must be learner-centered, interactive and multi-dimensional, making efficient use of technological tools and other fresh approaches to instruction. They also can be dynamic agents for forging new Communities of Learning and for building an interactive “school without walls.”

Partners. Continuous improvement in educational opportunities can grow from strong partnerships that will develop within and between members of Communities of Learning. Outcomes of such partnerships might include, for example, on-the-job training programs allowing people to work and upgrade skills at the same time; mentoring relationships between university students and elementary students in schools across the state and, research projects teaming educational institutions with producers and industry, within Nebraska, nationally, and globally. A few examples of possible interactive partnerships include those that may form among:

- educational institutions at all levels and in many locations;
- educational institutions, producers, agribusiness and industries, of all sizes;
- two- and four-year postsecondary and vocational institutions;
- Nebraska researchers and researchers from around the globe; and,
- learning sites and learning centers across Nebraska.

Quality and Access. Communities of Learning will develop educational programs imaginative enough in design to respond to changing demands on the food systems, but practical enough to remain accessible to community members. Quality programs in food systems will take advantage of:

- input and feedback from partners and teams in designing and staffing programs;
- resource sharing among educational institutions, government agencies, political entities and industry;
- interaction and personalization of programs;
- the strengths of each component in the entire educational system; and,
- cost-saving strategies.

What is Distance Education?

Distance education is the organizational framework and process of extending learning or delivering instructional resource-sharing opportunities to locations away from a traditional classroom or building. The receiving site may be another classroom, government facility, business, or home with access to video, audio, computer, printer, multimedia communications or some combination of these with other delivery methods. The goal of distance education is to make opportunities for quality learning experiences available to those who can use it.

*Distance Education
Task Force Report
Cooperative Extension Division
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An Invitation

The Vision Statement and its components have been synthesized from a multitude of personal and preferred visions for food systems education set forth by hundreds of Nebraska residents and educators. It serves as your invitation to join in forming Nebraska's Communities of Learning and implementing processes to create our best possible living, working, and learning future.

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of Learning for
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21**

**University of Nebraska
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