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## DRAFT REPORT of the N2025 Strategy Team: “Every Person and Every Interaction Matters”

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# DRAFT REPORT

of the N2025 Strategy Team:

“Every Person and Every Interaction Matters”

Co-Chairs:

Angie Pannier | Sue Sheridan | Rick Bevins | Shane Farritor

Submitted on behalf of the

**N2025 Strategy Team**

Sept. 23, 2019

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In 2019, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln celebrated its 150th year. That celebration involved reflection on the past, as well as planning the University's course into the future. As part of this planning, UNL Chancellor Ronnie Green appointed more than 150 stakeholders — faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members — to the Nebraska Commission of 150 to envision how the university can best serve the State of Nebraska and the world for the next 25 years.

The N150 Commission was divided into eight subcommittees, each charged with creating specific elements of the campus vision. The subcommittees were:

1. Campus Community and Faculty and Staff Roles
2. Diversity and Inclusion
3. Economic Development and Innovation
4. Engagement in Nebraska and Beyond
5. Internal Operations and Infrastructure
6. Mission and Values
7. Research, Scholarship, and Creativity
8. Student Experience

The work of these subcommittees and of the entire Commission represented a monumental effort of time and intellectual capital. At its conclusion, the N150 Commission laid out a bold vision for the University over the next 25 years:

*The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is unparalleled among public research universities in access, opportunity, innovation, and life-long experiential learning.*

Importantly, the N150 Commission defined four core aspirations to guide our path over the next 25 years:

- Nebraska students co-create their experience
- Our research and creativity transforms lives and learning
- Every person and every interaction matters
- Engagement builds communities

The full report of the N150 Commission can be found at: <https://n150.unl.edu/commission/report-n150-commission>.

The questions that remained following the report of the N150 Commission were: “What do we do next to achieve the bold N150 Vision? What will we accomplish in the first five years?”

Chancellor Green selected 30 members of the university community to serve on a N2025 Strategy Team. This group included faculty, students, staff, and university leadership. Four faculty members were chosen as co-chairs to garner strong representation of university faculty. Also appointed were the university's vice chancellors, given their ultimate responsibility to implement the strategic plan. The charge set before the team was to create a concrete and actionable plan to guide the university **over the next five years** to reach the 25-year bold vision articulated by the N150 Commission.

Chancellor Green hosted a kick-off meeting on February 13, 2019, to outline the goals and charge for the N2025 Strategy Team. Chancellor Green served as an ex officio member to remain informed throughout the process. He asked the team to create a plan and make it available to the full university community by the beginning of the Fall 2019 semester. This timeline would make it possible for the full community to deliberate the plan, the faculty co-chairs to finalize the document, and university leadership to adopt the plan by the end of the calendar year, thereby guiding the university from 2020 to 2025.

The N2025 Strategy Team immediately committed to rely heavily on the significant work of the N150 Commission. During the spring semester of 2019, four meetings of the N2025 Strategy Team were held to discuss each of the core aspirations of the N150 Commission. The full N2025 team worked on each of the core aspirations to obtain diverse and comprehensive input, and every member of the Strategy Team was asked to submit strategies and expectations for each of the four core aspirations. This work borrowed heavily from the work of the subcommittees of the N150 Commission.

Over the early summer of 2019, the N2025 co-chairs coalesced sources of input in the development of a draft of the N2025 strategic plan. The N2025 plan's content relies on the work of the N150 committees, the report of the N150 Commission, discussions at meetings of the N2025 Strategy Team, and input from team members extending and embellishing group discussions. Many of the ideas were bold and ambitious, yet unattainable within a five-year period. Others were highly prescriptive, and considered best left to units responsible for their implementation. In all, the co-chairs worked diligently on identifying consistent, cross-cutting aims that represent the breadth of the institution; culling strategies and articulating expectations that will move the university forward; and specifying targets that once realized will change the landscape and immediate future of the University of Nebraska.

The draft completed in mid-summer was presented for review to the full N2025 strategy team at the end of July, 2019. Final revisions to the draft were then presented at the Chancellor's leadership retreat in August, 2019. After these reviews and revisions, the draft is presented to the full university community for discussion during the Fall 2019 semester.

## Our Distinctly Nebraskan Principle and Three Core Aspirations

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As the N2025 Strategy Team worked through the four core aspirations of the report of the N150 Commission, one aspiration continually permeated all others. The idea that at Nebraska, every person and every interaction matters, became an aspiration that appeared superordinate to the other three. This overarching theme seems to fit what it means to be Nebraskan, and thus a core feature that undergirds everything we do. It reflects who we want to be as an institution; it represents our ethos around which the core aspirations and aims dynamically and synergistically are embodied.

Realizing this special Nebraska notion led the N2025 co-chairs to slightly adjust the four aspirations. “Every person and interaction matters” is now considered an overarching principle that blankets all of the other aspirations. Each of the other three core aspirations aligns with typical missions of public universities: Education, Research, and Engagement.

What will make Nebraska distinctive among all other universities is (and should be) that at Nebraska, every person and every interaction matters. This includes persons of all backgrounds, beliefs, experiences, perspectives, and orientations; it includes interactions that are formal and informal across the domains of academics, research, creative activity, and engagement. The principle of *every person and every interaction matters* guides all we do as members of the institution, including its students, faculty, staff, and leadership. Thus, every decision made at every level should align with and support (and hence, be supported by) our core principle that every person and every interaction matters, our core aspirations, and the primary aims of our strategic plan.

As concrete examples of our core principle, leadership decisions related to organizational structures and unit operations could be made with transparency via two-way exchanges. By interacting in a mutually respectful manner around shared goals, decision-makers at every level understand that collaborative actions generate solutions that are superior to those made independently. Likewise, in graduate and undergraduate courses, students are invited, encouraged, and supported in a way that reinforces to them their important contributions, and our belief that every person and every interaction matters. Every time a student knocks on a professor’s door, both the student and the professor should be thinking that this person and this interaction are important.

We believe that this core principle reflects the people and culture of the state of Nebraska. Highlighting the people and interactions at the University of Nebraska as central to our strategic plan reinforces the distinctiveness of our institution.

The relationship between the report of the N150 Commission and the N2025 Strategic Plan is shown schematically in Figure 1. This figure can be viewed from the bottom up or from the top down. The top of the figure represents our vision as defined in the N150 report. The bottom of the figure represents potential new actions, programs, courses, and other activities that may emanate as an outcome of unit-level planning or faculty-led initiatives. Connecting the two is the N2025 Strategic Plan.

Viewing the figure from the bottom up, one can trace how each decision (e.g., new action/initiative/ course) supports the specific aims outlined in the N2025 Strategic Plan. Each time a member of the university community considers a new action, they are encouraged to consider how it aligns with the overarching principle, core aspirations, and aims. They should also consider how their action supports the other three aspirations and how their new

activity is included in the work of the subcommittees of the N150 Commission. Each action can then be traced through the overarching principle that every person and every interaction matters.

Considering the figure from the top down, the university community can consider new efforts that support our core aspirations. These efforts can then be traced through the aims of the N2025 Strategic Plan down to individual actions. This structure can guide the university to fulfilling its mission and vision.

Importantly, the aims, strategies and expectations are intentionally cross-cutting, rather than independent or siloed entities. Certain strategies can support more than one aim; one aim may offer strategies that are connected also to a different aim. Examples include the strategy of increasing the diversity of world-class scholars; this strategy supports aims associated with research and creative activity, preparation of an educated workforce, creating an inclusive environment, among others. Likewise, student experiential learning maps on to aims related to engagement, diversity, research and creative activity, and the workforce.

Figure 1:

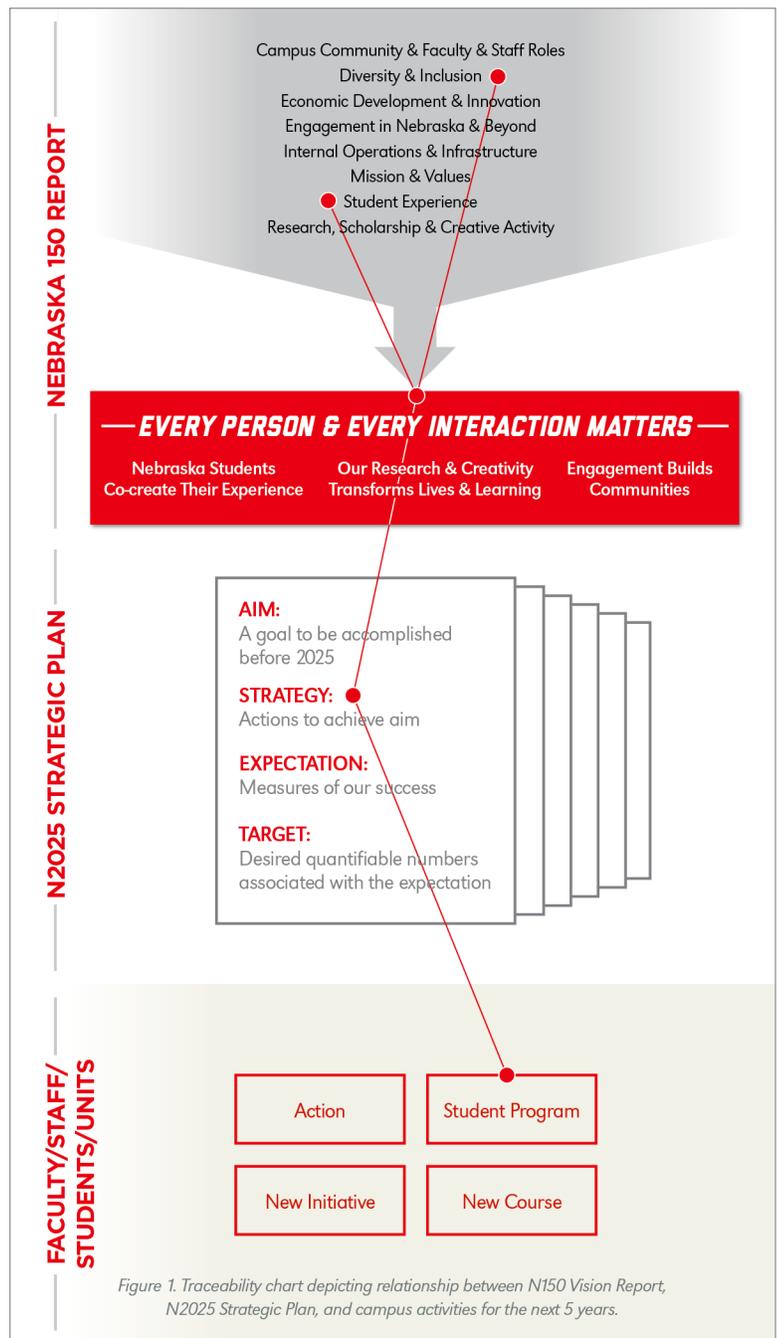


Figure 1. Traceability chart depicting relationship between N150 Vision Report, N2025 Strategic Plan, and campus activities for the next 5 years.

The N2025 Strategic Plan outlines the aims, strategies, and expectations for the first five years of the 25-year vision. The Strategic Plan contains six ambitious aims. Each aim represents a purpose or intended outcome. Supporting each aim are strategies and expectations. Strategies are actions that can be taken to move toward the aim. Expectations are anticipated changes that will be realized through the implementation of the strategies (e.g., an increase in federally sponsored research expenditures). It is expected that the campus will set quantifiable targets for the expectations (e.g., increase federally sponsored research expenditures by XX% in five years).

Importantly, the intent of this plan is not to be prescriptive. The plan does not define implementation details, by design. These tactics are best developed by the campus leadership, community, and units. This remains among the difficult work ahead for all of us.

The use of words such as “students” and “engagement” within the N2025 Strategic Plan are meant in the broadest sense. Students can include undergraduates, graduates, post-graduate and professional students, as well as alumni and life-long learners. Engagement refers to relationships with stakeholders that provide opportunities to partner around shared goals, enable a bidirectional flow of information and knowledge, and realize broad impact.

Finally, this N2025 Strategic Plan is meant for the entire university community. It is not expected that every unit or every individual will act on every aim in the plan. Some units and individuals will resonate with different portions of the plan. It is also expected that every unit will take some new actions to work toward accomplishing the aims outlined in the plan. No individual or unit will do everything, but it is expected that every individual and unit will contribute in meaningful ways to our shared goals of increasing impact and excellence of the university. It is also hoped that the entire campus will embrace the philosophy that “every person and every interaction matters,” and that this will be transformational for our campus community.

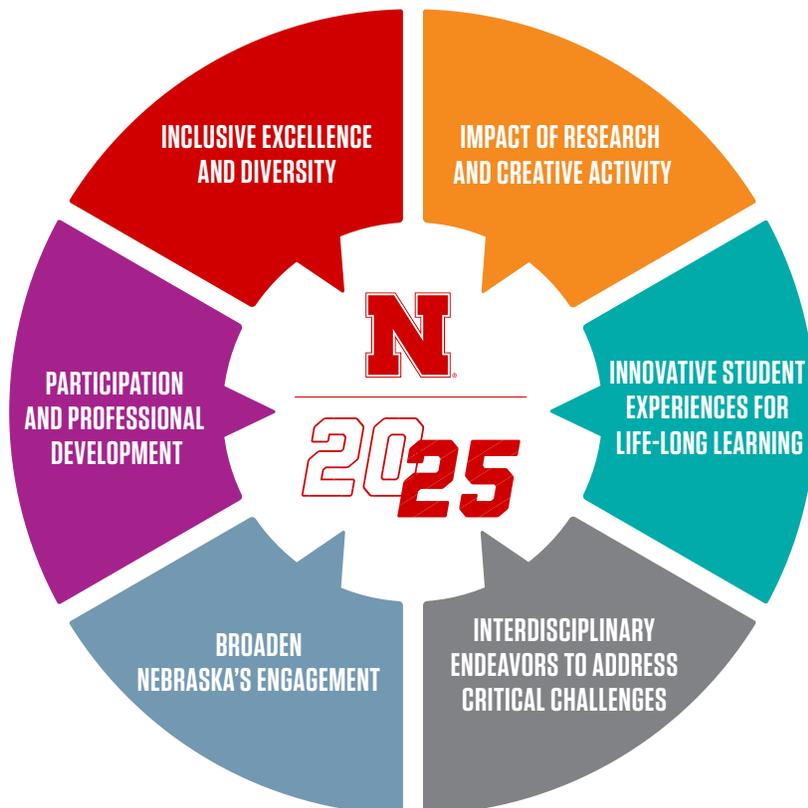
## Aims of the N2025 Strategic Plan

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The aims are listed below. The order of the aims does not imply relative priority. The interconnected relationship among the aims is depicted in Figure 2. Again, each of these aims should be read and understood with the concluding phrase “.....in a way that every person and every interaction matters.”

- **Aim:** Create a climate at Nebraska that emphasizes, prioritizes, and expands **inclusive excellence and diversity**
- **Aim:** Establish a community at Nebraska committed to increasing the **impact of research and creative activity**
- **Aim:** Innovate **student experiences** that prepare graduates for life-long learning and contributing to Nebraska’s diverse **future workforce**
- **Aim:** Focus research, scholarship, creative activity, and student experiences to foster innovative, **interdisciplinary endeavors** and **solve challenges** critical to Nebraska and the world
- **Aim:** **Broaden Nebraska’s engagement** in community, industry, and global partnerships
- **Aim:** Prioritize **participation and professional development** for all Nebraska students, staff, and faculty

**Figure 2:** Schemata of N2025 Strategic Aims



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▶▶▶ **Aim: Create a climate at Nebraska that emphasizes, prioritizes, and expands inclusive excellence and diversity**

We must *commit to inclusive excellence*. As systematic efforts expand to recruit and retain historically underrepresented students, faculty, and staff, it is imperative that this work be done in close concert with efforts to further improve the quality of research, creative activities, teaching, and engagement. An integrated approach will greatly improve work toward minimizing barriers and enhancing and creating new programs in support of diversity and inclusion. This *intentional integration* will equip us to better solve the challenges that face Nebraska and the world, while preparing students for a continually evolving and global workforce.

An environment that emphasizes inclusive excellence and diversity is a place that embraces the *importance of every person* and knows that *every interaction matters*.

**Strategies:**

1. Commit to inclusive excellence.
2. Expand systematic efforts to recruit and retain students from underrepresented groups.
3. Expand systematic efforts and minimize barriers to recruit and retain faculty and staff from underrepresented groups.
4. Enhance existing and create new student programs for academic, cultural, and social support.
5. Enhance existing and create new faculty and staff networks for academic, cultural, and social support.

**Expectations:**

1. Increased number of students from underrepresented groups
2. Reduced inequities in retention and graduation across student populations
3. Increased number of faculty, post-doctoral scholars, and staff applicants and hires from underrepresented groups
4. Increased retention rates of students from underrepresented groups
5. Increased graduation rates of students from underrepresented groups
6. Increased numbers and retention of faculty from underrepresented groups
7. Increased retention of staff from underrepresented groups

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▶▶▶ **Aim: Establish a community at Nebraska committed to increasing the impact of research and creative activity**

The University of Nebraska is the state's *flagship research institution*. Conducting novel and impactful research that generates new knowledge, solves real-world problems locally and globally, and enhances lives through research, creative activity, and transformational innovations is among the *most fundamental purposes of the institution*. It is imperative that research and creative activity be central to every University action, interaction, and decision; that sizable resources be committed to bolstering research and creative activity; and that students, faculty and staff are involved and stakeholders meaningfully engaged in research and creative activities.

The research and creative activity enterprise at Nebraska engages in practices *where every person and every interaction* contributes to the generation and proliferation of new knowledge, understanding, and perspectives.

**Strategies:**

1. Align all aspects of academic, student, and business affairs in support of research, scholarship, and creative activity.
2. Recruit and develop diverse world-class researchers, scholars, artists, and staff and provide them with strong institutional and community support.
3. Build new mechanisms to reward and retain highly successful faculty.
4. Recruit, develop, and compensate a competitive and highly competent community of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows.
5. Ensure dedicated, long-term research or creative activity experiences for students.
6. UNL apportionment guidelines and staff position descriptions and evaluation criteria revised to include engagement.
7. Apply for international and national awards and fellowships for faculty and students.
8. Communicate broadly about the breadth and social impact of research and creative activity.

**Expectations:**

1. Increased number and diversity of tenured and tenure-leading faculty with a majority research apportionment
2. Increased number, size, and scope of extramural proposal submissions
3. Increased revenues for research and creative activity through a diverse funding portfolio
4. Increased number and impact of scholarly journal articles and creative works
5. Increased number, quality, and compensation of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows
6. Increased number of students with long-term research or creative activity experiences
7. Improved research ranking among Big 10/peer institutions
8. Increased number of national/international awards and citations of faculty and students

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▶▶▶ **Aim: Innovate student experiences that prepare graduates for life-long learning and contributing to Nebraska’s diverse future workforce**

*Educating students* and preparing them for the *workforce* is a core mission of the University of Nebraska. Technology, demographics, and many other factors have led to significant changes in the way knowledge is distributed and acquired. The University of Nebraska must continue to innovate to provide a student experience, inside and outside the classroom, that remains relevant and produces a desire for *life-long learning*. The university must equip students for their future by including *experiential learning* for all Nebraska students.

The student experience at Nebraska should instill the value that *every person and every interaction matters*, resulting in alumni who value every person and every interaction.

**Strategies:**

1. Develop and employ innovative approaches for recruiting, enrolling, educating, and retaining a diverse student body.
2. Use technology, physical/virtual spaces, and scheduling to more effectively educate learners whoever and wherever they are.
3. Develop new tuition models that allow for increased revenue while improving accessibility.
4. Establish a requirement for graduation that all Nebraska students engage in experiential learning, which may include research, creative activity, or community engagement.
5. Enable students to co-create academic credentials or badges to demonstrate qualifications in response to the changing workforce needs in areas including inclusive innovation, leadership, and entrepreneurship.
6. Develop a University N150 Innovation Academy emphasizing imagination, creative expression, and design thinking that includes a new curriculum on innovation and entrepreneurship.
7. Establish new curricular requirements that emphasize diversity and inclusion.
8. Equip and incentivize instructors to improve their pedagogy, including methods to incorporate diversity of people and ideas into their teaching.
9. Prepare and align university staff to be more connected and engaged in the student experience as well as the recruiting and retention efforts of a diverse student body.
10. Align faculty apportionments, appointments, and evaluation criteria to achieve and maintain high quality of teaching.

**Expectations:**

1. Increased student enrollment
2. Increased outreach to underrepresented groups, community college graduates, international, and out of state students
3. Increased year to year retention of students
4. Increased diversity of student body
5. Increased enrollment in online platforms
6. Increased number and funding of experiential learning opportunities
7. Guidelines for academic credential or badge requirements established
8. University N150 Innovation Academy created and supported
9. Courses emphasizing diversity and inclusion identified, developed, and offered
10. Courses/opportunities in innovation and entrepreneurship developed and offered
11. Increased number of instructors with pedagogical training on diversity and inclusion within the classroom

▶▶▶ **Aim: Focus research, scholarship, creative activity, and student experiences to foster innovative, interdisciplinary endeavors and solve challenges critical to Nebraska and the world**

Interdisciplinary approaches in research and creative activity propel new ways of generating knowledge. The University of Nebraska values interdisciplinary work and *embraces collaboration*, characterized by an openness and respect for differing disciplines and perspectives, to address challenges facing our community, nation, and world. At Nebraska, a context that *promotes, supports, and rewards interdisciplinary work* encourages academicians, scientists, artists, and students with diverse experiences and knowledge to learn with and from one another, thereby accelerating the potential for solving Grand Challenges.

Inherent in interdisciplinary work at Nebraska is that *every person* contributes, and *every interaction matters*, in the creation of new knowledge and solutions.

**Strategies:**

1. Prioritize diversity of perspectives, approaches, and backgrounds when solving challenges.
2. Build, strengthen, and evaluate interdisciplinary centers and organized units to promote productivity, minimize duplication, and retain an emphasis on priority areas.
3. Revise policies and practices to incentivize interdisciplinary collaboration across departments, colleges, centers, and campuses, and with partners across the country and world.
4. Establish flexible and functional facilities for interdisciplinary research, creative activity, teaching and learning.
5. Create shared learning experiences that include interdisciplinary groups of students, post-doctoral fellows, and faculty.
6. Leverage interdisciplinary strengths into the development of intellectual property, technology transfer, and entrepreneurial activity.
7. Identify Grand Challenges that leverage existing strengths and seek to solve issues important to Nebraska and the world.
8. Commit, generate, and expand sources of support for investment in Grand Challenges, interdisciplinary research, creative activity, and education.
9. Integrate creative activities and education into solutions for Grand Challenges in an intentional and substantive manner.

**Expectations:**

1. Increased number and diversity of individuals, teams (faculty, staff, post-doctoral fellows, and students), and centers working on high priority challenges
2. Increased investments (financial resources and facilities) in successful teams and centers
3. Evaluation system developed and implemented to ensure continued productivity of successful interdisciplinary centers and units
4. Increased number of national and international collaborations in Grand Challenge areas
5. Increased number of interdisciplinary scholarly products (proposals, grants, publications, creative works)
6. Increased number of tenure-track faculty apportioned to interdisciplinary centers and units
7. Annual review and promotion documents value and reward collaboration and interdisciplinary work
8. Increased number of interdisciplinary learning experiences established
9. Increased number of patents, copyrights, licensing, and research-based start-up companies
10. Grand Challenge topics for Nebraska established and resources committed to them
11. Structures and systems established to support research and creative activities aligned with Grand Challenges

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▶▶▶ **Aim: Broaden Nebraska's engagement in community, industry, and global partnerships**

Engagement — the co-creation, co-discovery and co-development of solutions — is key to the *land grant mission* of the University of Nebraska. Engagement brings Nebraska to the world, and the world to Nebraska through a university where students, faculty, staff and alumni are actively engaged across Nebraska and beyond. It is imperative that the university embrace a culture of engagement and partnership that generates *genuine mutual benefit* both in Nebraska and across the world, while creating extraordinary opportunities for students, alumni, industry, community partners, faculty, and staff.

At its core, engagement is about relationships and reciprocity that must be built upon a foundation where *every person and interaction matters*.

**Strategies:**

1. Recognize engagement (i.e., relationships with stakeholders for opportunities in partnership and impact) as one of Nebraska's mission areas, reflected in staff and faculty apportionments and evaluation criteria.
2. Create a vehicle for advancing and supporting student engagement in community-based research, creative activity, and learning experiences at the local, national, and global level.
3. Establish and nurture strong, consistent two-way communication with stakeholder groups allowing for research and learning collaborations.
4. Establish new international partnerships that connect the world to Nebraska, and Nebraska to global opportunities.
5. Pursue Carnegie Community Engagement classification.
6. Develop Huskers for Life program to engage alumni and stakeholders from varying sectors and cultural backgrounds in life-long learning opportunities and partnerships.
7. Embrace and exploit existing and future technologies to promote access for individual and community-based research, learning, engagement, and creative activities.
8. Concentrate resources and funding to promote engagement responsive to unique local, national, and international needs.

**Expectations:**

1. UNL apportionment guidelines and staff position descriptions and evaluation criteria revised to include engagement
2. Student engagement program developed and supported
3. Increased number of and impact on community, industry, and global partners
4. Carnegie Community Engagement achieved
5. Increased engagement of alumni and stakeholders
6. Increased engagement through online platforms
7. Improved infrastructure and professional development to promote communication, applied research, and sharing of knowledge
8. Accelerated and concentrated response to needs

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▶▶▶ **Aim: Prioritize participation and professional development for all Nebraska students, staff, and faculty**

The most important asset at the University of Nebraska is its people – students, staff, post-doctoral fellows, and faculty. It is critical to *provide access* to individualized professional development and effective mentorship *for all members of the university community*. Professional development opportunities integrating inclusive excellence and fostering a culture of participative decision-making enhances the richness of the university experience. A *comprehensive approach* to professional development will result in a vibrant and supportive climate characterized by excellence in all mission areas of our institution.

Meaningful and impactful professional development for all reinforces that *every person and every interaction matters*.

**Strategies:**

1. Ensure a means for all faculty, graduate and professional students, post-doctoral fellows, and staff to co-create an individualized professional development roadmap.
2. Develop and enhance structures for all faculty, post-doctoral fellows, staff, and students to have access to a mentor or advisors.
3. Establish professional development around mentoring and reward effective mentorship of faculty, post-doctoral fellows, staff and students.
4. Create and allow access to university-sponsored Staff Council for staff to provide input on relevant issues to university leadership.
5. Revolutionize graduate education to include professional development in response to workforce needs.
6. Build and enhance institutional structures and culture for participative decision-making.
7. Embed inclusive excellence in existing and new professional development opportunities or systems.

**Expectations:**

1. Documented individualized professional development plan established for all faculty, post-doctoral fellows, graduate and professional students, and staff
2. Mentor or advisor provided for all faculty, post-doctoral fellows, staff, and students
3. Professional development methods established and delivered to faculty, post-doctoral fellows, staff, and students
4. Mentorship incentives established and awarded
5. Staff Council created
6. Graduate education continually updated to allow for flexibility and individualization
7. Improved transparency in administrative decision-making
8. Increased student, faculty, and staff retention
9. Increased job satisfaction
10. Improved placement of graduates and post-doctoral fellows

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