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## APC Hearing

John Owens

*University of Nebraska - Lincoln*, [jowens2@unl.edu](mailto:jowens2@unl.edu)

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**APC Hearing**  
**Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, Nebraska Forest Service, Veterinary**  
**Student Contract Program**  
**April 7, 2003**  
**John C. Owens**  
**NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor**

Fellow members of the Academic Planning Committee and others here today, I am appearing before you to speak about three<sup>3</sup> proposed cuts to the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources budget. These cuts are: \$213,959 in state funding for the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum; \$837,333 in state funding for the Nebraska Forest Service; and \$1,799,915 in<sup>1</sup> state-funding<sup>1</sup> for the Veterinary Student Contract program.

I do not speak *in favor* of these cuts; to do that I would have to believe they are in the best interest of our students, our constituents, Nebraska, the Institute, and the university. I do not. These proposed cuts are<sup>2</sup> repugnant<sup>2</sup> to me, as they are to the members of IANR's Deans' Council, and our faculty, staff, and students.

You will remember that through the first three rounds of budget cutting, members of the APC, and others, expressed frustration over not knowing<sup>4</sup> the alternatives to cuts being proposed at those times. Through those ~~three~~<sup>FIRST</sup> three rounds of budget cuts, we in the Institute consistently said we proposed the cuts

we were proposing because the alternatives to them were even worse. Today, in round 4, you can clearly see in these proposals the exact programs we worked so desperately hard to save through the first three rounds. These are the “even worse” cuts we spoke about. We propose them as the initial Phase I response to a budget-cutting bill coming from this legislative session for one reason: *Again, we believe the alternatives to them even worse.* Some of those alternatives still await announcement if it is necessary for the university to go to Phase II and Phase III in this fourth round of budget cuts. We do not make them public today because we know the demoralizing effect such announcements have on those involved with any program named, and we will not put people through that ordeal if there is any chance such a cut will not occur.

If the governor’s proposed 10 percent cut to the university budget is enacted, we in the Institute will be managing an externally imposed budget potentially **\$9.5 million less** than it was a year ago to still try to meet as many of Nebraska’s needs as possible. I’m sure you all read, as I did, that last week the Appropriations Committee tentatively lowered the cut to higher education to 3 percent as they debate the budget proposal they’ll send to the floor in late April. We at the University of Nebraska are extremely grateful for their support. Should that 3 percent cut occur, we may be able to reconsider some of these proposed

cuts, but we all must remember the Appropriations Committee has warned that last week's proposal is tentative. It could change in later discussions, and of course, the committee's action requires that a corresponding increase in revenues be enacted, as well as the Governor's ultimate approval.

The impact of our proposed cuts is amplified by the fact that the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources is the only comprehensive program in agriculture and natural resources in the major agricultural State of Nebraska. Any cut we make means programs important to our constituents and important to our state will be seriously reduced or eliminated, whether those cuts occur in Lincoln or off the Lincoln campus.

In round 4 of budget cutting we are forced to move further-up our list of bad choices in answer to the budget cuts imposed upon us. Today's proposals are the "even worse" alternatives to the rounds one-through-three cuts that caused such frustration earlier. The cuts proposed now are programs unique in Nebraska, and by unique I mean the Institute is the only place in Nebraska that offers them. Through three-rounds of cuts we tried desperately to protect them because of that uniqueness. Now they are on the table because, after long and careful consideration, we think the alternative cuts waiting behind them are even worse.

If we do not make these cuts, we will need to begin reducing our teaching programs,

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~, as well as significant pieces of our infrastructure as alternatives.

As you all know, undergraduate teaching is the first priority of the university. The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and the Nebraska Forest Service both have minimal integration into the undergraduate academic program and the research and extension-education functions of the Institute. Yet no other entity in Nebraska provides the valuable services offered by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and the Nebraska Forest Service. The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum board and staff are pursuing options to bolster the Arboretum's non-state funding to keep the program going. We will continue to provide the Arboretum in-kind support, such as office space, and we encourage everyone here today to offer Arboretum board and staff members any help useful in their pursuit of non-state dollars.

We are tremendously concerned about how cutting state funds for the Nebraska Forest Service could affect Nebraska, particularly rural areas where volunteer fire districts and communities rely heavily on firefighting equipment, training, and planning secured through the Nebraska Forest Service. We are seeking ways to maintain some crucial services provided by the Nebraska Forest Service, specifically rural fire assistance, and more if possible.

The third cut I must talk about today is terminating the Veterinary Student

Contract Program that basically pays the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition for 100 Nebraska residents at the Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine. We hope to continue to pay KSU for the students "currently" in the program, so they can complete their DVM degrees as the current contractual program is phased out, but that will depend on "the severity" of the final cut imposed by the Legislature. We are doing everything we can to identify "existing" alternative financial aid opportunities for students admitted this fall and for those students "interested" in pursuing this course of study in future.

With this cut we had to weigh this question: Is it better to cut the funding for a professional program that affects 100 Nebraska residents who still have the potential to attend a College of Veterinary Medicine, or to cut further into programs affecting undergraduate education in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and in the infrastructure <sup>of</sup> the Institute? As unfortunate as this proposed cut is for Nebraskans in the KSU program, we think the latter would do more long-term damage to current and future students, our constituents, the university, and our state, so we "reluctantly" recommend this cut.

This cooperative program in veterinary medicine with Kansas State University has been a very good investment for Nebraska and an excellent "example" of the type of cooperation "needed" between institutions in different states.

We regret "the need" to terminate the existing contract, and we hope to continue to work with KSU in veterinary medicine and other areas where "mutual benefits" can occur. Because KSU veterinary medicine students "rotate" through the Great Plains Veterinary Education Center at Clay Center as part of the contract program, we will work with K-State to continue the Clay Center program if they wish to do so. In return, we hope they will arrange for a certain number of classroom seats "reserved yearly" to Nebraska residents. I want to be "very clear" that the Great Plains Veterinary Education Center remains open and viable, and we hope it will assume a more prominent role in the university's extension veterinary education program.

"Why don't you cut administration?" is one of the questions that often arises as people seek "alternatives" in budget crises such as this one. We have. Through three rounds of budget cutting, 18.5 percent of the Institute's cuts – nearly one-fifth – ~~have~~ <sup>have</sup> been in administration. In the fourth round, while we retain the State Forester, currently an administrative position, with the occupant of that position and one other member of the Forest Service both having tenure in the School of Natural Resource Sciences, the State Forester will have "minimal" administrative and "more" programmatic responsibilities in future.

As people speak today, please know we agree with "anyone" who says these cuts are terrible. We propose them only because we have to balance our budget on

July 1, 2003, and we think the alternatives to them are even worse. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

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