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A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR UNL: SETTING OUR COMPASS

PREFACE

This document summarizes overarching priorities and goals of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. It is born from ideas that have emerged from documents that have guided our strategic planning to date (see Appendix A) and from the themes emerging from our academic strategic planning. It is not a traditional strategic plan. Rather, it is a compass - confirming the direction initially set by a number of campus-wide reports and initiatives and subsequently refined by many of our academic units and faculty through their actions and their planning activities. Our is that a university advances faster if strategic plans emanate from units, departments and colleges, are the product of faculty deliberations, and are revised or confirmed through conversations with the campus administration.

To this end, the principles in this document are distilled from these conversations and past campus-wide initiatives, and are an effort to reflect the current consensus that points the direction for UNL. We recognize that the university is a decentralized organization with shared governance where important strategic decisions are made at the unit, department, and college levels. More recently, interdisciplinary activities have increased at UNL, generating “centers,” “initiatives” and other less-formal collaborative arrangements through which academic directions are established. Within our system of shared governance and decentralized decision-making at UNL, a consensus about our overarching goals is desirable.

This document clarifies and affirms our shared vision for the university, our mission, our core values, and our priorities. Thereby, we can best assess the strategies employed by our units in pursuing excellence, our lead benchmark for success. Outlined below are the common aspirations that unite our vision of excellence across the university, informed by our core values. These goals also reflect NU system-wide goals for university achievement (<http://nebraska.edu/docs/StrategicFramework.pdf>). Every unit of the university shall seek excellence within the context of its particular mission, aligned with campus strategies and the Strategic Framework of the Board of Regents.

OUR VISION

UNL has a sustainable vision of excellence that evolves in response to the conversations and actions of the entire university community. This vision has produced remarkable momentum towards excellence.

Our vision, as a land-grant, comprehensive university, is to place the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the forefront of public higher education—to excel at all of our missions of teaching, research, and engagement. In doing so, we will attain national and international fame, while always serving the needs of all Nebraskans.

OUR MISSION

As Nebraska's only land-grant, comprehensive, research university, our mission is clear. It is defined by the Board of Regents and the Nebraska Statutes. We are directed to teach, to do research, and to serve Nebraskans. These missions are intertwined and interdependent. The products of the fulfillment of our mission are young adults prepared to lead successful lives, innovation that expands our horizons and our economy, creative activity that improves the quality of our lives, and a close connection to the needs and aspirations of Nebraska.

OUR CORE VALUES

In 2006, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln adopted a set of Core Values, as an outcome of our academic strategic planning process. These core values were derived after broad participation by members of the University community. Like our vision and our mission, they reflect the commitment of a land-grant, comprehensive research university.

We value:

- Learning that prepares students for lifetime success and leadership;
- Excellence pursued without compromise;
- Achievement supported by a climate that celebrates each person's success;
- Diversity of ideas and people;
- Engagement with academic, business, and civic communities throughout Nebraska and the world;
- Research and creative activity that inform teaching, foster discovery,
 - and contribute to economic prosperity and our quality of life;
- Stewardship of the human, financial, and physical resources committed to our care.

THE UNL PLAN: OUR COMPASS

PRIORITIES

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has two overarching priorities: undergraduate education and research. These priorities align with the two primary needs of the state of Nebraska.

Undergraduate education. A high-quality undergraduate program is an important priority for both the university and the State of Nebraska. Higher education plays a key role in retaining talented individuals who can contribute to the economy of the state of Nebraska and attracting young people from elsewhere. UNL, as the state's comprehensive research university, plays a prominent role in engaging those students who have the widest range of choice in choosing where to pursue their college careers. Evidence shows that students tend to locate where they earned their last degree, and the quality of the undergraduate experience is the single most important ingredient in student choice.

Research. Nebraska must be able to compete in a global idea-based economy. A strong university research agenda is essential to economic growth in Nebraska; as UNL, through its research, has spurred success in agriculture, it must broaden its scope to assure Nebraska participates in the technologies of the future. Research universities have driven economic growth across the nation and UNL must drive it here in Nebraska. In addition, the research and creative activity involved in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, support continued improvement in the quality of life in Nebraska, making it an attractive place for young people to live.

Both of these priorities are pursued within the context of engagement, derived from our land-grant tradition and our public university status. We are ever mindful that we serve Nebraska and Nebraskans. Our engagement activities, most visibly the work of UNL Extension across the state but also reflected in a variety of outreach activities from many academic units, are tied to our teaching and research, particularly our research. The quality of our engagement with Nebraskans is only as good as the quality of our teaching and research. Engagement must be understood in the context of how a land-grant, public university serves its state—by applying the research and teaching expertise we have to the issues that face our constituency. If we are not strong in undergraduate education so that the young people of Nebraska can access quality higher education at a reasonable cost and we are not strongly competitive in research, we cannot serve Nebraska. Thus, the service mission more properly defines the ultimate objective of our work.

GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

The ingredients for excellence at a land-grant, comprehensive research university are clear. Success depends on attracting talented people and providing them with the resources necessary to use their talents to advance the programs of the University. Attracting a quality faculty is the critical factor in success and this requires competitive salaries, appropriate facilities and equipment, supportive staff, and an environment and culture that recognizes and rewards achievement. In addition, building a quality undergraduate program at a residential institution requires a wide range of non-faculty personnel who contribute to the undergraduate experience

through student involvement, housing, recreation, leadership activities, and cultural experiences. Success in research as well as in undergraduate education, requires the recruitment of highly qualified graduate students and graduate programs that provide them the support to achieve excellence in teaching and research. Professional programs contribute importantly to each of our missions. Modern and adequate facilities that incorporate contemporary technology for both teaching and research are essential.

Resource-Maximizing Strategies

In a world of scarce resources, the University must be both creative in its effort to expand its current resource base and in investing the resources it has for maximum advantage. Here we set out strategies for enhancing resources.

- 1. Engage in strategic planning that carefully prioritizes programs and focuses resources on programs that most effectively advance the priorities of the University. Such planning must establish appropriate metrics for measuring our progress and provide ways to adjust resources to ensure success, or reallocate resources to meet higher priority needs.**
- 2. Continually assess and demonstrate the importance of the university to the future success of our two most important funding sources: students and Nebraska taxpayers.**
- 3. Remain cognizant of federal research priorities and build collaborations and expertise necessary to remain competitive for federal research funding.**
- 4. Engage in public-private partnerships to take advantage of the synergies that can arise when public institutions and private sector companies marshal their independent skills and perspectives for mutual advantage.**
- 5. Continue to be alert to entrepreneurial opportunities to enhance the research base of the university.**

Resource-Investment Strategies

Excellence at a major research university can only be achieved through careful planning at the faculty, departmental and collegiate levels. The campus administration, however, has a central role in providing a proper framework for such planning, signaling in advance the criteria for making investments from the campus level. The following are the campus-wide investment strategies.

- 1. Invest in a competitive undergraduate program that reflects the breadth of student interests and the range of future opportunities they will encounter in order to attract and retain highly talented students from Nebraska, the region and internationally.**

It is vitally important for the well-being of the State that its flagship university maintain its leadership in educating young people of Nebraska as well as students from other states and

countries. To ensure this success, we strive to:

- Offer a variety of high-quality undergraduate programs to attract the best students from Nebraska and the world, and to maximize every student's potential for success;
- Support faculty innovation and creativity to enhance undergraduate teaching and learning; and
- Increase access to undergraduate programs for qualified students from diverse backgrounds.

2. Invest in focused programs that are or can become “spires of excellence” through national or international recognition and which, thereby, enhance the reputation of the entire university.

Over the past 10 years, UNL has tripled its external funding for research and substantially increased the academic credentials of its entering student body. These accomplishments have been achieved, largely, by efforts to focus resources and attention on programs that are, or can become, nationally significant. New research centers, building on our strengths, have attracted additional outstanding faculty, advanced knowledge and educated students. New partnerships are creating opportunities for expanded technology commercialization and economic development. Development of innovative curricula as well as unique extra-curricular activities is essential to remain competitive in student recruitment. To continue that trajectory, UNL must:

- Continue to focus on outstanding programs through competitive allocation of existing resources and encourage strategic priorities at the academic unit level.
- Set and achieve benchmark goals to measure the success of these investments; and
- Support inter-disciplinary work that matches educational opportunities to future work-force needs and enhances research competitiveness.

3. Invest in programs of instruction or research and creative activity that serve the particular economic needs of Nebraska and contribute to our quality of life.

As the state's only comprehensive land-grant research university, UNL must assure that it addresses the particular needs of the State of Nebraska. In building “spires of excellence” the university must account for its comparative advantages which in many instances are dictated by its location in Nebraska. Beyond this, programs that may or may not achieve national recognition, but focus on particularly important needs for Nebraska or specifically enhance the quality of life in Nebraska deserve investment and support.

4. Invest, where we have a comparative advantage, in programs that contribute to solving challenges that face Nebraska, the nation, and the world.

In the United States, higher education institutions have always played a significant part in advancing the interests of the nation, both at home and abroad. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln accepts its own share of that responsibility and accordingly has a obligation to be a

participant, when it has a comparative advantage in doing so, in helping to solve the problems that face not only Nebraska, but the nation and the world. This is not only an obligation we share as a university, but one essential to the concept of engaged citizenship that we hope our students acquire.

5. Invest in unanticipated opportunities that may enhance our core priorities.

UNL must be nimble in spotting and pursuing opportunities that allow us to build on existing programs or establish new programs. While strategic planning for the future, we must never let today's plans limit our engagement with tomorrow's opportunities.

Operational Strategies

In the modern world, higher education is a complex enterprise. As a result, special attention must be paid to operational strategies and, especially, to measures that will permit our success to be monitored and evaluated. Our metrics for measuring success must take into account how well we implement these strategies as we work to fulfill our institutional priorities.

1. Assure that the university is open to persons of diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

We must continue our efforts to assure access to the university for all qualified students from all segments of society. We affirm our commitment to recruit and retain excellent faculty from varied backgrounds who reflect the diversity of modern society. We remain a university open to all perspectives and outlooks and affirm that commitment by pursuing practices and opportunities that encourage open review, two-way conversation and continuing dialogue. The Achievement-Centered Education program states learning outcomes that allow students to build their knowledge of diverse peoples and cultures.

2. Support internationalization of the university in ways that expand students' appreciation for the global environment in which they live and address the global interconnectedness of emerging problems and societal needs.

We recognize that UNL must establish a significant international profile in order to offer our students opportunities aligned with the world in which they will compete for jobs, and to better serve our state's global ambitions. Strategies that can help us realize this goal include:

- Identify strategic priorities for internationalizing curriculum and programs;
- Analyze the effectiveness of current education abroad programs and continue to encourage and enhance opportunities for participation;
- Focus on established and strong research programs that have substantial international track records; and
- Strengthen international partnerships that enhance university priorities.

3. Support outreach as a mechanism for assuring that all Nebraskans benefit from the priority efforts of the university.

Consistent with the University of Nebraska's Strategic Framework (see <http://nebraska.edu/strategic-framework.html> and <http://nebraska.edu/docs/StrategicFramework.pdf>), and recognizing UNL's land-grant mission, UNL aims to:

- Support economic growth and development;
- Connect Nebraska's communities to university programs;
- Encourage innovation and entrepreneurship; and
- Maximize the potential of information technology to offer degree programs and support research and scholarship.

APPENDIX A

- A 2020 Vision: The Future of Research and Graduate Education at UNL (<http://svcaa.unl.edu/documents/2020report.pdf>)
- Intellectual Engagement and Achievement at UNL: Report from the Blue Sky Committee (http://svcaa.unl.edu/documents/blue_sky_report.pdf)
- Everyone a Learner, Everyone a Teacher: Report from the Transition to University Task Force - December 2003 (http://svcaa.unl.edu/documents/everyone_a_learner.pdf)
- State of the University Address 2011 (<http://www.unl.edu/chancellor/sua2011>)
- Campus Blueprint: Enrollment Management Council's Strategic Enrollment Management Plan 2012-2017 (http://svcaa.unl.edu/documents/Campus_Blueprint-March_2012.pdf)
- Plan Big: UNL Campus and Landscape Master Plans (http://irp.unl.edu/Plan_Big_Final_Report_Revised_for_Web.pdf)