

REVISED Dec. 3, 2008

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR UNL: SETTING OUR COMPASS

PREFACE

This draft 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 and from the themes emerging from our academic strategic planning (see Appendix A). 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 underlying assumption 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 high degree of unanimity about our overarching goals is desirable.

This draft document aims to clarify our shared vision for the university, our mission, our core values, and our priorities, so that we can best assess the strategies to be 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 (see Appendix B). Our expectation is that each unit of the university will seek excellence within its own context and mission, mindful of the campus strategies and the Strategic Framework of the Board of Regents.

OUR VISION

Capturing a “vision” for an institution as complex as the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is not a simple task. Too often institutional “visions” are so general or inspirational that they do not connect to the day-to-day activity of the university or they are so all-encompassing in their specificity as to hide the true priorities of the university. To be sustainable, a vision must emerge from the evolving conversations and actions of the university community, rather than from the effort of a single committee tasked to produce one. We believe UNL has a sustainable vision—a vision of excellence—one that reflects the working assumptions and practical efforts that have powered the university for the last several years and have produced remarkable momentum toward excellence.

We have three related missions—teaching, research, and engagement. We are a public, land-grant, comprehensive university. As a community we have articulated in a variety of different ways our vision. We invite others to read our 2006 Institutional Self-Study; A 2020 Vision: The Future of Research and Graduate Education at UNL (2000); Intellectual Engagement and Achievement at UNL: The report of the Blue Sky Committee (2003); and Everyone a Learner, Everyone a Teacher: The report of the Transitions to University Task Force (2003). These reports were written by broadly representative groups, discussed within Colleges and Departments, and have been acted upon as guideposts in a continuing way. They all talk of excellence in the many ways in which a university such as ours pursues its missions and serves its clientele.

Our vision 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, whether to do so brings national and international fame or more quietly serves the needs of all Nebraskans, including our students. We seek to enhance the Power of Red and to harness it for the benefit of Nebraska.

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 mission 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 engagement 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 its 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 educational 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 newly established 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 study-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 (abbreviated version attached), 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

UNL Strategic Planning to Date

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has been engaged in an ongoing academic strategic planning process since 2004. Guidelines for the process were outlined in the Chancellor's 2004 State of the University Address. They called for a coordinated effort to produce a unifying document that tied together the strategic elements of various plans (such as the 2020 Vision report, the Transitions to University report, Blue Sky report, space needs, diversity needs, and others), with agreement on core values, on common objectives, and on measures of accountability. As we engaged in this planning process, we wanted plans to represent the best thinking of our colleges and departments—in short, we did not want a restrictive University plan that limited opportunities or, worse, was too general to be ambitious. And we needed this plan quickly, by March 15, 2005.

Under the direction of Vice Chancellors Couture and Owens, colleges and departments produced first reports indicating their strategic priorities and resources required to meet them. Also, in that first year, a preliminary set of core values was drafted. And we agreed that the academic strategic planning process would have implications for decision-making and resource distribution in a number of defined domains.

Department/Unit plans were indeed submitted by March 15, and they were presented in hearings to senior administrative team and representatives from the faculty senate, the Academic Planning Committee, and ASUN, and responded to in writing by the Chancellor, SVCAA, and VCIANR.

In fall 2005, we engaged in a second phase of the initiative. The Academic Planning Committee was charged with reviewing the initial planning documents to locate common themes, and new guidelines were distributed to academic units to direct the second phase. Plans from academic units were again collected, presented in hearings, and evaluated in writing by the Chancellor, SVCAA, and VCIANR. Concurrent with this effort was a 2 percent budget reduction process, which eliminated our ability to distribute new resources. And, simultaneously, a similar planning process, entitled "Investing in Nebraska's Future: a Strategic Planning Framework—Accountability Measures," was taking place, under the direction of President Milliken and our Board of Regents, at the University of Nebraska system level. Recognizing the multiple issues impinging on our planning process, we requested and were approved to do a "special emphasis" self-study focusing on academic strategic planning for UNL's decennial accreditation in November 2006.

We have now completed the third cycle of strategic planning. College plans, in this third iteration, are more strategic, and common themes are beginning to emerge, in part, from the opportunities that academic leaders have had to talk with one another about their planning.

Input from chairs, heads and deans at this juncture points to a unified request: they want a guide—a compass, if you will—that clarifies our direction by pulling together our common planning priorities in a single document that represents the goals of the university. This idea was also endorsed by the external accreditation review team that submitted its report in February 2007. Additionally, that team suggested that now was the time to align academic strategic planning with planning in other units at UNL, such as Student Affairs, Business and Finance, and Research:

Integrating University-wide planning and providing opportunities for units to share goals and outcomes throughout the process to encourage and permit alignment is an important aspect of the evolving planning process. (Advancement Section/Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation Visit, Page 5, 12-06-06)

The external team also recommended that UNL identify and share high-level institutional priorities for excellence in instruction, research and outreach for both academic and non-academic units. These guidelines would provide a basis for both unit and overall institutional planning and determine ways to measure our progress on each of these priorities:

Include in the planning process the presentation of both implementing and sustaining the process over time, and of the impact on other areas within the institution. Sharing these as (the) planning process progresses will help ensure that the horizontal linkages between academic units and non-academic units are recognized and addressed before the end of the process. (Advancement Section/Report of a Comprehensive Evaluation Visit, Page 7, 12-06-06)

The team further noted that our process, by design, is iterative and only in its third year so a summative evaluation of it now may be premature. However, the report noted also that UNL is beginning to “own” planning and the campus community believes that planning will better inform future institutional decisions on priorities and resources.

The accreditation review of academic strategic planning and the observations of our academic leaders both suggest that our plan now should be to better communicate UNL’s overarching priorities and goals so that, through common agreement, we can better focus and energize planning across the entire campus.

APPENDIX B



INVESTING IN NEBRASKA'S FUTURE

Strategic Planning Framework -- Accountability Measures

An Implementation Tool for the Board of Regents and University Leadership

2008-2011

The University of Nebraska is a four-campus, public university which was created and exists today to serve Nebraskans through quality teaching, research, and outreach and engagement. The future of the State of Nebraska is closely tied to that of its only public university, and this framework will guide university-wide and campus planning to help build and sustain a Nebraska that offers its citizens educational and economic opportunity and a high quality of life.

The framework consists of six overarching goals emphasizing access and affordability, quality programs, workforce and economic development, research growth, engagement with the state, and accountability. Each goal has a number of related objectives which will be prioritized, and strategies and accountability measures will be developed for Board and university-wide monitoring over a multi-year period.

The university's efforts will not be limited to these priorities, as we expect to be able to measure progress in other areas given the interrelatedness of the objectives, other priorities of the Board and the President, and the mature and/or ongoing strategic planning efforts of the four campuses. Each campus has established a set of quality indicators with metrics that provide a means to evaluate achievement and momentum related to many of these objectives. Additional indicators will be developed to address each objective consistent with campus missions.

1. The University of Nebraska will provide the opportunity for Nebraskans to enjoy a better life through access to high quality, affordable undergraduate, graduate and professional education.

- a. Maintain an affordable cost of education.
 - i. Secure state funding sufficient to support excellent programs.*
 - ii. Keep tuition increases moderate and predictable.*
 - iii. Increase support for need-based financial aid.*
- b. Increase the percentage of Nebraska high school graduates who enroll at and

graduate from the university.

- i. The University of Nebraska shall increase its overall enrollment.*
- ii. Each campus shall exceed the average undergraduate freshman-to-sophomore retention rate of its peer institutions.*
- iii. Each campus shall maintain or reach the average undergraduate six-year graduation rate of its peer institutions.*
- iv. Each campus shall endeavor to increase the enrollment of students of*

color,

employing measures permitted by state and federal law.

- v. The university shall engage in partnerships with other higher education institutions, K-12, and the private sector to increase the overall college-going rate in Nebraska.*

c. Increase the percentage of persons of color and the economically disadvantaged who enroll at and graduate from the university, employing measures permitted by state and federal law.

d. Expand lifelong educational opportunities, including those for non-traditional and transfer students.

e. Promote adequate student preparation for and success in higher education.

2. The University of Nebraska will build and sustain undergraduate, graduate and professional programs of high quality with an emphasis on excellent teaching.

a. Recruit and retain exceptional faculty and staff, with special emphasis on women and persons of color.

- i. Faculty salaries and incentives (awarded on the basis of merit) and fringe benefits should exceed the average of peer institutions.*
- ii. Each campus shall conduct campus climate surveys and minimize the differences in assessment of climate among various groups of employees, especially women and persons of color.*
- iii. Each campus shall endeavor to exceed the average of its peers in the proportion of the faculty who are women or persons of color, employing measures permitted by state and federal law.*
- iv. Secure enactment of the Distinguished Professorship Act.*

b. Pursue excellence in programs where the university can be a regional, national and/or international leader.

c. Pursue excellence in programs aligned with the long-term interests of the state.

- i. Determine key areas of future workforce demand and strengthen or develop curricula and programs in alignment with those areas.*
- ii. Develop educational programs that prepare students for the flexibility required to respond to the uncertainty of future workforce demands.*
- iii. Develop distance education and other educational programs that permit Nebraskans to prepare for jobs and opportunities to meet future workforce demands.*

d. Achieve university-wide and campus priorities through the strategic allocation of resources.

3. The University of Nebraska will play a critical role in building a talented,

competitive workforce and knowledge-based economy in Nebraska in partnership with the state, private sector and other educational institutions.

- a. Work to stem and reverse the out-migration of graduates and knowledge workers.
- b. Increase proportion of Nebraska high school students ranking in the top 25 percent of their classes that attend the University of Nebraska.
 - i. *Increase enrollment of Nebraska students ranked in top 25% of their high school class.*
 - ii. *Increase support for merit-based scholarships.*
- c. Increase the number of nonresident students who enroll at the university.
 - i. *Increase enrollment of nonresident undergraduate students at UNL, UNO and UNK.*
- d. Improve entrepreneurship education, training and outreach.
- e. Increase the global literacy of our students and citizens.
- f. Develop and strengthen internship and service learning opportunities with business, education, government, military, and nonprofit organizations.

4. The University of Nebraska will pursue excellence and regional, national and international competitiveness in research and scholarly activity, as well as their application, focusing on areas of strategic importance and opportunity.

- a. Increase external support for research and scholarly activity.
 - i. *Increase federal support for instruction, research and development, and public service.*
 - ii. *Inventory and forecast infrastructure (physical facilities, information technology, equipment) necessary to support continued growth in research activity and secure private and public support to eliminate deficiencies.*
 - iii. *Implement LB 605 to repair, renovate and/or replace specific university facilities.*
- b. Increase undergraduate and graduate student participation in research and its application.
- c. Encourage interdisciplinary, intercampus and inter-institutional collaboration.
- d. Encourage and facilitate the commercialization of research and technology to benefit Nebraska.
- e. Improve the quantity and quality of research space through public and private support.

5. The University of Nebraska will serve the entire state through strategic and effective engagement and coordination with citizens, businesses, agriculture, other educational institutions, and rural and urban communities and regions.

- a. Support economic growth, health and quality of life through policy initiatives consistent with university mission.
- b. Recognize and reward faculty innovation and effectiveness in outreach and engagement.
- c. Connect Nebraska cities, institutions, regions and communities through university programs.

- d. Support Nebraska's economic development.
 - i. Partner and collaborate with government and the private sector to attract, retain, and spur business development and economic opportunity.*
 - ii. Use survey data of Nebraska business and industry, including agriculture, to foster more effective relationships with the private sector.*
- e. Build local, regional, national and international partnerships across public and private sectors.

6. The University of Nebraska will be cost effective and accountable to the citizens of the state.

- a. Allocate resources in an efficient and effective manner.
 - i. Review and ensure administrative best practices in bidding.*
 - ii. Find savings and cost reductions through academic, administrative and business process efficiencies and effectiveness.*
 - iii. Assess priority programs and make appropriate revisions, if any.*
- b. Maximize and leverage non-state support.
 - i. Investigate revenue-generating ventures.*
- c. Create and report performance and accountability measures.
- d. Maximize potential of information technology to support the university's mission.
- e. Implement measures of student learning and success outcomes.
 - i. Compare and improve educational value-added performance.*
- f. Maintain competitive capital facilities.
 - i. Build a comprehensive long-range capital facilities planning process and provide a six-year capital construction plan, updated quarterly.*

(dated 06.13.08; <http://www.nebraska.edu/strategic-framework.html>)