



The University of Nebraska Report from the Board of Regents

February 2010

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A report from the February 2010 meeting of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents

Regents approve agreement on Lincoln arena project

The University of Nebraska Board of Regents has approved a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Lincoln on the city's proposed new Haymarket arena.

The agreement, approved during a special meeting on Feb. 12, calls for the Husker men's and women's basketball teams to play in the new arena if it is built. The agreement limits the University's financial obligations in the arena project to rent for Athletics to operate home games and some practices for the basketball programs.

The Board also unanimously approved a resolution urging Lincoln voters to support the arena. Voters will be asked on May 11 to approve a \$25 million general obligation bond to help pay for the arena project.

UNL Chancellor Harvey Perlman called the arena "a critical project" for the University and its Athletic Department. A new facility would help in basketball recruitment, Perlman said, and would also draw more young people to Lincoln.

He said the Memorandum of Understanding was the result of "serious and extended" negotiations with the City of Lincoln. The University likely would not be able to build an arena on its own without the city's help, he said.

The aging Bob Devaney Sports Center, the current home of Husker basketball as well as other athletic events and graduation ceremonies, will need significant renovations regardless of the outcome of the arena vote, Perlman said.

During its March meeting, the Board will consider forming a Joint Public Agency with the city for the arena.

Board tours renovated Whittier building during UNL visit

Following their meeting, regents spent the rest of the day touring parts of the UNL campus. Among the highlights was a tour of the former Whittier Junior High School building at 22nd and Vine streets. The building, purchased by the NU Foundation in 1983 but largely unused since then, is undergoing a \$23.75 million renovation into cutting-edge research space for transportation and energy initiatives. Renovation also includes the state-of-the-art University Children's Center, which opened for the fall semester in the north annex of Whittier.

Construction for transportation and energy research space is scheduled to be completed in March, according to Ted Weidner, assistant vice chancellor for facilities, management and planning at UNL.

Other UNL campus visit highlights:

- Regents toured the Animal Research Facility on East Campus and heard a presentation from Dr. Don Beermann, director of the animal care program. Beermann reported there is a critical need to modernize the building, as current conditions are impacting UNL's ability to recruit and retain top faculty talent.

- Regents heard a presentation from Dr. Susan Sheridan, professor and director of the new National Center for Research on Rural Education. UNL announced in July it had won a \$10 million federal grant to establish the center, which is the only one of its kind in the country. The center focuses on rural education research to improve student learning in reading, science and math.

- Regents heard from Dr. Dean Sicking, professor and director of the Midwest Roadside Safety Facility. Sicking's team – part of the Nebraska Transportation Center, which will be one of the first inhabitants of the newly renovated Whittier building – is an international leader in developing roadside safety hardware. Their inventions are installed along every major highway nationwide.

- Regents heard from Dr. Ken Cassman, professor and director of the Center for Energy Sciences Research, which is also scheduled to move into Whittier. The center works to produce new technologies, processes and systems that provide new or better sources of energy – such as biofuels, wind and solar power – to improve quality of life and economic opportunities for Nebraskans.

- The Board visited the new Jackie Gaughan Multicultural Center (photo below), which will offer office and storage space for student organizations as well as study and meeting areas for all students. At the center, regents heard from Dr. David Conrad, associate vice chancellor for technology development. Conrad's presentation on NUtech Ventures focused on efforts to increase entrepreneurship opportunities for faculty researchers.

- Regents toured Hamilton Hall, the chemistry hall. Dr. Jim Takacs, chemistry professor and chairman, pointed out some cutting-edge facilities as well as other areas, like undergraduate lab spaces, that need to be updated in order to provide for the best possible academic experience for students.

- Regents visited the new Digital Arts Studio in Richards Hall and heard from Dean Giacomo Oliva and faculty on how the studio is allowing students to receive state-of-the-art instruction in digital arts.



The Jackie Gaughan Multicultural Center will soon open at UNL.