

# UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESIDENT LEADERSHIP PROFILE

D. B. AND PAULA VARNER HALL



UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**<sup>®</sup>  
System



# THE OPPORTUNITY

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The Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska invites applications and nominations for the position of President of the University of Nebraska. The President is the chief executive officer of the University and provides overall leadership for its multi-campus system.

The University of Nebraska is the state's only public university and has served Nebraskans through teaching, research, and engagement for over 150 years. The University's four campuses—which include a leading Big Ten flagship campus in Lincoln, a metropolitan campus in Omaha, an undergraduate-focused campus in Kearney, and an academic health science center in Omaha—are home to nearly 50,000 students and a workforce of 16,000 faculty and staff.

A tremendous asset to Nebraska and its citizens—academically, culturally, and economically—the University strives to help build and sustain a state that offers educational and economic opportunities and an excellent quality of life. As one of the state's most prominent public leaders, the President also serves as a vital advocate for education and economic development.

## CORE LEADERSHIP PILLARS

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- **Proven Leader** - demonstrated ability to lead and manage a large, complex organization, work effectively with the elected Board of Regents, build a strong leadership team, and possess a commitment to integrity and ethics.
- **Strategic Thinker** - ability to articulate a vision for the future of the University of Nebraska that can be developed into a strategic plan.
- **Prioritizes Higher Education, Academic, and Research Excellence** - understands, appreciates, and prioritizes excellence in higher education, academics, and research; and its importance to faculty, students, and their families, and the state.
- **Committed to “One Nebraska”** - understands and appreciates the value of including all voices in the University community, including students. Ability to develop and implement more collaborations and cooperation among the four campuses that leads to the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Maximizes the economic impact to the state. Connects with Nebraskans—rural and urban.
- **Political Acumen** - ability to develop and maintain effective working relationships with the Governor, members of the Legislature, and other elected officials across the state.
- **Capable of Fundraising** - ability to develop and cultivate relationships with potential donors and work with the University of Nebraska Foundation to design major capital campaigns.
- **Values Diversity and Inclusion** - understands and appreciates the importance of campuses having students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds and campuses that are inclusive and welcoming to all.

- **Values University as a Global Leader** - views the University of Nebraska as having an impact across the world through its academic programs, research, and service.
- **Values Intercollegiate Athletics and Academic Health Science Centers** - understands and appreciates intercollegiate athletics, especially Husker Athletics, and academic health science centers; and views them as important doors to the University of Nebraska.

# MAKING AN IMPACT: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT

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The past five years have been significant in the life of the University of Nebraska System. Departing President Ted Carter has provided critical and effective leadership for the University throughout the global pandemic and subsequent economic ripples, including challenges relating to the highest period of inflation in a generation and emergent workforce issues. In response to these challenges, the Board of Regents charged President Carter to develop a plan to realign the University and return to “offense.” Foundational work is underway, and the next President will have the opportunity to build, advance, and extend the following priority areas:

- Renewed focus on our Customers
- Raising our Academic Profile and Research Capabilities
- Academic Program Array
- Transparency, Communication, and Change Management
- Operational Excellence

More information about these priorities can be found at <https://nebraska.edu/reinvention>.

Additionally, given the opportunity to engage a wide variety of University of Nebraska stakeholders through eight listening sessions held across the four campuses and a survey conducted in October 2023, the following themes emerged regarding the important work in which the President must engage to live out the Core Leadership Pillars and the Plan for Reinvention. These include:

1. The President must be the **chief advocate and champion** of the University of Nebraska at the state level by building relationships of trust and candor with the Governor and members of the Nebraska Legislature; working similarly with Nebraska’s congressional delegation and the executive branch; and finally, working with the extraordinary philanthropists who have had major statewide, national, and global impact through their investments in the University of Nebraska.
2. Leading the University of Nebraska is not a solo act. The next President must be a talented conductor who can **lead the leaders** of the campuses and the Office of the President to continue to engage the University community and other stakeholders in building a shared vision, inspiring action, modeling collaboration, being bold and decisive, and owning responsibility for advancing the mission of the University.

3. The new President will need to further **hone and strengthen the University** and build synergies between and among the campuses, research institutes, and extension centers while recognizing and affirming the particular and differentiated missions and culture of each in order to be good stewards and to maximize the impact of the University, improving quality of life and economic vitality for all Nebraskans.
4. There are very few Nebraskans who can have as much impact on the state and beyond as the President of the University. The reach and power of the University's brand is a source of pride and is ubiquitous across the state and nation. It is expected that the President will be committed to getting to **know, understand, and embrace the whole of Nebraska**, recognizing the diverse opportunities and challenges found across the vast and varied landscape in its vibrant and growing urban areas, in small towns where everyone knows your name, and in the beauty of its topography. A point of extraordinary alignment among stakeholders is a strong preference for a leader who will provide compelling, inspiring, and effective leadership for a decade or more.
5. There is a **spirit of innovation** that is alive and well in Nebraska. The state's agricultural-based economy has been a leading innovator over the past several decades. Many of these advances are linked to research conducted by University faculty in partnership and with support from the agriculture industry. The next President will be expected to be a tireless leader and champion for supporting the innovation necessary to meet the needs of today's students through transformative learning practices and with a laser focus on student success. Equally important are finding ways to understand the workforce needs of Nebraska employers and to focus on talent retention.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND DESIRED LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

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Successful candidates will possess an earned terminal degree from an accredited institution and/or significant senior-level leadership experience in higher education and/or the private/public sector. A Ph.D. is preferred, but not required.

The listening sessions and survey also revealed a desire that successful candidates possess a mix of the following desired leadership attributes and qualities:

- An authentic, humble, genuine, and ethical person of high character and integrity that promotes trust in all relationships.
- A gifted communicator who listens well and can inspire and galvanize others to action.
- An engaging leader who can develop a shared vision; and act boldly and decisively.
- A forward-thinking, creative, and collaborative style leavened with resilience and optimism.

- A visible, energetic, and tireless champion for higher education that keeps students at the forefront of all efforts and values shared governance and academic freedom.
- A personal commitment to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- A demonstrated record of strong financial acumen, especially in difficult times.

# APPLICATIONS AND NOMINATIONS

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Academic Search is partnering with the Board of Regents and the Presidential Search Advisory Committee in this search. Confidential discussions about the position are encouraged and may be arranged by contacting the Academic Search team:

- Jay Lemons: [jay.lemons@academicsearch.org](mailto:jay.lemons@academicsearch.org)
- George Ross: [george.ross@academicsearch.org](mailto:george.ross@academicsearch.org)
- Jennifer Kooken: [jennifer.kooken@academicsearch.org](mailto:jennifer.kooken@academicsearch.org)

Applications and nominations should be sent to [NUPresident@academicsearch.org](mailto:NUPresident@academicsearch.org).

To apply, candidates should prepare a letter of interest that addresses elements of the Core Leadership Pillars, priority areas for impact, and/or desired leadership attributes outlined in this profile. Also required are a current curriculum vitae and a list of five professional references with contact information and a brief explanation of the working relationship with each. References will be contacted at a later stage in the search process and only with candidate permission. The position is open until filled, but only applications received by **January 1, 2024**, will be guaranteed full consideration.

All candidate names will remain confidential.



*The University of Nebraska does not discriminate based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, and/or political affiliation in its programs, activities, or employment.*

## LEADERSHIP

### Board of Regents

The Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska is a 12-member public body consisting of eight voting members popularly elected on a nonpartisan basis by regental district for six-year terms; and four non-voting student regents, one from each campus, who serve during their tenure as student body president. Members of the Board are not compensated, but are reimbursed for expenses related to their service.

Meetings of the full Board are typically held six times each year. The committees of the Board typically meet bimonthly. The Bylaws, Policies, and Standing Rules of the Board may be found at <https://nebraska.edu/regents/bylaws-policies-and-rules>.

Current members of the Board of Regents are:

- District 1 - Tim Clare, Lincoln (Chair)
- District 2 - Jack Stark, Omaha
- District 3 - Jim Scheer, Norfolk
- District 4 - Elizabeth O'Connor, Omaha
- District 5 - Rob Schafer, Beatrice (Vice Chair)
- District 6 - Paul Kenney, Amherst
- District 7 - Kathy Wilmot, Beaver City
- District 8 - Barbara Weitz, Omaha
- Student Regents - Temo Molina, UNK; Paul Pechous, UNL; Katie Schultis, UNMC; and Hakim Lotoro, UNO

### University Administration

The President is assisted in the administration of the University by the four campus chancellors, who also hold the title of vice president of the University. The chancellors, as the chief administrative officers on each campus, are responsible to the President and, through the President, to the Board of Regents. The chancellors are:

- Rodney Bennett, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- Jeffrey Gold, University of Nebraska Medical Center
- Doug Kristensen, University of Nebraska at Kearney
- Joanne Li, University of Nebraska at Omaha

The leader of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR), Michael Boehm, also holds the title of vice president and, in that capacity, reports to the President. He also reports to the UNL chancellor.

In addition, four vice presidents with University-wide responsibilities—the Executive Vice President and Provost, the Senior Vice President and CFO, the Vice President and General Counsel, and the Vice President and CIO—report to the President, as does the Chief of Staff. The Corporation Secretary and the Associate Vice President/Director of Internal Audit report jointly to the President and the Board of Regents.

## CAMPUSES

### University of Nebraska

In June 2023, the University commenced a strategic realignment of its Lincoln and Medical Center units into the “University of Nebraska.” Nearly all Big Ten institutions aligns a flagship research university and an academic health science center—and their academic and research results are self-evident. In accordance with state law, the President is the institution’s chief executive officer; and the chancellors are chief administrative officers of their divisions. Part and parcel to the June 2023 realignment and clarification of the President’s role as CEO, the Board of Regents’ *Bylaws* were amended to assign responsibility for intercollegiate athletics on the Lincoln campus to the President.

### Lincoln

The [University of Nebraska-Lincoln](#) (UNL) is the flagship, Big Ten research university, home to more than 24,000 students. Chartered in 1869, UNL was the original land-grant campus of what would become the University of Nebraska System. Reflecting the University’s commitment to agriculture, UNL is also home to the [Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources](#) (IANR), which houses the statewide Nebraska Extension network as well as the [Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture](#) (NCTA) in Curtis, which serves nearly 300 students in two-year programs.

### Medical Center

The [University of Nebraska Medical Center](#) (UNMC) is the state’s only public academic health science center. More than 4,000 students are enrolled at UNMC, including in highly ranked physician assistant, primary care, physical therapy, pharmacy, public health, and other programs. UNMC’s research and patient care in cancer and infectious diseases are also recognized globally.

### University of Nebraska at Omaha

The [University of Nebraska at Omaha](#) (UNO) is Nebraska’s metropolitan university, rooted in deep ties to Omaha and with a mission of access and affordability. Initially a municipal university, UNO joined the University of Nebraska System in 1968 and today enrolls more than 15,000 students. UNO is known for its student-centered environment, community engagement, and dedication to embracing students from all backgrounds.

### University of Nebraska at Kearney

The [University of Nebraska at Kearney](#) (UNK) is a residential university focused on undergraduate education. Previously the Nebraska State Teachers College, then Kearney State College, UNK became part of the University of Nebraska System in 1991 and today enrolls more than 6,000 students who experience a private-school environment on a major public university campus.

## UNIVERSITY-WIDE INSTITUTES

The University of Nebraska System also comprises three institutes that leverage the expertise of all campuses to address key issues facing the state and world: the [National Strategic Research Institute](#), which conducts national security and defense research through an exclusive partnership with the Department of Defense; the [Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute](#), which works to address food insecurity with less stress on water resources; and the [Buffett Early Childhood Institute](#), which is working to make Nebraska the best place in the nation to be a baby.

## UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA FOUNDATION

The [University of Nebraska Foundation](#) is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit that exists for one purpose: to advance the University of Nebraska System. With offices in Lincoln, Omaha, and Kearney, the Foundation connects the passions of donors to the mission of the University, stewarding donor generosity across the campuses to support students, faculty, research, academics, facilities, and more.

In fiscal year 2022, a record number of donors, 60,571, committed \$300.6 million to the University of Nebraska Foundation. This marks the third consecutive year that giving eclipsed \$300 million annually. Of the Foundation's \$3 billion in total assets under management, more than 99 percent are restricted by donors to a specific use by the University.

In November 2022, the [Only in Nebraska: A Campaign for Our University's Future](#) was publicly launched. The campaign is a historic effort to encourage at least 150,000 benefactors to give \$3 billion to support University students, faculty, academic programs, and research to address the needs of the state. The campaign has three priorities: (1) Relentless focus on student access and success; (2) Enhancing faculty, academic, and clinical excellence; and (3) Transformational research and innovation. To-date, over \$2 billion has been committed, and over 130,800 unique donors have been engaged.

## LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

The Office of the President and Official Residence are both located in Lincoln, Nebraska. A city of more than 292,000 people and growing, Nebraska's capital city offers the ambiance of a friendly small town and the amenities, attractions, and entertainment opportunities of a larger metropolitan area. Lincoln's stable economy, moderate cost of living, low crime rates, world-class healthcare facilities, outstanding public and private schools, and a commitment to community are the midwestern ideal.

For more information about the Lincoln community, please visit the [Lincoln Convention and Visitors Bureau](#) or the [Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development](#) websites.

