



The University of Nebraska Report from the Board of Regents

August 2006

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A report of the June and July 2006 meetings of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

College of Public Health Approved

Plans for a new College of Public Health were presented to and enthusiastically received by the Board of Regents at the June meeting and approved at the July meeting. The college will be housed at UNMC but include collaborative programs with UNO, UNL and UNK as well as with community partners across the state. Dr. Jay Noren will serve as dean of the new college.

“There is a significant need for research and training in public health issues,” said Board Chair Jim McClurg. These include infectious diseases (i.e. avian flu, mumps, AIDS) chronic conditions (i.e. obesity, mental health and substance abuse), disaster preparedness and agricultural and environmental health issues.

The goals of the college include assuring a workforce of trained public health professionals, identifying and helping solve community health problems, educating the public, mobilizing community health partnerships and conducting research.

Existing accredited public health programs are largely concentrated in the eastern half of the United States. Mutually beneficial collaborations with other states and regions are anticipated, especially in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain states. The estimated economic impact of the new college is \$30 million in external funds, 700-750 new jobs, improved health outcomes for Nebraskans and others, and a workforce trained and educated in critical public health issues.

The Omaha World Herald applauded the proposed college in an editorial opinion, saying, “A public health college could have an enormous impact on Nebraska and UNMC's reputation and sustainability - and also on everyday Nebraskans and their health.”

Strategic Framework

Each board meeting includes a discussion of the University of Nebraska Strategic Framework, including, at some sessions, the establishment of specific one-year and three-year targets for measuring progress toward goals. Discussion at the June meeting centered on assessing student learning and success outcomes, to be measured by creating a set of “dashboard indicators” of student performance on national and state examinations (such as professional licensing and certification). The board will review results annually.

2007-09 budget request includes funds for “Nebraska Initiatives”

At the July meeting, the Board approved a budget request for 2007-09 that includes funds for several initiatives collectively called “Investing in Nebraska’s Future.” Funds would be directed to projects in such areas as public health, agriculture, the life sciences and “STEM” (science, technology, engineering and mathematics education at both the K-12 and college level). The initiatives will include research, education and outreach programs that are closely aligned with the interests of Nebraskans.

The university will request a 6.5 percent increase in state funding for FY 2007-08 and a 4 percent increase for FY 2008-09.

The Board also approved a **capital funds request** for 2007-09 that has two major components:

- ◆ A new university-wide student information system that will streamline student record-keeping and communication
- ◆ Three facilities projects in greater Nebraska that will impact NU agricultural research and outreach programs. These include a new education facility at High Plains Agricultural Center at Sidney, upgrades to the extension offices at Concord, and replacement of the dairy and swine research facilities at Mead.

2006-07 tuition rates set

The Board of Regents approved a 5 percent increase in tuition for 2006-07, as well as a 1 percent assessment to meet the matching requirements of LB 605, the facilities renovation legislation approved in 2006. Nebraska resident undergraduates will see a per-credit-hour increase of \$7.25 at UNK, \$8.25 at UNO, \$9.00 at UNL and UNMC, and \$11.50 in UNMC’s College of Nursing.

“Affordable access to a quality education is the Board’s number one priority,” McClurg said. “The new rates are well below last fall’s projected tuition increase of 9 percent, and are also below the average of each campus’ peer institutions.” NU’s tuition compares with planned increases averaging 6.5 percent for UNO’s peers, 6.6 percent for UNL’s peers, and 5.7 percent for UNK’s peers, according to a phone survey conducted by the university’s budget office.

Tuition dollars help fund faculty salaries, diversity initiatives, programs of excellence on each campus, facilities costs such as utilities and maintenance, and the continuing operations of the university.

The university’s strategic framework identifies significant goals relating to the quality of the university. These include bringing faculty salaries up to the mid-point of their peers, increasing the number of Nebraskans who attend and graduate from college, and investing in academic programs of high quality. Achieving those goals depends on moderate tuition increases, strong state support and adequate need-based aid.

Strong state support was evident this year in a 7.4 percent increase in state appropriations, as well as legislative support for building renovations included in LB 605. For 2007, state general fund support increased 6.1 percent.

The operating budget approved by the Board increases funding for need-based aid by 13.6 percent for 2006-07. There is still a gap between what many students can afford and what is provided through state and federal aid. And, as the state’s demographics change, it will become increasingly important to ensure that adequate need-based aid is available.

Peer information:

2005-06 resident, undergraduate tuition, based on 15 credit hours per semester:

UNL: \$4,530	Peer average: \$5,832
UNO: \$4,133	Peer average: \$4,453
UNK: \$3,668	Peer average: \$4,222

Grand Island Community Visit

Each year, the Board of Regents holds one meeting in Greater Nebraska and uses the opportunity to meet with community, education and business leaders. This year's meeting was held in Grand Island and included a community breakfast and discussion with President Milliken, panel presentations on educational access and economic development featuring area speakers, and tours of Central Community College, Hornady Manufacturing and Chief Industries' fabrication plant.

Central Community College hosted the meeting. The **education** panel discussion, led by P-16 Coordinator Joe Rowson of Lincoln, brought together three people who have great concern for the community of Grand Island and the education of its young people: Dan Naranjo, a prominent businessman who is active in civic and volunteer efforts; Lynn Cronk, a veteran board of education member and community activist; and superintendent of schools, Steve Joel who has led successful school improvement efforts.

Dan Naranjo, whose heritage is Native American and Hispanic, said he "jumped in the deep end" by registering at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln after high school. He succeeded with the help of a minority-outreach program, but he is concerned about "just normal" students who may get lost in a big high school, are unlikely to take advanced placement courses and may also face economic obstacles to continuing their education.

Lynn Cronk believes all students need the full attention of educators and that recent improvements in standards and accountability have proven that much higher percentages of students can be successful.

Steve Joel, who has instituted a career pathway program in health care and is working with Chief Industries on a proposed computer-assisted drafting program, is also

bringing Air Force ROTC to Grand Island Senior High School. Such programs, he believes, can make academic work relevant to the students' real world and will help them succeed in college and their careers.

The panel on **regional economic development**, led by Pete Kotsiopulos, NU's vice president-university affairs, addressed a range of issues that communities and regions face in attracting new business and new capital, and in retaining a workforce.

Marlan Ferguson, president of the Grand Island Economic Development Corporation, has experience as a city administrator in both Sidney and Grand Island. He discussed efforts and challenges in guiding the Grand Island region's economic development efforts.

Jeff Kelly, president of Kelly Supply Company, has taken his company into the global marketplace with the development and servicing of a software package designed for the industrial services industry. His success provides a model for entrepreneurship as an economic development strategy.

As vice president-human resources of Chief Automotive, Tami Slater knows firsthand the challenges of hiring, training and retaining a workforce in the Midwest – one of the most critical elements in economic development.

Duane Kristensen, manager of the Chief Ethanol Plant in Hastings, is a veteran of the ethanol business and a leader in expanding the industry within the state and internationally. Finding new ways to leverage Nebraska's strength in agricultural productivity is one key to competitiveness.

Tours of the Hornady and Chief facilities provided members of the board with a firsthand look at regional business growth.

News briefs

Newly appointed Regent **Robert Phares** of North Platte will be sworn in August 23 in a ceremony at Varner Hall. The September 8 meeting of the board will be his first meeting.

Program statements and budgets for four **renovation projects** authorized under LB 605 were approved: Animal Science Complex, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Physical Sciences building replacement at UNL, and Bennett Hall at UNMC. Eventually, financing will create \$175 million of facilities improvements and renovations encompassing 17 building and infrastructure projects across the four campuses. The first phase of financing was approved at the July meeting.

Veterans of all branches of the U.S. armed services will be eligible to attend the University of Nebraska at in-state (resident) tuition rates under an amendment to the university's tuition policy approved by the Board of Regents. Any individual who graduates from a Nebraska high school, is honorably discharged from the military, and returns to Nebraska to establish a home now qualifies for in-state tuition without having to first meet the 12-month domicile rule. The policy is effective immediately. The board will consider expanding the policy to all veterans.

The **UNO Facilities Development Plan** for 2006-2015 was presented and approved in June. The plan envisions a greatly expanded campus, with additional housing, parking, academic and student life facilities and continued strong relationships with Omaha businesses and neighborhoods.

Rural Economic Development expert Priscilla Salant of the University of Idaho spoke at the June board meeting and presented data on Nebraska's economic development challenges. Population trends were illustrated by a map (below) showing that only five Nebraska counties gained population at or above the national average rate between 2000 and 2005. The Board's Task Force on Economic Development and Outreach will continue to explore opportunities for the university to impact Nebraska's economic competitiveness.

