



The University of Nebraska Report from the Board of Regents

January 2007

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A report of the January 2007 meeting of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

NU Budget Director presents cautionary numbers

Gov. Dave Heineman's disappointing budget recommendations for the University of Nebraska – a 1.1 percent increase next year, and 2.2 percent in 2009 – set the stage for possible budget cuts and tuition increases, NU Budget Director Chris Kabourek told the Board of Regents in January.

Kabourek presented some interesting numbers:

- The governor's proposal would mark the third lowest increase in state appropriations for the university in almost 40 years.
- Historically, state appropriation decreases lead to tuition increases.
- The University's share of the state budget has fallen steadily from 22 percent in 1989 to what would be 13.8 percent in 2009 (if the governor's recommendations are enacted). Medicaid and state aid to K-12 education consume increasing percentages of the state budget.

Regent Chuck Hassebrook of Lyons pointed out: "Sometimes we assume the key to economic growth is spending less. But I think we'll find that higher education is an investment, and you'll see quite a return on that investment. That's the real key to the future of our state."

University aims to improve financial aid to students

Two target measures were presented to the Board of Regents aimed at improving opportunities for University of Nebraska students to receive need-based financial aid: 1. Better marketing for the Tuition Assistance Plan, a financing commitment from the university guaranteeing that eligible, low-income students can graduate debt free (provided they maintain certain academic standards); and 2. Expanding financial aid to impact a broader range of families, specifically middle-income students.

University officials said they were troubled by these kinds of statistics:

- Average Nebraska families must now use 27 percent of their income to cover expenses at four-year public colleges, compared to 17 percent in 1992.
- 60 percent of NU graduates take out loans during college.
- Students who take out loans leave with an average debt of almost \$17,000.

Regent Charles Wilson of Lincoln said the university must ask the question: "If the state won't help these students, who will?"

University President James B. Milliken noted that private funds are becoming an important part of the financial aid picture. "I've noticed an increase in philanthropists who understand supporting need-based aid is a long-term way of recognizing what's good for our state."

New Regents officers elected for 2007

Chair: Charles Wilson, a retired cardiologist from Lincoln, represents District 1 and has served on the Board since 1990. He was re-elected to two additional terms, and twice previously served as chair.

Vice Chair: Chuck Hassebrook, from Lyons, District 3 is director for the Center for Rural Affairs. First elected to the Board in 1994, he was re-elected in 2000 and 2006, and has been chair and vice chair.

Regents agree to further explore new northeast nursing division

The Board of Regents has agreed to the concept of establishing a College of Nursing Division in Norfolk, provided the University has adequate funding, and that financial and academic support is available from the Norfolk area. The Regents asked for a \$10.7 million commitment from northeast Nebraska by May, 2008, and an agreement to share operational costs.

State Sen. Michael Flood of Norfolk first suggested establishing the new nursing site to help ease the growing shortage of nurses in the northeast corner of the state. "We're asking for a chance to make a difference," he told the Regents. "This is a big deal for us."

If established, the new nursing division could share facilities with the Northeast Community College in Norfolk, and would offer bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in nursing. The UNMC Nursing College's 500-mile campus has sites in Scottsbluff, Kearney, Lincoln and Omaha.

Campus facility changes approved

Changes will appear on the campus horizons of the University of Nebraska at Kearney and the University of Nebraska at Omaha thanks to approval of several facility requests.

UNK Chancellor Doug Kristensen presented a facilities plan for the Kearney campus identifying goals and planning concepts for the next decade, including: creation of new campus entrances, building renovations, landscaping improvements, changes in parking and the development of campus property. "UNK is a place of pride, and this plan reflects that pride," Kristensen said.

Regents also approved the addition of new student housing at UNO for apartment-suite style units that will accommodate up to 400 students on a site adjacent to University Village, as well as a new 600- to 900-vehicle parking structure in the same area. Both are expected to be available by the fall of 2008.

John Christensen, Interim Chancellor at UNO, said the new student housing effort marks an important milestone for the Omaha campus. "And we would like to move ahead as quickly as possible with this project."

News briefs

The Regents approved an official program statement and budget for the **Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation** at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. The new addition expands the Low Vision Clinic and establishes the only non-profit provider for comprehensive visual rehabilitative services in the region.

Regents approved a name change at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences to the **Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies** to better identify what students will study in the department.

The Regents passed a system-wide policy **prohibiting possession of concealed weapons and firearms** on university-controlled property, in university vehicles and at university-sponsored events. In 2006 the Nebraska Legislature passed into law the Concealed Handgun Permit Act which allows people with permits to carry concealed guns. The Act prohibited guns on "school property," however, last month the Attorney General determined that the university was not a "school" for purposes of this bill.