



The University of Nebraska Report from the Board of Regents

January 2010

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

University graduation rates improving; UNO, UNK above peers

Graduation rates on all three of the University of Nebraska's undergraduate campuses continue to improve, according to a Jan. 22 presentation to the Board of Regents.

Graduation rates measure the percentage of a cohort of full-time, first-time freshmen who earn a degree from the University of Nebraska within six years. The University of Nebraska at Omaha's 2008 graduation rate was 42.5%, compared to a peer average of 39.6%. The University of Nebraska at Kearney's rate was 58.6%, well above its peer average of 50.2%.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's graduation rate was 63.7%. While this was below UNL's peer average, UNL has improved significantly since 2002, when its rate was 54.4%.

UNL Chancellor Harvey Perlman cautioned that graduation rates do not take all factors into consideration. Students who transfer away from the University but still earn their degree from another school, for example, are not included. Nevertheless, Perlman said he remains "deeply committed" to improving UNL's rate.

The Board of Regents' accountability measure on graduation rates calls for each campus to reach or maintain its peer average.

Six-year graduation rates compared to peer institutions

<i>UNL</i>	<i>UNK</i>	<i>UNO</i>
2002: 54.4%	2002: 49.3%	2002: 31%
Peer average: 63.9%	Peer average: 48.3%	Peer average: 38.6%
2008: 63.7%	2008: 58.6%	2008: 42.5%
Peer average: 68.4%	Peer average: 50.2%	Peer average: 39.6%

Milliken highlights competitiveness initiatives

NU President J.B. Milliken added context to the graduation rates report by highlighting several national and local initiatives aimed at making the U.S. more competitive.

As one example, Nebraska recently submitted its application for the federal Race to the Top grant program. Included in the \$122.6 million application is a proposal to create the Nebraska Virtual School STEM Academy, which would allow Nebraska students – especially those at low-resource rural schools – to take online courses in the critical STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. The Academy would fall under UNL's Independent Study High School, which has offered classes since 1929.

Regents approve disposal of buildings at Innovation Campus

The Board of Regents approved the disposal of 14 buildings at Nebraska Innovation Campus. The buildings do not meet the needs of UNL's planned research and development campus.

Among the buildings slated for disposal are the Swine, Sheep & Goats Barn, the Exposition Building, the Auditorium and Ag Hall. Twenty-four additional smaller structures, including those that make up the Heritage Village, also are slated for disposal. The Industrial Arts Building is not scheduled for disposal at this time.

UNL will issue a request for proposals seeking bids from individuals or companies interested in moving the structures or demolishing them. Disposal of these structures will make way for Innovation Campus, the public-private research enterprise that will soon take shape at the 251-acre former fairgrounds.

Regents hear update on campus recruitment, retention efforts

Academic and recruitment officers from each of the University's campuses reported to the Board on efforts to recruit and retain students.

Charles Bicak, senior vice chancellor of academic and student affairs at UNK, noted faculty are more responsible than ever for recruiting students. Terry Hynes, senior vice chancellor of academic and student affairs at UNO, said it's important to help students develop a "sense of place" so they're more likely to stay and finish their degree.

Alan Cerveny, admissions dean at UNL, highlighted strategies to recruit out-of-state students. He said UNL has several "key markets" for recruitment, such as Sioux Falls, Kansas City and the Twin Cities, that will become even more critical as Nebraska's number of high school graduates falls.

News briefs

- The Board heard a presentation on outreach and economic development. Presenters included Pete Kotsiopoulos, vice president for university affairs; Wendy Birdsall, president of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce; Bradley Walker, president of Nanonation; David Brown, president and CEO of the Greater Omaha Chamber; and John Oliver, vice president of global applications at Interpublic Group. The business leaders agreed that more could be done to develop the "I-80 corridor" to improve collaboration between Lincoln and Omaha.

- Regents approved the collective bargaining agreement with the American Association of University Professors, the bargaining unit that represents UNO faculty. Over the biennium, faculty will receive pay increases of 5.84%, bringing them to the midpoint of their peers. The settlement results in about \$1 million less in personnel costs than would have been paid under a special master's order.

- The Board approved a ground lease agreement with the Suzanne and Walter Scott Foundation to provide 480 beds of student housing and related parking at UNO. Each new living unit in the four, three-story buildings will have four private bedrooms, two baths, a living room and kitchen.

- Regents approved an agreement to lease UNL facilities and provide housing and food services for 4,000 athletes, coaches, officials and sponsors for in the 2010 Special Olympic Games, which will be held in Lincoln in July.

- Regents approved a revised budget and schedule for the NanoScience Facility at UNL. UNL has won \$6.9 million in stimulus funds to help cover the cost of the facility.

- The Board's Business Affairs Committee OK'd design changes for a new \$16 million education center to be built at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis.

Regents elect Phares as chair, Whitehouse as vice chair

The Board of Regents elected Bob Phares to serve as chairman for 2010. Phares, of North Platte, has served on the Board since 2006 and represents District 7. He is president and owner of Phares Financial Services Inc. Phares replaces outgoing chair Kent Schroeder of Kearney.

Bob Whitehouse of Papillion was elected as vice chairman. Whitehouse, who represents District 4, has served on the Board since 2006 and is a retired principal of Bryan Senior High School in Omaha.