



The University of Nebraska Report from the Board of Regents

March 2011

A report from the March 2011 meetings of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

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President Milliken: Salary increases will help NU stay competitive

After two straight years without general salary increases for University of Nebraska faculty and staff, raises will be critical in the 2011-13 biennium to ensure NU remains competitive in the global market for talent, President James B. Milliken told the Board of Regents during its March 11 meeting.

Milliken said the operating budget that will be brought before the Board in June will include salary increases for faculty and staff – even though such an investment will require the university to make additional budget reallocations.

“We need to remain competitive, and I know the Board agrees with that,” Milliken said.

Faculty salaries on each of the four NU campuses lag behind their peer averages. The gap is especially significant at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and University of Nebraska Medical Center, where faculty do not engage in collective bargaining.

The 2010-11 operating budget included no funds for salary increases for faculty and staff not covered by collective bargaining agreements. The 2009-10 budget included a 1.5 percent salary pool to be used for merit and competitiveness purposes. Compensation for NU’s senior leadership has remained unchanged since 2008-09.

Board of Regents approve UNO’s move to Division I athletics

During a meeting March 25, the University of Nebraska Board of Regents unanimously approved a resolution authorizing the University of Nebraska at Omaha’s move to Division I athletics. UNO is scheduled to join The Summit League July 1 of this year.

In a presentation to the Board, UNO Athletic Director Trev Alberts and Chancellor John Christensen made clear that the move to Division I is in the best long-term financial interests of UNO. The Athletic Department has increasingly relied on tax and tuition support in recent years – an unsustainable model especially given that the university has faced significant cuts to academic programs over the past decade. The Summit League also is an excellent fit geographically and academically for UNO, Alberts said.

While the Board specifically voted on UNO’s athletic conference alignment, it was clear, per the recommendation from Alberts and Christensen, that a move to Division I would mean elimination of UNO football and wrestling. Neither sport is sponsored by The Summit League. UNO will honor the scholarships of all football and wrestling student-athletes in the hopes that they will complete their studies here, and advisers are assisting those who wish to transfer.

University of Nebraska research funding exceeding benchmarks, regents learn

Federal research awards at UNL and UNMC are far exceeding Board-approved benchmarks, and external support for research and scholarly activity at UNO also is surpassing the Board's goal, regents learned March 11.

Richard Hoffmann, NU associate vice president for academic affairs and research, told the Board that federal research funding to UNMC has increased by an average of nearly 27 percent each of the past three years – even though its metric was an average of less than 2 percent. Federal research funding to UNL, meanwhile, has increased by an average of more than 10 percent each of the past three years, more than double its metric. Together, the two campuses brought in \$186 million in federal research funding in FY2010; priority research areas include heart disease, cancer, water for food, energy, rural education, and other topics important to Nebraska.

External support for teaching, research and public service at UNO reached \$16.5 million last year, a 6.6 percent increase. UNO was recently classified as a doctoral/research university by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching – a reflection of the progress UNO has made in recent years in academics and research. Notable initiatives include the Nebraska Biomechanics Core Facility and a partnership with Kabul University that focuses on education of journalists and modernization of journalism in Afghanistan.

At the University of Nebraska at Kearney, external funding was \$1.7 million, a decrease from the previous year. Research at UNK improves teacher quality and engages students. About one-quarter of UNK undergraduates are involved in scholarly research mentored by a faculty member.

Regents approve naming of Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute

The Board of Regents approved the naming of the Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute, the university-wide research, education and policy analysis center that was established in 2010 with a \$50 million gift from the Robert B. Daugherty Charitable Foundation.

The Daugherty Institute is dedicated to the efficient and sustainable use of water to feed a rapidly growing global population. Daugherty, the legendary founder of Valmont Industries who became a leader in improving agricultural productivity, died in November 2010.

NU President James B. Milliken said, "It is because of Bob Daugherty that the Water for Food Institute exists. Naming the institute in Bob's honor is a sign of the university's deep appreciation for his vision and generosity, which will allow us to take a leadership role in the world in addressing one of the greatest challenges facing mankind: feeding more people with finite amounts of water."

Together with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Daugherty Institute will host the third annual Water for Food Conference May 1-4 in Lincoln.

News briefs

- The Board heard a presentation on the outlook for federal funding to the university. NU is watching budget developments in Congress closely, especially as they impact two areas: research and student financial aid. The budget bill enacted by the House in February reduces the maximum Pell Grant – the federal grant for low-income students – by \$845, and reduces funding to research agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation. Both the House and Senate also have enacted moratoriums on earmarks, which have historically funded important research projects at NU.
- The Board approved collective bargaining agreements for faculty at UNO and UNK. Faculty at UNO will receive salary increases of 1.1 percent and faculty at UNK will receive 1 percent raises each of the next two years.
- The Board approved a revised budget and scope for the UNL East Stadium expansion and the program statement for renovation of the Eppley Cancer Institute at UNMC.
- The Board thanked outgoing student regents Justin Solomon from UNL, Nathan Summerfield from UNK and Michael Crabb from UNO for their service. Regents also honored Board Corporation Secretary Donal Burns, who is retiring after 43 years at the university.