





## The George W. Norris Scholarship Lecture

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It is a pleasure to be here at the invitation of the Political Science faculty to present the George W. Norris Scholarship Lecture. This lecture celebrates a Nebraskan of great integrity and wisdom, and I am honored to be in some small way associated with him. I first became aware of Norris reading “Profiles in Courage,” where his presence was no doubt at a minimum suggested by another outstanding Nebraskan. I then read his autobiography “Fighting Liberal.” Perhaps a sign of how much times have changed; it’s hard to imagine that a successful Nebraska politician, especially one who spent most of his career as a Republican, would identify himself thus.

I am honored to join the list of distinguished speakers who, over the years, have been afforded the opportunity by this forum to address issues important to the University and our state. I hope you agree that my topic today, the active engagement of the University – its students, faculty and stakeholders – in the world outside the United States, is one such issue.

This is not, of course, a new issue. This University – including each of its constituent campuses – has a long and rich history of international engagement. Its faculty and administration have, for decades, recognized the ways in which diverse countries, cultures and languages enrich the lives of students, faculty and citizens. They also recognized the benefits that inure to our campuses and communities when we are successful in attracting talented students and faculty from all over the world.

But today is different. The world is increasingly interconnected, interdependent and dangerous. Technology has significantly reduced the traditional obstacles to international communication and

collaboration: time, distance and language. We have growing global markets for goods and services and unprecedented opportunities to collaborate to find solutions to global problems including hunger, disease and poverty. We are more vulnerable than ever to political volatility around the world, but hopefully in a better position than ever to build new partnerships that could reduce the risks of war and international terrorism.

The United States will continue to play a leading role in the world, and whether we do that wisely will depend in significant part on the education our citizens receive – an education that more than any time in history requires an understanding of the rest of our small planet.

### A Long History of Global Engagement

In the early 1950s, at a time of real concern for the future of democracy in southeastern Europe, Cliff Hardin – who was then chancellor of the University of Nebraska – offered the resources and talent of the University to help the government of Turkey build a stronger and more dynamic society. With significant support from the U.S. and Turkish governments, the University of Nebraska helped strengthen the existing Ankara University so that it could prepare effective leaders for the vital agricultural sector in Turkey.

The University then entered into a long-term effort to create a new university for the Turkish nation, away from the traditional centers of power. The new Ataturk University represented a public commitment to expand higher education’s benefits more widely, offered education to an underserved population and concentrated on improving agriculture and technology to help dramatically improve the economy.

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Nebraska’s efforts were among the critical initiatives taken in the 1950s and 1960s that transformed Turkey into a stable, reliable ally and a major trade partner, and moved the nation into the ranks of top world economies. We continue to have the opportunity, by leveraging our research and other intellectual resources, to have a similar impact in today’s developing economies, albeit on a much larger and more mutually beneficial scale.

In the 1960s, at this institution, faculty recognized the value of increasing students’ understanding of the world. One of the early leaders in global understanding at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, James Smith, brought a broad spectrum of experts in international diplomacy to Nebraska to discuss issues of global significance. Today, students, faculty and other Nebraskans continue to benefit from symposia and lectures on topics ranging from the world financial crisis to human rights and ethnic conflict, offered each year in conjunction with the James Smith Conference on World Affairs. There may be nothing more important that we can do for our students than to increase their awareness, interest, understanding and involvement in issues that will affect not only their families, their communities and their country, but also their world.

The work of Cliff Hardin and James Smith, and later the efforts of Ron Roskens and others to expand educational opportunities for students, scholarly and research activities of our faculty and exposure to our citizens, have helped build an international reputation for the University of Nebraska. Obviously this has not only – or even especially – been the work of institutional leaders. Its success depends on the commitment of our faculty and the wisdom of our graduates.

### **Distinguished Faculty in the Global Environment**

Today, relationships developed by NU faculty across four campuses reflect the increasing interconnectedness of the world of knowledge. For example, one of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s most prolific researchers, Charles Wood, director of the Nebraska Center for Virology, has developed extensive collaborative programs and facilities in Zambia and China.

His research focuses on HIV/AIDS and associated diseases, and is aimed at developing vaccines and therapeutics to treat these diseases wherever they are found. He is also training students and scientists in collaborative programs in Nebraska, the University of Zambia and Nankai University in China.

Agricultural engineers from the University of Nebraska are working with Chinese scientists to establish an experiment station and irrigation demonstration project. Others are partnering on international water research to develop a cyber infrastructure for global water research, a project funded by national science foundations in the U.S. and China.

The University of Nebraska Medical Center has established a joint MD/PhD program with Shanghai Jiaotong University School of Medicine – the only partnership of its kind between a U.S. medical center and a Chinese medical center. UNMC also manages the China-U.S. Joint Research Center for Life Science with the Chinese Academy of Sciences to pursue rigorously peer-reviewed joint research projects.

In India, we are developing a joint engineering doctoral program and collaborative research

with one of India’s top engineering schools. We also have an agreement with ICRISAT, the international crops research institute in India, to expand collaborative research programs and give plant science graduate students the opportunity to conduct research in that country.

Our faculty have built a strong reciprocal educational program with Indian institutions for students interested in information technology, developed an exemplary program to train teachers in Afghanistan and led biodiversity research in Brazil.

I was reminded of our place in the world this summer when I participated in the decennial UNESCO Global Higher Education Conference in Paris. I had arranged to meet the head of the International Hydrological Programme, which is the UN’s prominent center for water research, technology and policy. When I came into his office, he pointed to the galley proofs of a book he was just finishing. His co-author was Joe Szilagyi, one of our faculty members.

This collaborative work is critically important, not only because of the benefits it brings to the work of a scholar in his or her field, but because it increases the potential to find new knowledge and solve problems. Water research is a great example. The University of Nebraska has been conducting research in the management of water for agriculture for decades. The work that we have done has greatly increased the productivity of crops, influenced policy in several arenas including the use of agricultural chemicals, and helped farmers understand how irrigation and other water management techniques can increase their profits. That research, largely conducted in Nebraska, has global implications.



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By 2050, the world population will have increased 50 percent, from 6 billion to 9 billion, and the demand for food will have doubled. We are not yet prepared to deal with major problems associated with food security, an issue which has already been identified as a central focus of our foreign policy and national security agenda.

In May, I joined Jeff Raikes, the CEO of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – which has as one of its primary objectives addressing global hunger, especially in Asia and Sub-Sahara Africa – in inviting people from around the world to a conference at the University of Nebraska on Water for Food.

We invited experts from North America, Africa, South Asia and Pacific Asia to help us explore how our University might leverage its long-standing research and expertise in water to help address this issue – and we now hope to create a Global Water for Food Institute, involving faculty from all four campuses. This builds on work we are doing in climate change and drought, management of natural resources, water quality, crop productivity as well as legal and policy development to address one of the world’s most critical issues.

The potential benefits to the world are clear; the benefits to Nebraska are equally exciting: the opportunity to attract top talent and international investment, to tap into and leverage resources that are well beyond what we have at hand, and to put Nebraska technologies and research to work for the world.

#### **The Race for Talent**

The University can also take advantage of its reputation in this and other areas and leverage its position to attract students to our campuses.

Our country and Nebraska in particular can only benefit from success in attracting the most talented faculty and students from abroad. The United States remains the most popular education destination in the world, with record numbers of international students in 2008 – more than 600,000, including some 2,700 at the University of Nebraska. I am especially proud of the relationship that has developed between the Kearney community, the university and the 600 international students who have chosen to study here in heart of the Midwest.

And the demand for higher education is growing. Nearly 3 million students move around the world annually in search of higher education opportunities, and by 2025 nearly 8 million will be mobile seeking university-level education. Currently the U.S. attracts 20 percent of what has been a rapidly growing market, but other countries are investing heavily in education and are becoming increasingly attractive destinations for international study.

The quality of American higher education, and our commitment to academic freedom and open inquiry, are still our sharpest edge. We are the world’s leading knowledge society. However, the “new” large emerging economies of the world, along with many of the world’s traditional economic powerhouses, increasingly recognize the importance of developing native talent and creating a productive research environment at home rather than exporting talent and importing innovation.

China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have built or are building hundreds of new universities and are seeking to keep more of their students at home. China, Australia, Canada, the U.K. and Japan are recruiting

aggressively overseas for student talent to help enhance the quality and competition level in their universities and, in some cases, to make up for a declining population base. China and Europe also seek to lure back home scholars who have settled in the U.S.

Saudi Arabia’s new King Abdullah University of Science and Technology has been founded with the notion that it cannot achieve world-class status without recruiting globally for world-class student talent. States such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have built Education City and Knowledge Village to serve both their own populations and their non-citizen workforce, as well as students from other nations.

Add to these trends the facts that our post-9/11 student visa policies are perceived to be and sometimes are a barrier to increasing the talent flow, that our higher education costs stun many individuals who want to study here but are accustomed to largely government-supported “free” university education, and that our regulatory environment hinders post-graduate collaborative work and long-term residence in the United States. These factors will make it increasingly difficult to compete for international talent. But we are working aggressively to build new educational partnerships and exchanges in major countries.

#### **International Opportunities for Students**

The flipside of the dramatic growth of competition in higher education around the world is the opportunities it provides to our students and faculty. Many of our students have recognized the abundant opportunities available to them and are pursuing serious activities internationally with the help of our government, foreign governments and our faculty.



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This year, for example, one of our undergraduates in the field of biosystems engineering was awarded a RISE scholarship by Germany’s academic exchange agency, DAAD, to pursue significant research under the direction of an advanced German graduate student.

We have a recent University graduate who is intent on researching the development of the next generation of biofuels in Brazil and relating his findings to new breakthroughs possible with ethanol production here at home.

Another student is competing for the opportunity to research water management and economic development in Western China. Her long-range interests point to an international legal and regulatory career dealing with critical issues related to water, food, trade and technology.

Reflecting issues central to our state, other students are seeking scholarships related to agriculture, food safety and policy. One intends to join an international research group in Greece to better understand international agricultural trends and consumer preferences. This student is a great example of the value internships can play building toward an international career goal – last year she was the only U.S. intern working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in all of southwest China and then later interned in San Salvador.

UNK has achieved distinction in study abroad programs, for example providing leadership in developing and coordinating the Nebraska Study Abroad program in the Czech Republic, a distinguished faculty-led semester-long program, as well as an intensive Spanish program for students in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Service learning provides another opportunity to broaden the student experience. Some of our graduating seniors are applying to help high school and university students overseas better understand our society and communicate globally through English Teaching Assistantships programs sponsored by the Fulbright program. Service learning Fulbright students can also play an important role in places like metropolitan centers in Spain that have vulnerable recent immigrant populations from North Africa. Not only are these excellent opportunities for our students, but they are extraordinary diplomatic opportunities for our country.

#### **A Strategy for Global Engagement**

Four specific strategies will help advance our goals.

**First, we will offer every undergraduate at the University of Nebraska the opportunity for a meaningful academic experience abroad.**

Currently only about 15 percent of NU undergraduates study abroad. This is above the national average but below the rates among states leading in higher education attainment and among our peers and neighbors in Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas and Colorado. Also, much of our growth in overseas study is in short-term sojourns and informational travel rather than rigorous learning or active work overseas. An international experience is becoming an important part of a graduate’s portfolio and is increasingly valued by employers. In a new study by the Institute of International Education, 60 percent of CEOs responding reported that the hiring and promotion strategy of their companies acknowledges the importance of a study abroad experience.

It is important that we encourage students from more disciplines to pursue international study, that we promote longer and more meaningful international experiences, and that we encourage faculty to raise the bar for international engagement – in the classroom, in developing study abroad programs, in their own research and in scholarly activity.

This is not a frill or luxury, and it should not be reserved only for those whose families can afford it. To make this possible, we are seeking scholarship support that will extend this commitment to all our students. This is one of the key themes of our \$1.2 billion capital campaign, and I believe this is within our reach.

**Second, we intend to double international student enrollment at the University of Nebraska by our 150th anniversary in 2019** through better marketing, more opportunities and new scholarships and assistantships.

Our efforts to attract international students have a very direct economic component. The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates that higher education revenues from international students infused nearly \$15 billion into the U.S. economy in 2008. In Nebraska, the international student population in colleges and universities contributed an estimated \$80 million dollars to the state’s economy last year. But the real value is in the richness of the experience we gain by having students from Japan, India, Mexico and Africa on our campuses and in our communities. We need to offer our students – in the middle of the continent far from global capitals – the opportunities their peers elsewhere have. This includes daily exposure to students from other countries and cultures.



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Also, one of the best forms of diplomacy is educating people who will go back to their countries as leaders; leaders who understand the United States and have an affinity for this country and its institutions. When I traveled to Chile, I met the President, who had studied at the University of Maryland, and the Foreign Minister, who had studied at Wisconsin and still considered himself a “cheesehead.” They brought an entirely different level of understanding and depth of knowledge to our interactions than those leaders whose lives had not included international education.

In addition to the ambitious goal of attracting many more students to our campuses in Omaha, Lincoln and Kearney, we will add to this by offering a University of Nebraska education to thousands more students around the globe through Online Worldwide, our new university-wide global distance education initiative. We have an opportunity to use technology to leverage the Nebraska brand and quality to compete for the best students around the world in their own countries. Our promise – a University of Nebraska education...real professors, real courses – will not only allow us to increase revenue but also extend our brand in ways we could not otherwise.

**Third, we will significantly increase opportunities for our faculty to work abroad and collaborate with colleagues around the world.** As important as it is for our students to pursue international study and be exposed to international students on our campuses, it is equally important that our faculty live and do their scholarly work in the world of knowledge, which certainly doesn’t end at our borders. We must support faculty efforts that go beyond exchange programs and international visits to build relationships,

research collaborations and new, global approaches to mutually beneficial partnerships. There are opportunities available that we have not taken full advantage of, and as an institution we must also find ways to encourage and support our faculty’s efforts.

**Fourth, we will renew our commitment as an institution to work with countries and institutions around the world.** This not only serves the interests of the University and our state, but also our nation. We will focus on countries with well-developed higher education systems and economies that will allow collaborative relationships. In addition, we will develop strategic partnerships abroad in fields critical to mutual economic well-being. Foreign investment in Nebraska is crucial to the economy of our state; more than 400 foreign-owned companies employ some 20,000 Nebraskans across the state.

We will collaborate with nations with the greatest potential return on investment. We will also serve our nation’s interest through involvement in U.S.-sponsored work in the developing world where we have much to offer – agriculture, water, early childhood development and medicine come immediately to mind.

And finally, but certainly not last – and especially not last at a lecture named for George Norris – is the benefit to our democratic institutions. An educated citizenry is the lifeblood of a democracy, and as in no time in the past, that education requires a knowledge of and understanding of people around the world.

Our government cannot make wise policies if our citizens don’t make wise choices. how can we make wise choices about policies affecting our

relationships with the Middle East, Asia, Africa, South America unless we understand something of their history, their institutions, their culture and especially their people? This is the greatest benefit of the global engagement of the University of Nebraska: that our students will go into the world with a better understanding of that world than we have, and the decisions they make as citizens will be informed by that understanding.

These strategies support our goals of providing a 21st-century education, building a workforce second to none, developing the economy of the state, developing an educated citizenry, and contributing to health and stability in the world. We cannot achieve this through the entrepreneurial activities of individual faculty members – as admirable as that is – or the desire of a handful of students to experience international travel, or the episodic involvement of faculty in research and exchange projects.

I believe the University of Nebraska can be a leader but it will require the commitment, involvement, engagement, passion and resources of many.

Our faculty and students have, for decades, reached abroad on their own to add value to their academic disciplines and education. For nearly as long, the University of Nebraska has welcomed the infusion of intellectual talent, new ideas and opportunity for synergy that foreign students and faculty provide us. Over the next decade, we are committed to a new emphasis on and investment in global engagement. I believe it holds enormous promise for the future of our students and faculty, the university and the state.

