

THE STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA 2009  
*Leadership, Momentum, Opportunity*

JAMES B. MILLIKEN  
PRESIDENT

## INTRODUCTION

2008 – a year of unprecedented political and economic change – was also a year in which the University of Nebraska gained significant momentum and celebrated major accomplishments.

Enrollment rose for the fourth year in a row, with increases on every campus and in every category – first-time freshmen, undergraduates, graduate and professional students, international students, minority students and out-of-state students. And, with the highest-ever average ACT scores for incoming freshmen on each campus, it's clear we're making significant progress toward achieving our goal of attracting top students from within and outside the state.

Each of our campuses was recognized for academic excellence, with UNL being ranked among the top 40 public universities, UNK as a top-tier Midwestern masters level university, and UNO ranked first nationally in value-added education by the Council for Aid to Education. In addition, a number of UNO graduate programs in public affairs were nationally ranked, as were UNMC's rural health, primary care, internal medicine, physician assistant and physical therapy education programs. And a new ranking from US News, measuring a university's "popularity" based on the percent of admitted students who enroll, put UNL first in the nation among all public universities, and sixth among all universities.

The increasingly positive perception evidenced by steady growth in enrollment and reputation is also reflected in the dramatic increase in private support for the University during the past year – a record year in both funds raised and funds transferred to the University.

The progress continued in this last year has in turn fueled a physical transformation on each of our campuses. In 2008, we dedicated or broke ground for more than a dozen major new or renovated facilities to expand our teaching and research capacity and enhance student life.

We received significant new funding for research in key areas including cancer, agriculture, nanomedicine and early childhood education. Our total research expenditures dwarf those of just a few years ago, and we are among the top 30 public universities in America in R&D

activity. This is a rewarding recognition to be sure, but the true value is in the demonstrable benefits of this growth for the state of Nebraska.

In this regard, one of the most exciting developments of the past year was the approval by the legislature and Governor of our proposal to develop Innovation Campus, a 250-acre public-private R&D campus adjacent to our Lincoln campus. This initiative, possible now because of the impressive growth in research activity and the recognition of the University's role in fueling the innovation economy, has the potential to transform the University and significantly strengthen the state's economy as we pursue and foster new partnerships with the private sector.

The year ended with economic uncertainty and turmoil that is likely to have significant implications for the University of Nebraska and for the state. We will work together with the Governor and the Legislature to manage the fiscal impact in order to maintain the momentum achieved to date. This only increases the importance of our focus on and investment in areas of academic excellence in which we can be a national leader, contribute to our state's health and economy, and serve the people of Nebraska in ways that are more important than ever. Foremost among these objectives will be to continue to offer access to a high quality education at an affordable cost.

While the fiscal pressures on the University are challenging, I am confident that we will emerge from the current economic downturn a very strong University. We need only look at the tremendous achievements of 2008, and the momentum that has carried us into 2009, to know that while this is a University with a rich history and great traditions, our best days are ahead of us.

## **LEADERSHIP**

My optimism for the future of the University of Nebraska is based, in part, on the solid leadership we have seen from our governing board and on each of our campuses. The Board of Regents is fully engaged in providing leadership guided by our strategic framework, maintaining a focus on the accomplishment of six overarching goals: affordable access, high quality academic programs, focused research excellence, workforce development, engagement with the state and accountability. The elected members have served, collectively, for 66 years – led by retiring member Dr. Charles Wilson of Lincoln, whose 18 years of service and leadership have been exemplary. We welcome Chuck's replacement on the Board, Tim Clare, who won a seat in November's election.

Our chancellors and their leadership teams are dedicated to achieving the unique mission of their campus. They have built strong relationships with their communities, and provided valuable outreach to citizens across the state. Each is fully committed to enriching the lives of our students, building and sustaining a talented faculty, growing our research enterprise,

hiring highly capable administrators, and providing transparent and responsible financial management.

During 2008, three new vice chancellors joined the administrative teams on their campus. At UNO, Terry Hynes was named senior vice chancellor for academic and student affairs, and Bill Conley was named vice chancellor for business and finance. Terry formerly served as dean and professor in the College of Journalism at the University of Florida. Bill is a UNO alumnus who has extensive business experience in Omaha, including several executive positions with the *Omaha World-Herald*.

The newest addition to the UNK administrative team is Charles Bicak, who was named senior vice chancellor for academic and student affairs. Charlie is a highly regarded former UNK faculty member and department chair who most recently served as dean of the School of Natural Sciences at St. Edwards University in Austin, Texas. These new senior leaders bring great academic and business experience to the University.

In January I hired Joel Pedersen as vice president and general counsel, replacing Richard Wood who retired in December 2007. Joel served in the Lincoln city attorney's office before joining our staff as associate general counsel in 2006. His leadership with the Antelope Valley Project, the largest public works project in Lincoln's history, will serve the University well as he provides guidance for the development of Innovation Campus and other public/private partnerships.

And, the record-setting year in fund-raising and support of the University achieved by the University of Nebraska Foundation is a tribute to the leadership provided by Terry Fairfield, who retired in 2008 as CEO of the foundation after 21 years of service, and Clarey Castner, who has served as president for the past three years and now succeeds Terry as CEO.

During Terry's tenure, the assets of the Foundation increased from \$175 million to \$1.6 billion, and he led the successful Campaign Nebraska from 1993-2000 in which more than \$727 million was raised for student scholarships, faculty support, facilities and programs. Under Terry's last year as CEO, the Foundation raised a record \$166 million and transferred \$130 million to the University – not just a record, but 50 percent above the previous high. The Foundation is among the top 20 U.S. public universities in the size of its endowment. Clarey has spent his career with the Foundation and is very well prepared to lead its talented group of professionals and volunteers in the years ahead.

## **MOMENTUM**

The University of Nebraska Strategic Framework includes specific targets and measurements for each of the six goals, and those metrics provide compelling evidence of the significant

momentum that we have enjoyed over the past several years, and that we continue to enjoy as we move into 2009.

### **AFFORDABLE ACCESS**

Our increasing enrollment can be attributed to a variety of factors, including more sophisticated and aggressive student recruiting strategies, a highly competitive cost of attendance, outstanding specialized academic programs and honors programs, and stellar faculty. The most important factors include one that is largely invisible outside the University and one that is highly visible. Several years ago we changed the way we allocate campus budgets to provide meaningful incentives for growth, and we initiated a pattern of moderate and predictable changes in tuition.

New initiatives such as the Metropolitan Advantage Program, which allows students in three western Iowa counties the opportunity to attend UNO and Omaha-based UNL programs at 150 percent of resident tuition, have been part of a successful entrepreneurial approach to increasing enrollment. This year was our first with this new tuition incentive, and we look forward to additional significant growth from western Iowa in the years ahead.

Another important factor is our commitment to providing need-based aid and making the promise of affordable access a reality for more Nebraska students. In November, Gov. Heineman joined me for a statewide launch of our expanded tuition assistance program, Collegebound Nebraska. Our message to the nearly 5,000 students with whom we met and the many others who received information about the initiative was simple: college is affordable, attainable and an important goal for every high school student in Nebraska. We introduced them to the Collegebound Nebraska promise – that any Nebraska resident undergraduate student who meets our admission requirements and is eligible for a federal Pell Grant can attend the University of Nebraska and pay no tuition.

In addition, many students whose family income is just beyond Pell eligibility now also qualify for free tuition. While eligibility depends on a number of factors, a general guideline is that family of four with one student in college and a family income of \$45,000 or less now qualifies for our promise of a tuition-free undergraduate education for up to five years. In addition, most students who qualify for this program receive thousands of dollars in other aid to help cover the cost of fees, books and room and board. We have plans to further expand Collegebound Nebraska in the future, with the goal of extending it to all families at or below the median family income in Nebraska.

In 2008-09, nearly 4,300 students across the University received funds through Collegebound Nebraska – more than \$3.5 million. More than 220 of those students qualified under the newly expanded income guidelines, and we believe that number will increase significantly as more Nebraskans learn about this program.

Many other financial aid resources are available to Nebraska students, one of the most notable of which is the new Thompson Scholars Program sponsored by the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation. This program includes scholarship funds of up to \$3,200 per semester for any qualifying student, a \$400 allowance for books, and the opportunity to participate in a Thompson Learning Community at UNL, UNO or UNK. We worked with the Buffett Foundation to develop this exciting program in which students in Thompson Learning Communities take certain courses together and receive additional tutoring and mentoring to help ensure their success in college.

One of the keys to retaining these first-generation and lower-income students is an effective first year program, and we believe the Thompson Learning Communities can be a national model. University-wide, more than 500 students received Buffett scholarships in the fall of 2008, up from 275 in the fall of 2007, and 252 of those students are part of the new freshman class in the learning communities. This is one of the most generous private foundation programs in the country and it's making the promise of a college education come true for thousands of Nebraskans.

The Building Bright Futures initiative in Omaha, which seeks to increase students' chance for success through early childhood education, academic support through K-12, reducing truancy and drop-out rates, and supporting college going, is gaining national attention. In July, Dick Holland, the chair of Building Bright Futures, and I were asked by the U.S. Secretary of Education to address a national summit on access, affordability and accountability.

Another important access initiative that we have expanded this year is our engagement with Nebraska high schools, including the Kearney Bound! program, which was expanded in 2008 to include two Kearney high schools, and UNL's College Prep Academy, which now has a program at Omaha North Magnet School. These pilot programs are designed to give academically promising low-income or first-generation students and their parents the tools they need to be successful in going to college: college-prep classes starting in their sophomore year in high school, mentoring and tutoring, special programs for parents and campus visits. Students who successfully complete the program, including maintaining a 3.0 grade point average, receive full tuition, fees, and room and board at the sponsoring campus.

These programs complement many other outreach efforts on the part of every campus to attract qualified students from across the state. If determined to be successful, and all indications now are that they will be, we plan to expand the programs in ways that reach more Nebraskans and increase the opportunities of academy students to attend one of our campuses.

Nebraska's changing demographics only increases the importance of affordable access to higher education as a key to our state's economic future. Our Latino and African-American

populations are the fastest-growing segments, and these are also the populations with, historically, the lowest participation in post-secondary education. In November, Nebraska voters approved Initiative 424, which bans public education institutions, among others, from giving preference to an individual on the basis of gender, race, national origin or ethnicity. We are reviewing University policies and programs to determine whether there will be changes in some of our access efforts. What will not change is our commitment to increasing the diversity of our campuses, including our student body, faculty and staff, and to developing programs that help meet the workforce needs of our state. The Board of Regents has been on record for decades in support of efforts to increase diversity in the student body and among faculty and staff, and reaffirmed this goal following the adoption of Initiative 424.

### **PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS**

The legislature's decision to transfer State Fair Park in Lincoln to the Board of Regents for the development of Innovation Campus is a truly remarkable development with dramatic implications. The Nebraska State Fair will move to Grand Island, where new facilities and strong community support and investment have the potential to revitalize the fair and make it successful and accessible to people across the state. We will take possession of the 250 acres in just one year, and planning is under way for the property. A request for information issued in July elicited significant interest from the development community, and in December a request for proposals was released to engage consultants to develop a master plan for development.

The potential for Innovation Campus is enormous, and it is the culmination of ambitious plans that involved studying relevant R&D developments across the country and especially the Centennial Campus in North Carolina. We involved the Governor, business leaders, members of the Board of Regents and campus leaders in visits to Centennial Campus to study its planning and development. Innovation Campus is envisioned as a two-thirds private, one-third public research and development campus that will offer opportunities for collaboration between the University, government and the private sector, increase multi-disciplinary, multi-campus collaborations, and allow students and faculty to interact on a daily basis with business leaders, entrepreneurs, government and private researchers, and University colleagues in new and innovative ways.

We believe this will facilitate new partnerships such as the one forged this year with Nestle Purina, which included the creation of a new major in food technology for companion animals (the first in the nation), scholarship support from Nestle for students in the program, internships with the company, and research collaborations with UNL's Food Processing Center.

Plans advanced to locate a new federal Agricultural Research Service facility on Innovation Campus, creating new opportunities for research in crop genetics and renewable energy among University and government researchers and private sector businesses. This effort to locate a federal lab as the first – and a very significant – partner in Innovation Campus has been championed by Senator Ben Nelson.

We are also participating in the rapid progress of Aksarben Village in Omaha. This mixed-use development is revitalizing central Omaha, and will be complemented by further development of University property on over 70 acres south of the village and Center Street, which will mean that UNO's expanded campus will essentially surround this new urban village. Our students and faculty will benefit from having new restaurants, coffee shops, theatres and businesses as a functioning part of the campus.

UNO is already home to a great example of collaboration and public-private partnership – the Peter Kiewit Institute, which houses UNO's College of Information Science and Technology and UNL's Omaha-based engineering programs.

PKI was created over a decade ago and this year we undertook a comprehensive internal and external review of the institute to determine how to take it to the next level of excellence. A team of outstanding business and academic leaders from The Washington Advisory Group conducted the external review and made recommendations that are reflected in a new charter for PKI that was adopted by both the PKI Board of Policy Advisors and the Board of Regents in June.

The review team noted that the institute had made impressive progress in its first decade and is a “poster child” for partnership between the business community and the University. To reach the next level of accomplishment, we will identify a few key areas in which we can be a national leader in research, expand the financial base to attract additional outstanding faculty, increase the number of graduates in information science and technology, develop deeper strategic partnerships with organizations and corporations that are important economic drivers in the region and strengthen collaboration among programs and campuses.

The first major step in this process is to hire an executive director and chief science officer who will report to the Office of the President and whose task will be to lead the development and implementation of a strategic plan for the next generation of success at PKI. That search is now under way and should be concluded during the spring 2009 semester.

## **RESEARCH**

The University extended its success in the research arena in 2008, winning major grants in areas that are important in Nebraska and throughout the world, and continuing to develop an infrastructure that will help us accomplish goals for research growth set by the Board. A

successful research enterprise depends in part on careful planning to ensure adequate capacity, state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, and both public and private support. These investments, in turn, allow us to attract top faculty who are key to sustaining momentum. We made major strides in these areas in 2008.

The second Durham research tower at UNMC is nearing completion, and UNL's expanded capacity includes space for university-wide virology research in the new Ken Morrison Center, investment in the renovation of the Whittier building to house the Center for Energy Sciences Research, and planning for Innovation Campus. Facilities renovated through LB 605, which matches state funds to University funds, support research in agriculture, animal health, cancer, and atomic physics, materials and nanoscience. Faculty working in these areas are among the best in the nation, and their success in attracting funding is significant.

Competitive grants contributed to a record \$106 million in external funding for research at UNL and continued success at UNMC in key areas such as nanomedicine, for which a \$10.6 million NIH grant was received in October, and pancreatic cancer, the subject of a \$5.3 million National Cancer Institute grant. UNMC also received seven grants totaling \$12 million to continue important work in neurodegenerative diseases including Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

A five-year \$8.1 million grant to UNL for the Materials Research Science and Engineering Center will also contribute new knowledge in the increasingly important field of nanotechnology. The Center's research has applications in advanced computing, data storage and energy production.

We continue to build our reputation for science and mathematics education, as three recent grants demonstrate. UNL received a \$9.3 million grant from the National Science Foundation to build on its successful "Math in the Middle" project designed to improve math skills among elementary school students – ensuring that Nebraska kids are better prepared to succeed in high school, college and the workforce. Elementary classrooms will also be enhanced by a \$2.5 million NSF grant to develop a robotics-based curriculum to help teach math, science and engineering – a project of UNL engineering faculty located at the Peter Kiewit Institute. And, the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources won a \$2.5 million grant to expand its robotics and GPS curriculum used by Nebraska 4-H to a national audience.

Another major success was an \$8.7 million award from the US Department of Health and Human Services to UNL to establish a regional center that will work with federal, state and tribal agencies to improve the quality and effectiveness of child welfare services in 10 states including Nebraska.



Other funding of note includes an \$3.8 million National Science Foundation grant to UNL directed at increasing efforts to recruit and retain women faculty in science, technology, engineering and math; a \$2.4 million grant to UNO for the BattleSpace project – collaboration science relating to the military, and a National Science Foundation grant to UNO to develop a bioinformatics curriculum.

Research success isn't just about grants awarded, of course – it's also about how research can be leveraged to create knowledge, innovation and jobs. Collaboration between medical and engineering faculty, for example, is leading to new types of medical equipment and procedures. University research also helps inform public policy discussions, such as UNO's in-depth research on the economic impact of immigrants in Nebraska, UNL's research on bullying, which is now featured in an online resource for parents at education.com, and research on responsible use of water, which is vitally important not just in Nebraska but across the globe.

Research also creates unmatched opportunities for students to work alongside faculty, enhance their employment prospects and make meaningful contributions in their field even before they graduate. This is a priority on each of our campuses.

### **BUILDING HIGH QUALITY ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

The quality of students we are able to attract to the University of Nebraska is a direct result of the quality of our academic programs and the faculty who teach them. In 2008, we built on the success of the J.D. Edwards program with the establishment of the Jeffrey S. Raikes School of Computer Science and Management. This school, like the Peter Kiewit Institute, is poised for national prominence. Both focus on providing excellent faculty, opportunities for students to gain real world experience, and guidance from outstanding lay boards. Jeff Raikes, a Nebraska native and former Microsoft executive, had long been involved with the J.D. Edwards Program as an active member of its advisory board. Establishing the Raikes School is a fitting tribute to his commitment to and significant financial support of the school. In May, Jeff was selected to lead the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the world's largest philanthropy.

This year, the average ACT score of freshmen entering the Raikes School was 32.8 – these are truly among the best students from across Nebraska and the U.S., and I believe the program will only get stronger. In November, a team of three students from the Raikes School bested more than 200 teams to win the regional competition of the Intercollegiate Programming Contest, and will head for the world finals in Stockholm this spring.

Students on every campus also continue to excel individually, to win awards in regional and national competitions and to participate in research. Honors programs offer students advanced coursework in a challenging academic environment.

We also have a group of students who have rarely, if ever, been on our campuses – the rapidly growing number of distance education students. Distance education holds tremendous promise for enhancing the lives of Nebraskans, extending the reach and reputation of the University of Nebraska far beyond the borders of the state, and increasing revenue to the University. We believe we can have a competitive edge in a burgeoning market: courses taught online by the same professors who teach in the classroom, opportunities for collaboration among students and professors, challenging courses that are fresh and relevant, and a commitment to being responsive to student needs.

In 2008, we made significant progress toward bringing our 60+ degree programs and 1000+ courses under a single umbrella, a project that is moving forward with great collaboration among the campuses and under the leadership of a university-wide team led by Arnold Bateman, who directed UNL's distance education programs for many years.

This ambitious new strategy will include “communities of practice,” each led by a different campus, which will identify strategies for better serving students, enhancing and sharing revenue, developing more collaborative programs, and effectively leveraging the new Student Information System for distance students. A new marketing plan to position University of Nebraska distance education in a growing regional, national and international marketplace is underway.

Whether students are in the classroom, the community, the clinic, online or in the laboratory, the quality of their education depends on a great faculty. We are fortunate to have faculty members like Donna Dufner at UNO and Theresa Wadkins at UNK, winners of the 2008 Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Award, or OTICA. Donna was recognized for her creative approaches to involving students in the community through service learning, and Theresa was honored for mentoring undergraduate students involved in research projects and her creative approaches to teaching psychology.

The University-wide Departmental Teaching Award this year went to UNMC's Department of Family Medicine, which plays a major role in Nebraska's health care delivery. The department maintains clinical instruction sites in more than 40 Nebraska communities and teaches more than 600 pre-medical students, medical students, residents and family practitioners across the state each year. Nebraska ranks first in the nation in the percentage of its physicians who were educated in the state, and this department deserves a great deal of credit for its leadership in health care education.

We also honor outstanding faculty in research with the ORCA (Outstanding Research and Creative Activity) award, the University's highest award for excellence in research. In 2008, Fred Luthans of UNL was honored for his decades of work in Organizational Behavior, a core part of virtually every business school curriculum, and Vladimir Gladyshev was

recognized for his work in biochemistry and bioinformation at the Redox Biology Center – one of UNL’s premier research programs, which he directs.

Also worthy of note is the selection of Dr. Prem Paul, Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development at UNL, as a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Under Prem’s leadership, UNL has enjoyed tremendous growth in competitive funding for research, and he has helped create a climate in which research is highly valued and celebrated.

### **OUTREACH TO NEBRASKANS**

In 2008, we continued our emphasis University-wide on entrepreneurship. We developed a new website featuring a wealth of resources for entrepreneurs and hosted Carl Schramm, CEO of the Kaufmann Foundation, to keynote our annual Entrepreneurship Summit. The Kaufmann Foundation is the world’s largest foundation that focuses on entrepreneurship, and the summit drew some 300 successful and aspiring entrepreneurs, faculty and funders together to share mutually beneficial ideas and information. This conference was complemented by the annual Research and Innovation Conference that we co-sponsor with BioNebraska and EPSCoR Nebraska, showcasing new research in engineering and science that will help build a foundation for Nebraska’s innovation economy.

The University also supports and participates in a variety of educational programs on issues of importance to Nebraska, including the annual open house at the Gudmundsen Ranch in the Sandhills, where new agricultural research is showcased for area farmers and ranchers, and the Climate Change Conference, held in North Platte, with its important focus on sustainability of natural resources. By bringing together University and government researchers, farmers and ranchers, policy makers and organizational leaders, we can begin to address the issues of alternative energy and sustainable use of our natural resources.

These are critical issues for the future of our state and nation, and this is an area in which the University has an opportunity to lead by example. To be good stewards of the environment, we must ensure that sustainable practices are integrated into our building designs. To that end, I issued a Sustainable Design Policy requiring that all new buildings be LEED-certifiable, and I am encouraging sustainability initiatives on each campus.

One of the important ways in which the University has always connected with the people of the state is through the arts, and this year marked the second visit of Presidential Professor Enrique Martínez Celaya to our state. A renowned painter, sculptor and poet, Professor Martínez Celaya worked with students and faculty at UNO in the fall, and will return to Omaha the spring of 2009. He also presented well-received public lectures at Kaneko, an “open space for creativity” in downtown Omaha that combines the arts, science and philosophy. This was part of a new partnership between Kaneko and the University, which

includes an exciting UNO library development in Kaneko that will create a new place for our students and other members of the community to participate in this creative endeavor. The lectures that Professor Martínez Celaya has presented as part of his Presidential Professorship will be published to provide a wider audience access to his unique perspectives.

Scottish artist Mark Gilbert concluded a two-year term as artist in residence at UNMC in 2008. His work included painting portraits of patients and their caregivers and teaching medical residents observational skills by using techniques drawn from the arts. The portraits, which now comprise an exhibit called “Here I Am and Nowhere Else: Portraits of Care,” demonstrate the powerful connection between art and medicine.

Other public lectures and forums on each of our campuses provided an opportunity for students, faculty and people across the state to hear from world leaders and to engage in the democratic process, with programs like UNO’s Debate Watch 2008 and “Democracy Matters” forum, UNK’s Conference on World Affairs, and UNL’s E.N. Thompson Forum.

## **GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT**

An area of increasing importance to the University is global engagement – the opportunity for students and faculty to participate in meaningful international experiences, including study abroad, international internships and service learning opportunities, and research and scholarly exchanges. It is an essential skill for students in the 21st century to have an understanding of the world in which they will live and work. Today, a relatively small percentage of our students study abroad and we plan to increase that number significantly. We have the highest number of international students in our history, and we also have a goal of increasing that significantly – both to accomplish key educational priorities and to enhance revenue and build relationships.

In 2008, we forged a number of new international partnerships, and as we pursued those it became apparent that this University is well known and well regarded internationally. UNMC established a joint M.D./Ph.D. program with Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, the first such partnership between a U.S. and Chinese institution, and created the Research Center for Life Sciences in collaboration with the Chinese Academy of Sciences. UNL expanded its partnerships with two Chinese universities, allowing students to take their first two years of study in China, study English with UNL faculty, and complete their degree here.

International relationships are also important for the state, and in September the University joined with the Governor, the Department of Economic Development and the Nebraska Diplomats to host a Reverse Trade Mission, bringing more than 100 business leaders from China, Japan and Brazil to Nebraska to explore investment opportunities, emerging technology, agriculture and potential business and research partnerships. We believe

Nebraska has the workforce, educational resources and business opportunities to appeal to a broad range of international interests.

Another contingent of international guests came to Nebraska in June when UNMC became the first US host of the International Student Research Forum, drawing students from China, Japan, Australia and Russia.

In April, I had the opportunity to deliver the keynote address at the annual conference of European Fulbright directors in Athens about the competitiveness challenges the United States faces, the important role that universities play in meeting these challenges and the quality of American educational institutions. My goal was to encourage greater participation of international students and faculty at universities, such as the University of Nebraska, which have historically not participated at high levels. I am optimistic about strengthening these relationships in the coming years.

Our global engagement also includes the work of faculty whose research in every corner of the world has implications for critical social, health and environmental issues: AIDS/HIV, climate change, world hunger, education and drought. Our Fulbright faculty scholars are pursuing research in Belgium, South Africa, Denmark, India, Norway and Namibia. Other initiatives include UNO's Afghan Teacher Education Project, which is helping rebuild the educational system in Afghanistan, and UNL's Confucius Institute, which provides opportunities for Nebraskans to learn more about Chinese language and culture and has organized a trip to China for Nebraska educators.

## **FACILITIES**

Our momentum is both reflected in and fueled by the remarkable new facilities that are transforming our campuses. During 2008, we broke ground for Mammel Hall, which will house UNO's College of Business Administration near the Peter Kiewit Institute on the expanded UNO campus. The proximity of these two facilities to each other and to Aksarben Village will make this area of campus a center for interaction between students, faculty and businesses. We are grateful to Carl and Joyce Mammel for the lead gift making this new facility possible. At UNO, we also dedicated a new home for the College of Public Affairs and Community Service, bringing all of the College's programs together under one roof for the first time.

The dedication of UNMC's Michael Sorrell Center for Health Sciences Education in June marked the opening of a state-of-the-art facility for educating the next generations of health care professionals. Again, Ruth and Bill Scott were instrumental in providing support for the center, which they asked to have named in honor of an outstanding UNMC physician. The new facility allowed us to increase enrollment in the College of Medicine for the first time in 30 years – an important contribution to Nebraska's growing need for medical professionals.

In October, we broke ground for an addition to the College of Nursing Omaha campus, also funded by the Scotts, which will help address Nebraska's projected shortages of nurses and nursing faculty.

We also broke ground for a new building for the College of Public Health and announced that the facility would be named for Chancellor Harold Maurer and his wife Beverly. This building is another example of Ruth and Bill Scott's beneficence and interest in recognizing difference makers within the University. The College will play a critical role in research, education and policy development on a wide range of issues important to Nebraskans and will provide impetus for our goal of achieving Comprehensive Cancer Center status for the Eppley Cancer Institute.

UNMC's work in the area of aging and geriatric medicine will have a new home in the Home Instead Center for Successful Aging, a \$10.2 million facility funded entirely by private donations, led by Paul and Lori Hogan, founders of Home Instead. The center is being built next to the Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation, a gift led by Alice and Bob Williamson, which was dedicated in May.

At UNL, we dedicated two major facilities on East Campus. The International Quilt Study Center and Museum, funded principally with a gift from Robert and Ardyce James, is drawing interest from scholars and quilting enthusiasts around the world; its contributions to the state's economy were recognized with the 2008 Nebraskaland Rising Star Tourism Award. And the Ken Morrison Life Sciences Research Center, made possible by a gift from Ken Morrison, which houses the \$21 million Nebraska Virology Center, brings much-needed research space to UNL and provides a new home for collaborative research in plant and human virology.

On the city campus, the Jackie Gaughan Multicultural Center is under construction. This \$8.7 million facility is a partnership between the Gaughan family and UNL students, who voted to share the cost. With the student union next door, the center will be a hub of campus activity, providing space for faculty, staff and students dedicated to diversity and multi-cultural programming.

UNK's campus continues to be transformed by new residence halls, including Nester Hall, which was dedicated in May and fittingly named in honor of Bill Nester, the last president of Kearney State College and first chancellor of UNK. Both the University community and the Kearney community are proud of what has become a centerpiece of the city, with promising new development adjacent to the campus on the horizon.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

A number of initiatives have been undertaken to ensure accountability to the many entities that provide resources to the University: students and their families, taxpayers, donors, private industry and state and federal governments.

One of the major initiatives is an historic new partnership between the University of Nebraska and the Nebraska State College System to better serve our students through implementation of a single Student Information System. This partnership was proposed by the University and supported by the Governor and the Legislature as an opportunity to save money on implementation and long-term operation of this \$30 million system, and to spur additional collaboration between the University and the State Colleges.

In September, after a lengthy process of study, review and negotiation, a committee including representatives of all campuses and the state colleges recommended, and the Board of Regents approved, the selection of a new system, which will go live in the fall of 2009. The system will manage the entire student experience, from recruitment to financial aid, registration, housing and tuition, with flexibility for upgrades and new applications that were no longer going to be supported by the previous vendor. The legislature provided initial funding toward the purchase of the system; funding additional acquisition costs and operating costs will be a challenge in this fiscal climate, and we will continue to work with the legislature and the governor to ensure a smooth transition to the new system.

A new accountability initiative directed to potential students and their families is led by the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). The College Portrait offers consistent, comparable and transparent information on colleges and universities across the country. Unlike more subjective rankings (i.e. US News), the College Portrait provides clear information on the cost of attendance, student engagement and important educational outcomes. I am proud that the University of Nebraska was one of the first multi-campus systems to participate in this program, and our campus profiles can be viewed at [www.collegeportrait.org](http://www.collegeportrait.org).

One of the outcomes that was measured nationally this year was “value added education” – that is, how much a University improves its students’ intellectual ability between freshman year and graduation. The Council for Aid to Education, which administers the assessment, reported in August that the university that ranked highest among 176 participants in the study was the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

The Board of Regents demonstrates its commitment to accountability at every meeting, reviewing progress against metrics established in the Strategic Framework in 16 key areas, from student achievement to enrollment growth to fiscal responsibility. In addition, the Board also expanded and strengthened the University’s internal audit function this year.

## **OTHER 2008 HIGHLIGHTS**

One of the signature events of 2008 was the kickoff of the celebration of UNO's centennial. What began in 1908 as a single square block municipal University with 26 students is now a thriving metropolitan campus that offers students excellent academic programs taught by outstanding faculty, a diverse campus environment and an incredibly bright future. With its strong leadership, relationships with the business community, private support and location in the heart of the city, UNO is well-positioned for its next 100 years.

We have also undertaken a new university-wide campaign to raise our profile in a very positive way – with the cooperation of one of Nebraska's best-known citizens and one of our most successful alumni, Warren Buffett. Visitors to Omaha who arrive at Eppley Airport can see billboards carrying his advice, as originally delivered to UNL College of Business students in 2006, to "invest in yourself." Other ads feature Buffett with Bill Gates and an image of a share of Berkshire Hathaway stock and a University of Nebraska diploma with the tagline: "It's only paper."

The University's ads made a splash during the Berkshire Hathaway annual meeting, which brings some 30,000 high-income guests to the city, and during other high-profile events including the College World Series and U.S. Olympic Swim Trials.

## **OPPORTUNITY**

The year ended with a mixture of concern about the financial forecast and measured optimism built on the University's current position of strength. On December 1, I sent a message to all faculty and staff citing economic conditions and their impact on higher education and asking that everyone use the remaining seven months of the fiscal year to prepare for the potential of reduced resources in the next biennium. At the same time, I emphasized our considerable accomplishments and my resolve that the University continue to invest in strategic priorities. It is too important to the future of the state and our citizens that we continue our momentum.

Looking ahead, we plan to advance a number of initiatives this year including increasing our global engagement, positioning and building our online presence, implementing the student information system, and expanding Collegebound Nebraska and other initiatives to achieve increased access.

Affordable access to a high quality education will continue to be among our highest priorities. The number of students who received Collegebound Nebraska funding, Thompson Scholarships and other financial aid this year is encouraging – but we must do more. We will continue to work with donors, private foundations and the state and federal governments to



direct financial aid to ensure that students who meet our admission requirements will have the opportunity to succeed.

We will also look at ways to expand and improve programs that engage with high school students to provide a greater chance of success in college. We are very pleased with the campus-based high school academies developed by UNK and UNL, and we believe students who successfully complete requirements for programs such as these should have the option of attending the NU campus that best fits their needs and interests. This should be a basis for new programs.

We believe that one way to help some prospective University students prepare for success is to work with Nebraska's community colleges, which serve more than 40,000 students. Early in 2009, we will introduce an exciting new initiative to ease the transition from community college to the University, with both academic and financial aid.

It is also important that all students, regardless of means, understand the costs of college and how they can avoid the sizeable debt with which many students leave college. One approach is to offer – or perhaps require – programs that increase the financial literacy of our students and give them better tools for managing their finances. Our campuses have each put programs in place, but it seems appropriate to address this in a more systemic way. We hope to partner with other Nebraska institutions to accomplish this goal.

We live in a time in which college graduates can no longer be considered educated without an understanding of the world outside our borders. I am convinced that an important part of this education should include greater exposure to other peoples and cultures, both on our campuses and abroad.

Beginning in 2009, we will advance a plan to increase significantly the number of undergraduate students who have the opportunity to study abroad, the number of international students studying on our campuses, and the opportunities for faculty to participate in programs such as the Fulbright. The life-changing experience of studying in another country is so important to the global and cultural literacy of students and their ability to compete in the future. This will require resources, and my goal is that we can raise the funds to double the number of students who study abroad in five years. During that same period, I hope we can also increase significantly the number of international students who study on our campuses. By 2020, I expect every undergraduate at the University of Nebraska to have the opportunity to study abroad.

We are putting in place ambitious plans for a number of outstanding University of Nebraska programs that are important to the state and the world. These include the disciplines involved in early childhood education, water research and policy, agriculture and life sciences research and education, cancer research and treatment, our valuable niche in information technology

and business and our new school in architectural engineering and construction. We have premier programs in these areas and plans for them to be international leaders.

Early childhood education is a rapidly growing area of national importance. We have strengths on each campus, including a leading child development laboratory in its 80<sup>th</sup> year, well over 100 courses relating to early childhood development, medical and social programs, a new center on child health in the College of Public Health and on-line programs for practicing professionals. We have the opportunity to be the leader in education, training and certification of early childhood professionals, and in research and graduate programs.

Our Water Center is arguably a top five program in the nation – and we hope to create a global water institute that will lead the world in basic and applied research, education and policy analysis relating to the agricultural use of water, which represents 86 percent of the consumptive use of water worldwide. No other university is as well positioned to take on leadership in this important area.

The importance of our cancer research is clear – one of every two Americans will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. We have existing strengths at the Eppley Cancer Center as an NCI-designed center, and important collaborations between Eppley and the campuses, such as the Redox Biology Center and Virology Center at UNL, bioinformatics and social work at UNO, and faculty and graduate student research partnerships with UNK. Our new College of Public Health will also play a key role in cancer epidemiology and population science, complementing existing strengths in lymphoma, breast cancer and pancreatic cancer.

We will not be satisfied until we earn NCI designation as a Comprehensive Cancer Center, which will put us in the top 30 in the country and even more prominent in those centers focusing on cancer affecting rural populations. If we can attract sufficient support, we believe we can accomplish this goal.

Leading strengths of our two research campuses are in the life sciences, including biomedical and agricultural research. We have made advances, with the opening of the Morrison Center for Life Sciences, the University-wide Virology Center, biomass energy research, adding a second Durham Research Center, and many other examples. This should be an area where Nebraska excels, and it is a priority for the University.

The field of architectural engineering and construction is another area in which we can and should lead. Two years ago, we created the Charles Durham School of Architectural Engineering and Construction with the goal of building the leading such program in the country. We have had one of the best architectural engineering programs, and with our business leadership in these areas, it's a natural. The endowment targeted would be the largest private fund for a school in the country.

And, we will continue to build on the success of the Raikes School and the Peter Kiewit Institute, programs that successfully blend strengths in information technology and business. Both programs are in the midst of transformations that can make the University a regional and national hub for attracting the most talented students, faculty and business partners.

Finally, an important long-term goal is to help build the regional innovation economy. Eighteen months ago, the Chancellors and I met to plan the “next big thing” for the University. We decided one of the great strengths of the University – the diversity of our campuses – supported a similar strategy with unique applications on each campus. One of the most important things we could do is to leverage campus academic strengths and other assets to spur and sustain regional growth in the innovation economy. We have already been moving in that direction with PKI and Aksarben Village, and more recently, Innovation Campus. Each campus has a different role and strategy, but this plan is held together by an underlying philosophy of a 21st century interpretation of the public university imperative of engagement in the life of the community and its economy.

In good economic times, and perhaps especially in bad economic times, the role that a public university can play in the life of its state—in educational opportunity for the next generation, creation and application of knowledge that supports economic development, health, culture and civic engagement – cannot be overstated. The University of Nebraska seeks to be the best public university in the nation as measured by the impact we have on our state and, in turn, the world. That goal has never been more important.

## **IN MEMORY OF FRIENDS**

On a somber note, this was a year in which the University lost some of its treasured friends. Chuck Durham, who received the first Regents' Medal in 2007, was the University's greatest living benefactor, responsible for transformational gifts at UNMC, and with his late wife Marge, at UNO as well.

John Angle, former CEO of Guardian Life Insurance Company, and his wife Catherine have been great financial supporters of UNL, and John provided leadership after his retirement and return to Lincoln, particularly in the arts. On a personal note, John and I share a common heritage; our ancestors were involved with a business in Fremont for generations.

Finally, my undergraduate professor and advisor and then great friend, Robert Knoll, died in early 2009. Robert introduced hundreds if not thousands of undergraduates to Shakespeare and the sheer joy of ideas and learning. In retirement, he wrote the wonderful – and definitive – history of the University in Lincoln, *Prairie University*. Robert's contributions to this University cannot be overstated, and he brings into sharp focus a belief we all share – that great teachers transform lives immeasurably.