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## University of Nebraska Five-Year Strategy, Revised August 12, 2020

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# UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY

REVISED AUGUST 12, 2020

D.B. AND PAULA VARNER HALL





# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**E**ducators have changed my life again and again. There were my parents, of course—Mom an English teacher, Dad a public servant—who imparted a passion for curiosity and the value of integrity and hard work.

There was the teacher who saw that I had a knack for math and took time outside the classroom to tutor me in trigonometry, a subject not offered at my rural Rhode Island high school. There was the biology teacher who encouraged me to enter a science fair, leading me to discover a love of oceanography that would become my college major.

There were the leaders who sent me to educational programs like Top Gun and the Navy Nuclear Power School—experiences that shaped my teaching and learning perspectives for a lifetime.

I know how education can change a person's life because I have experienced it myself. Now, as president of the University of Nebraska, it is my calling to help future generations of young people experience that same transformative power.

The strategy that follows in these pages is the result of months of work by a diverse team of students, faculty, staff, alumni and donors, leaders in business and agriculture, elected leaders and other Nebraskans. It is built around the core belief that the value of higher education is as great today as it was when our University was founded more than 150 years ago.

It is designed to fulfill our most fundamental promises to Nebraskans: That we will provide their daughters and

sons with an affordable, quality education, culminating in a timely degree, that prepares them for success in life and work. That we will work hard, use common sense, act decisively and spend our money wisely. That we will be a University for all—welcoming and inclusive, open to all voices.

In short, that we'll get things done the Nebraska way.

I view this strategy as a living document. The challenges of 2020 have taught us that we must be flexible and open to change. Still, our strategy gives us a clear path forward. It articulates our priorities—starting with students—and offers specific targets against which we will measure our progress.

**Our strategy aims to provide hope, predictability and positive outcomes for Nebraskans.**

I am humbled and honored to call myself a Nebraskan and to be able to serve you in this role. My wife Lynda and I are excited to work alongside you in creating a bright future for our University.

**TED CARTER**  
President, University of Nebraska

## The University of Nebraska Five-Year Strategy: Trust, Predictability, and Positive Outcomes for Nebraskans

In February 2020, the newly named president of the University of Nebraska system, Ted Carter, gathered a diverse 28-member team of students, faculty, staff, and administrators to help chart the path forward for Nebraska's public university. The team's goal: At a time of great change in higher education, lay out a vision for what the future should look like for the University of Nebraska.

Broad themes quickly emerged, including student access and success, excellence in teaching and research, diversity and inclusion, partnerships, and fiscal effectiveness. Then COVID-19 hit, forcing a pause in the team's work. The ensuing months showed that the initial priorities identified by the team were not only still relevant, but more important than ever in defining the future of higher education.

From that early work has emerged a five-year strategy for growth and success across the four-campus University of Nebraska system. In addition to the strategic planning team, Carter engaged alumni and donors, elected leaders, leaders in business and agriculture, the Board of Regents, NU senior leadership, and others in conversations about the University's future.

The resulting strategy is built around several key principles:

- ▶ **The value of higher education is clear and growing.** Nebraska's success is tied to that of its University.
- ▶ **Students come first.** The University of Nebraska should be the best place in the country to be a student, providing high-quality, affordable, accessible education that prioritizes students' mental and physical health and prepares them for post-graduation success.
- ▶ **Our people are our greatest asset.** We will invest accordingly.
- ▶ We have a responsibility to **make the best use of every dollar** Nebraskans entrust to us.
- ▶ **Themes of equity and inclusion touch everything we do.** We will be a University for everyone—successful only when all voices are heard.
- ▶ Finally, **Nebraskans should know what to expect from their University.** We must work every day to maintain the trust and confidence of the people of our state.

# UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MISSION & VISION

## ▶▶▶ Our Mission

The University of Nebraska system exists to transform lives and communities in Nebraska and around the world. The four campuses of the University system bring unique strengths together to create an exceptional level of quality and impact—through accessible and excellent education for diverse populations of students, research and creative activity that generates new knowledge, and service and engagement that enriches quality of life.

## ▶▶▶ Our Vision

The University of Nebraska will be America’s preeminent public university system—a broad, diverse, and collaborative system of higher learning that leads the world in education and discovery. We will be:

- ▶ **The destination of choice for students** seeking an affordable, accessible, world-class education—in an inclusive, innovative learning environment that guarantees every student the opportunity to succeed.
- ▶ **The world leader in making breakthrough discoveries** and building the skilled workforce necessary to solve the most urgent 21st century challenges: water and food security, infectious disease, rural community development and vitality, national and cyber security, and early childhood education.
- ▶ **The premier partner in our communities, across the nation, and around the globe** in achieving the highest quality of life and economic prosperity for all.

# THE STRATEGY



## Access, Affordability, and Attainment

The University of Nebraska was founded on the principle that higher education should be accessible to all, not just a privileged few. That principle is as important today as it was more than 150 years ago, with a college degree increasingly recognized as a vital pathway to individual and economic prosperity.

Nebraskans have a basic expectation of their University: That they can send their daughters and sons to our campuses for an outstanding education, at an affordable cost, where they can graduate on time and prepared for success in life and work. And while they're here, we will provide them with the most enriching collegiate experience possible, to include internships and study abroad, participation in athletics and the arts, and community service and research. That "whole-person" experience is what our students expect and deserve.

Cost must not be a barrier for any qualified Nebraska student to attend the University. It is intentional that this broad theme comes first in our strategic plan. As we chart the path forward, the affordability, accessibility, and quality of a University of Nebraska education will continue to be our North Star.

- ▶ **Launch Nebraska Promise**, a tuition-free education for Nebraska families with an annual income less than \$60,000.
- ▶ **Evaluate all University-imposed costs** to students and limit increases to the greatest extent possible.
- ▶ Adopt a **4-year undergraduate graduation guarantee**.
- ▶ Shift the University's **undergraduate tuition model** from a "per credit" to "block" basis.
- ▶ Evaluate **innovative academic calendar models** to accelerate time to graduation.
- ▶ Strengthen **pathways to higher education**.

# THE STRATEGY



## Workforce Development

Nebraska’s workforce needs are urgent and growing. The state will have more than 34,000 annual openings in high-skill, high-demand, high-wage (H3) jobs in the years ahead, and the needs exist across the entire state. Demand for more engineers, IT professionals, nurses, teachers, physician assistants, and other professions is acute. And of course, the University will lead in supporting the backbone of Nebraska’s workforce and economy, agriculture, by educating the next generation of farmers, ranchers, scientists, and others who will help feed an increasingly hungry world.

The future of higher education will be about pathways—to college, to relevant internships and academic experiences, to timely graduation, and finally, to great jobs here in Nebraska. That includes educating more of our own Nebraska students, as well as attracting new Nebraskans to our state to live, work, and raise their families.

With more skilled graduates, we’ll grow our economy, workforce, and strong communities across the state.

- ▶ **Pursue partnerships** with the Governor, Nebraska Legislature, business leaders, and others to fund scholarships in key workforce areas.
- ▶ **Develop scholarship programs** to attract nonresident students pursuing programs in key workforce areas.
- ▶ **Build and test models to guarantee internships, jobs, and debt forgiveness** for graduates.

# THE STRATEGY



## Culture, Diversity, and Inclusion

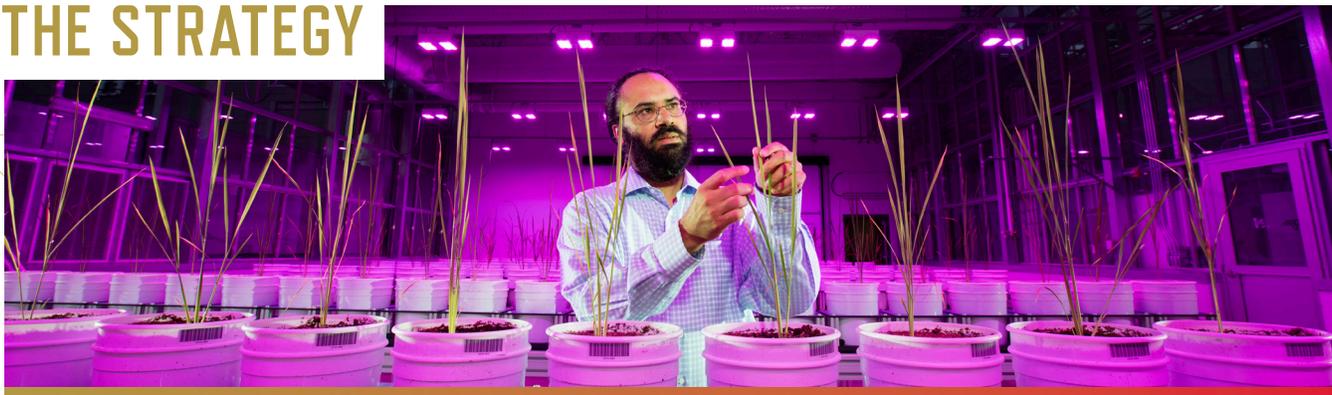
A growing, thriving University of Nebraska depends on the voices, ideas, and success of all members of our community. We must be a University for everyone—a place where diverse backgrounds and ideas are welcomed and celebrated, where robust dialogue is encouraged, and where we are intentional and transparent in exploring how we can be a better place to learn, work, and study.

We will have a bias for action in evaluating and improving our culture. That will include honest assessments of our successes and areas for improvement. Where there are gaps—like that between UNL and UNMC faculty salaries and their peers, which has been a challenge for too long—we will put action plans in place to better support our talented faculty, staff, and students.

We have heard loud and clear from our University community that inclusive excellence must be among our highest priorities. Our students deserve to see themselves reflected in our classrooms, and all members of our community deserve to feel valued, welcomed, and safe.

- ▶ **Develop an implicit bias training program** to reach every employee.
- ▶ **Refine policies and procedures** to more fully support our students and employees.
- ▶ **Conduct annual climate surveys** and develop action plans based on the data.
- ▶ **Commit to no new state-aided non-faculty FTEs** at UNL, UNMC, and UNCA until faculty salaries reach their peer averages at UNL and UNMC.
- ▶ **Identify and reduce gender and racial equity pay gaps** among employees through compensation studies.

# THE STRATEGY



## Partnerships

In pursuing excellence in and outside the classroom, we acknowledge that we can't be all things to all people. What we can do is identify a select number of areas where we can be the world leader. We will be disciplined in our investments and engagements, focusing on areas that matter to Nebraska and where we have deep expertise: Water and food security; infectious disease; rural community vitality; national and cyber security; and early childhood education.

Recognizing that we can't be successful alone, we will invest our time in cultivating partnerships that will advance our work—between campuses, with donors and alumni, elected leaders, our higher education partners, and with all Nebraskans, who collectively are the single largest investor to the University of Nebraska every year.

We will make every decision with an eye toward building the trust and confidence of our most important partners, the people of Nebraska.

- ▶ **Focus University investments** on water and food security; infectious disease; rural community vitality; national and cyber security; and early childhood education.
- ▶ **Increase the sense of bond and connection** among alumni and donors.
- ▶ **Increase the number of annual donors** to 75,000 by 2027.
- ▶ **Increase annual total private support** to \$300 million by 2027.
- ▶ **Engage our 374,000 alumni** in University events and leverage their voices through an advisory and advocacy network.

# THE STRATEGY



## Efficiency and Effectiveness

In entrusting their precious resources to us, Nebraskans expect their University to operate with common sense and prudence. We won't spend money we don't have; we will take care of the resources we do have; and we will continually look for opportunities to become leaner, more effective, and more efficient.

Of particular importance is developing a long-term plan to maintain our capital assets, including the buildings where teaching and research take place, and the information technology infrastructure that supports virtually every aspect of the academic and business enterprises. Furthermore, knowing that sustainability is a high priority for our students and employees, we will create a University-wide plan for improvement—preserving both University and natural resources.

In all of this work, we will hold ourselves to a high standard of transparency, recognizing that we have a responsibility to demonstrate accountability to those who invest their resources in us.

- ▶ Develop a **5-year rolling budget**.
- ▶ Maintain a **structurally balanced budget**.
- ▶ Launch the **Red Tape Review initiative**.
- ▶ Develop a comprehensive **University-wide capital master plan**, including facilities, infrastructure, and information technology needs.
- ▶ **Launch 2021 University Facilities Program**.
- ▶ **Evaluate all University assets** for potential monetization and maximization.
- ▶ Set and achieve **University-wide sustainability goals**.

# Presidential Transition Committee

A diverse group of individuals from across the University of Nebraska provided advice, assistance, and support in the development of the five-year strategy.

**Trev Alberts**

Vice Chancellor for Athletics Leadership and Management  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

**Bob Bartee**

Vice Chancellor for External Relations  
University of Nebraska Medical Center  
and University of Nebraska at Omaha

**Anne Bowen**

Senior Assistant to the Chancellor  
University of Nebraska Medical Center  
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**Andrew Burival**

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**Lori Byrne**

Executive Vice President  
University of Nebraska Foundation

**Ted Carter, Chair**

President  
University of Nebraska

**Brenda Eschenbrenner, Ph.D.**

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**Doug Ewald**

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University of Nebraska Medical Center  
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Senior Advisor to the Chancellor  
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**Laura Grams, Ph.D.**

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and Faculty Senate President  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

**Ken Hansen**

Associate Vice Chancellor and Director, Campus Facilities  
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Junior, Psychology Major  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

**Stancia Jenkins**

Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer  
University of Nebraska

**Emily Johnson**

Senior, Political Science and Spanish Major  
and Student Body President/Regent  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

**Chris Kabourek**

Vice President for Business and Finance/CFO  
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**Mary LaGrange**

Associate Vice Chancellor/Controller  
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**Peter Longo, J.D., Ph.D.**

Professor, Political Science  
and Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
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**Martha Mamo, Ph.D.**

Department Head, Agronomy and Horticulture  
and John E. Weaver Professor of Agronomy  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

**Richard Moberly, J.D.**

Interim Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

**Ashley Mueller**

Extension Educator and Disaster Education Coordinator  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

**Keith Ozanne**

Fourth Year Medical Student and Student Body President/Regent  
University of Nebraska Medical Center

**Lance Perez, Ph.D.**

Dean, College of Engineering and Omar H. Heins Professor  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

**Juliann Sebastian, Ph.D.**

Dean, College of Nursing  
University of Nebraska Medical Center

**Susan Sheridan, Ph.D.**

Director, Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth,  
Families, and Schools  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

**Will Thomas, Ph.D.**

Professor of History  
and John and Catherine Angle Chair in the Humanities  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

**Barb Weitz**

Board of Regents, District 8

**Bob Wilhelm, Ph.D.**

Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln



## About the University of Nebraska

The University of Nebraska, the state's only public university, has served Nebraskans through teaching, research, outreach and engagement for over 150 years.

The university was founded on February 15, 1869, less than two years after Nebraska became the nation's 37th state. The goal of this new land-grant university was, "To afford the inhabitants of this state with the means of acquiring a thorough knowledge of the various branches of literature, science, and the arts." This goal has stood the test of time—underlying the university's dedication to the education of students, research in a broad range of disciplines, and service to the state's citizens.

**Each campus has a unique role and mission—and when viewed collectively, give the University of Nebraska a breadth that is hard to match.**

The University of Nebraska is comprised of four campuses: the University of Nebraska at Kearney, the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, the University of Nebraska Medical Center, and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Teaching, scholarly research and creative activity, and statewide outreach are at the heart of the university's work.

The university's four campuses—including an undergraduate-focused campus in Kearney, a leading Big Ten institution in Lincoln, a world-renowned academic health science center with branches across the state, and a metropolitan university in Omaha—are home to 51,000 students and 16,000 faculty and staff. The university also includes many research, extension, and service facilities statewide.



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