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Innovation Campus Newest Piece of NU's Tradition of Excellence

Throughout the years, the University of Nebraska (NU) System has transformed and adapted to meet the ever-changing needs of our state. It continues to innovate and adapt to new technologies, ensuring our students receive a quality education while providing top-tier research for the nation. Part of that evolution is the Nebraska Innovation Campus (NIC) that will bring new opportunities to our students and state.

I enjoyed touring the new facility this month with Chancellor Harvey Perlman and NIC's Executive Director Dan Duncan. Still in its first phase of construction, the impressive facility is a research campus designed to facilitate new and more in-depth partnerships between the University and the private sector. NIC is being built on the former Nebraska State Fairgrounds.

The first stage of construction includes the renovation of the 4-H building. The building is being repurposed to serve as a multi-functional meeting space, including a 400-seat auditorium, a 400-seat banquet room and several smaller rooms for breakout sessions, but the architecture and features of this iconic building – both inside and out – still stand strong. While the building's original purpose has changed, its new occupants will protect and

preserve this great cultural landmark for many years to come. As I was visiting the facility, NIC officials were also preparing to move into their new, state-of-the-art office space nearby.

In addition to the conference center, the campus will eventually be home to a wet lab, a food processing pilot plant and a greenhouse complex. A number of private companies are in conversations with NIC about partnerships. Con Agra will move in next year, beginning the public-private partnerships. The campus will also include a business accelerator to help small business owners expand their operations. The partnerships are intended to pursue the mission of providing a “dynamic environment where university and private sector talent transform ideas into innovation that impacts the world.”

NIC, when completed, could contain more than 2.2 million square feet of research, meeting and office space and employ thousands of people on the campus. Roughly a third of those would be employed by the university and two-thirds would be employed by private companies. Additionally, the City of Lincoln is partnering with NIC on a project to use reclaimed, non-drinkable water from the city’s wastewater treatment plant to heat and cool the campus – another forward-thinking partnership with mutual benefits. And those behind the project have their own sights set on achieving many of these goals within the next five years.

Innovation Campus will bring the talent and expertise of students, researchers, and the private sector together under one roof, giving them the tools necessary to excel in the real world. Mr. Duncan and University leaders deserve credit for their vision. I am confident the fruits of NIC’s labor will be seen throughout the world in the years and decades to come.

Source

U.S. Senator Mike Johanns, *Weekly Column*, August 18, 2014 (http://www.johanns.senate.gov/public/?p=WeeklyColumn&ContentRecord_id=3fa82646-26ce-4b84-b33b-b0a5fc4e7fb3&ContentType_id=fdd4e816-234d-4825-b703-ea582a48faea)

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