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CHAPTER TWO  
*Progress Since  
1997*







## Chapter Two:

# Progress Since 1997

## Developments Since the Last Accreditation

In preparation for the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s decennial accreditation visit in 2006, a group of faculty and administrators convened to talk about their perceptions of the university and its progress over the previous 10 years. What emerged from that lively discussion surprised and even delighted participants. The university had made significant, innovative, and even bold changes in many areas. New buildings were constructed and new programs had been launched. The research enterprise had nearly doubled in size. Hiring and funding decisions had been made with more focused strategy. We had made great progress on a number of fronts.

How did all this happen? In this chapter, we outline our progress over the last decade and suggest that a change in philosophy regarding the nature of excellence and the scope of programming at UNL took hold during this period. We re-examined our goals and how we set them, and we began to target our resources to support our quest for excellence. We concluded that a coordinated approach to planning would more effectively produce results and that ongoing processes to manage our progress would propel the university forward.

We have sketched here some of the changes made in the last decade that have helped UNL take this more-focused approach toward excellence in teaching, scholarship and research, and engagement and outreach.

### *Establishing a Renewed Sense of Direction*

State of the University addresses were introduced at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in 1991 by then-Chancellor Graham Spanier. The speech, given at the beginning of fall semester in the campus performing arts center, preceded an all-university picnic. Early addresses focused on recognizing success, building morale and announcing new initiatives or thrusts for the upcoming year.

*Our vision for the year 2019 is that the University of Nebraska–Lincoln become one of the leading public research universities in the nation and ranked among the strongest state universities in academic quality. ... The University of Nebraska–Lincoln has a legacy of being one of the nation’s great public research universities. ... (W)e need to recommit ourselves to building and retaining strong faculty who are dedicated to the process of discovery and to create an environment that supports and encourages their best efforts.*

UNL 2020 Vision Report

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-1](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-1)

The tradition of the state of the university speech has continued; most recently, Chancellor Harvey Perlman has used the State of the University address to urge the university community to work together to achieve our primary goal of excellence in all we do. But it was in the mid-90s that UNL chancellors began to use the address to lay out a longer-range set of goals and challenges to move the university to higher levels of performance. For instance, in 1996, then-Chancellor James Moeser stated his goals to:

- Keep Nebraska's best in Nebraska.
- Create nationally recognized centers of excellence, building on existing strengths to meet areas of great need or opportunity.
- Take seriously our responsibility to help our students develop not only a style and habit of learning that will serve them for a lifetime, but also a set of values, an ethical core, that will guide them in their personal lives and make them productive community leaders.
- Be an institution that itself has an ethical core, a place that enshrines institutional as well as personal integrity, responsibility, and a strong commitment to fairness, equity, and equal opportunity. [[www.unl.edu/resources/2-2](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-2)]

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-2](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-2)

This statement of goals required action steps to accomplish as well as shifts in attitude and thinking. With this address the university began to take steps to develop a long-range vision based on achieving an identified set of goals. Critical to implementing the vision was the collective decision to strategically target resources toward achieving those goals.

In a succeeding presentation, "Building a Culture of Excellence," to the University of Nebraska Board of Regents in 1999, Chancellor Moeser stated:

Our vision is premised on excellence in every aspect of our mission. ... To achieve that level of excellence, we shall have to begin a process of steady, continuous improvement, beginning with where we are today, and building year by year. This will require a rigorous process of identifying existing strengths and potential opportunities, a careful survey of the needs of the state and nation, and perhaps most importantly, some tough decisions to establish clear priorities. We can achieve the greatest level of excellence only by targeting our resources carefully. [[www.unl.edu/resources/2-3](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-3)]

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-3](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-3)

Moeser's challenge was to try to turn the university, which had long acted as a full-service provider for Nebraska, into an organization with a narrower, yet still comprehensive, service-based focus. This required artful prioritizing. And it aroused some level of trepidation because prioritizing, by its very nature, meant that some long-beloved, but perhaps outmoded, programs would be de-emphasized, reduced or eliminated. A critical document shaping change at this time was titled "Reshaping Our University" (1997). This document was the report of a reallocation process undertaken during 1995-96, which had as its goal moving resources to enhance targeted programs of excellence, building on recognized strengths. [[www.unl.edu/resources/2-4](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-4)] While many

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-4](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-4)

viewed this reallocation process as considerably less than highly successful, the document laid the foundation for future efforts to build on strengths.

## *Articulating the Vision through Focused Reports*

It fell upon Chancellor Harvey Perlman, who succeeded Moeser in 2000, to continue to move this agenda of reaching toward excellence with a more laser-focused approach. UNL's changes occurred in tandem with a rapidly changing world. Nebraska's economy, largely agriculture based, faltered in the late 1990s due in part to recurring drought. The global economic collapse following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States additionally damaged the economy. UNL responded in recognition of the changing landscape. And the biggest change was our realization that the university had to be great in a different way: it could no longer be all things to all people. In order to equip students and faculty to compete and excel, programs must reach a minimum threshold level of quality and excellence. And with dwindling resources due to reductions in state support, the scope and breadth of programs needed to be cut to support that threshold of excellence in surviving programs. The decision to match resources to priorities was the key change.

Working within this framework, a number of task forces produced reports that resulted in a clearer direction. Among the documents created were:

- ***A 2020 Vision: The Future of Research and Graduate Education at UNL (2000)***. (Often called the *2020 Vision* report or document.)

The recommendations in the *2020 Vision* report are built around a vision for UNL's sesquicentennial year, 2019, that UNL will "become one of the leading public research universities in the nation and ranked among the strongest state universities in academic quality." The report declared: "Research and scholarship are central to all of the missions of a university, and must be emphasized by those that aspire to the highest levels, as UNL does. ... The Task Force has developed a set of recommendations, guidelines and benchmarks to be used as a basis for campus-wide discussion, to inform campus decisions and to assist UNL in monitoring its progress." It was discussed in each of the university's academic units and each was encouraged to develop plans to implement its recommendations. Many on the campus, particularly those in research and graduate education, view this report as a turning point in the work and direction of the university. [[www.unl.edu/resources/2-1](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-1)]

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-1](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-1)

- ***Intellectual Engagement and Achievement at UNL: The report of the Blue Sky Committee (2003)*** (Often called the *Blue Sky Report* because it was a report from the Blue Sky Committee.)

A follow up to the *2020 Vision*, the *Blue Sky Report* identified three ways to progress toward the 2020 vision: (1) by developing a culture at UNL focused more explicitly on intellectual challenge, engagement and achievement; (2) by creating a university environment in which teaching, scholarship and outreach form a more integrated

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-5](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-5)

whole; and (3) by engaging in a long-term process of reflective self-assessment examining the success of strategies for promoting excellence. [www.unl.edu/resources/2-5]

• ***Everyone a Learner, Everyone a Teacher: The Report of the Transitions to University Task Force” (2003)*** (Sometimes referred to as the *Transitions* report.)

The task force that produced the report focused on the question “How do we better prepare our students to be intentional learners?” (i.e., learners who “adapt to new environments, are informed, integrate knowledge across a wide spectrum, and are responsible for their own actions”). This report provided a series of recommendations for steps to be taken to realize the 2020 vision with undergraduate students.

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-6](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-6)

Interestingly, nearly all of these recommendations were implemented within a year of the report’s adoption. This report is considered by many to be a key agent of change in philosophy and thinking about the undergraduate experience at UNL. [www.unl.edu/resources/2-6]

While these reports were being prepared, university administrators decided to publish an annual report of our progress. The “Indicators of Institutional Quality: Annual Report” was first published in 2002 to provide data and comparisons with peer group universities on a number of indicators relating to undergraduate student learning and achievement; graduate, professional, and post-doctoral education; research, scholarship, and creative activity; outreach and engagement; and other contributors to the profile of excellence to which the university is committed. [www.unl.edu/resources/2-7]

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-7](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-7)

The task force reports, quality indicators and state of the university addresses have prompted important conversations and planning to take place at UNL over the past decade, activities that have helped us:

- Give definition to the core values that have prompted our key activities and investments;
- Create a culture in which each of us feels invested in the work of the total campus;
- Establish a long-term commitment to build excellent programs;
- Support movement toward interdisciplinary research and collaborative projects; and
- Enhance already strong programs to make them exceptional.

Building on these efforts of the last several years, UNL initiated a formal academic strategic planning process in the fall of 2004. This process is the central focus of this self-study document and of the efforts of the university to seek continuous self-improvement. It draws on the progress of recent years as it positions the university for the years ahead. Chapter 3 of this self-study describes the development of our academic strategic planning process.

## *Targeting Our Resources to Support Excellence*

A recurring theme throughout the reports is the desire to identify needs and allocate resources more effectively. University officials increasingly recognized the need for collaboration and partnerships in order to leverage resources to achieve excellence.

To use our resources more effectively, university leaders restructured administrative units that had overlapping interests; established a process to identify high-priority academic programs and steer resources toward them; formed interdisciplinary research centers to create critical groupings of faculty able to compete for larger grants; and forged partnerships with sister institutions in Nebraska and beyond.

A clear application of this philosophy of targeting and leveraging resources occurred in 2003, when the university faced a permanent budget cut of more than \$3 million. Rather than employing across-the-board horizontal cuts, Chancellor Perlman, after much deliberation, enacted a controversial policy of vertical program cuts. Announcing that preservation of the undergraduate teaching mission was of top priority, Perlman's cuts eliminated three deans' positions, some undergraduate programs deemed of lower priority for various reasons, some master's-only programs and several service programs. These actions resulted in terminations of 23 tenured faculty, a step taken with reluctance but deemed necessary. Tenured faculty affected by these cuts were provided options including early retirement and reassignment. Of the 23, 13 were eventually rehired with new assignments, eight retired or entered phased retirement, and two left UNL. American Association of University Professors' rules were followed carefully in this process and the national AAUP headquarters was kept fully informed of our actions. The Academic Planning Committee was involved throughout the decisions relative to meeting the budget cut. Chancellor Perlman put the policy of vertical cuts to a faculty referendum in May 2003. The final tally was 914 in favor, 110 against, although that certainly did not mean that faculty were totally comfortable with what had happened. While taking vertical program cuts was painful in many ways, it was deemed the best approach for meeting the budget reduction while at the same time retaining forward movement in priority areas.

Another, more positive, change that resulted in targeting resources toward priorities was the adoption in 1999 of new permanent funding for Programs of Excellence. In 1999, the Board of Regents directed each campus to identify its high-priority academic programs, consistent with its mission, vision and values. Nine criteria were established for selecting such programs:

- Centrality to Role and Mission/Strategic Plans
- Need and demand for program
- Quality and outcomes for teaching and learning
- Quality and outcomes for research/creativity activity
- Quality and outcomes of service
- Human, fiscal and physical resources

- Impact
- Cooperation and partnership with other programs
- Other unique dimensions

The Programs of Excellence (POE) initiative followed after the determination of the high-priority programs. Excellence funding allocations targeted a select subset of priority programs that promote the university's educational, research, and outreach excellence. Since 2001, each campus of the university has submitted an annual request to the University of Nebraska president for excellence funding. At UNL, 15 priority programs were provided continuing increases in funding in the first year of the Programs of Excellence. Since then, the number receiving excellence funds has increased to 23. The Academic Planning Committee has been a key player in the selection of projects for this initiative. UNL requires that programs provide a business plan that demonstrates how the funds will be used before any award is made. In selecting programs for POE funding, UNL has significantly emphasized undergraduate honors programs and other enhancements of undergraduate excellence. Of the current POE programs, 21 have an undergraduate component, 11 have a faculty recruitment component, seven have a research component, seven have an outreach component, seven have an equipment component, six have an extramural grant proposal development component and one has a facilities component. [[www.unl.edu/resources/2-8](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-8)]

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-8](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-8)

One fear associated with the establishment of the Programs of Excellence initiative was that it might lead to a decline in quality, vigor and forward movement in programs not so designated. This has not happened. In fact the "culture of excellence" resulting in part from this initiative has led other programs to upgrade the quality of their work and productivity.

### *Adopting Structural Changes to Support Progress*

UNL has adopted several administrative changes, facilities improvements and technology upgrades aimed at focused excellence.

#### **Administrative Restructuring**

Consolidations and mergers of existing units served the purpose of bringing together units that were closely related in terms of mission. The restructuring was undertaken to support more effective use of resources; the new units included:

- The School of Natural Resources, a combination of faculty from Conservation and Survey; Agriculture Meteorology; and Forestry, Fisheries, and Wildlife in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources with faculty from Biological Sciences and Geosciences in the College of Arts and Sciences (1997)
- The Department of Anthropology and Geography, a combination of the former separate departments of anthropology and geography (2000)
- The Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, a combination of the former separate departments of agronomy and horticulture (2000)

- The Department of Nutrition and Human Sciences, from the Department of Nutritional Sciences and Dietetics and elements from the Department of Health and Human Performance (2003)
- The Department of Statistics, from the Department of Biometry and elements of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics (2003)
- The School of Architectural and Construction Engineering, from the Department of Construction Management and elements of the Department of Architecture (2003)
- The College of Education and Human Sciences from Teachers College and the College of Human Resources and Family Sciences (2003)

In addition to these new academic units, new interdisciplinary centers were established (e.g., Center for Applied Rural Innovation, National Drought Mitigation Center, Nebraska Public Policy Center) to address important societal needs. And new partnerships were developed across units (e.g., Extension with the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts and the Office of Admissions) to bring together resources for specific projects.

### ***Capital Investments, Program and Facility Enhancements***

Between 1997 and 2004, UNL enjoyed an unprecedented building boom, undertaking both new construction and building renovation. Two factors contributed to this. The 1998 passage of a bill by the Nebraska Legislature addressed a decades-long backlog of deferred maintenance projects.

LB1100 provides matching funds of \$5.9 million from the State General Fund each year for up to 10 years beginning in FY 2000 for major repair, renovation or replacement projects at the four campuses of the university and at the three state colleges. This funding, to give but one example, allowed the university to demolish two older buildings and replace them with a single new building, Teachers College Hall, which linked two existing buildings used by the college.

It also allowed the renovation of an architecturally significant building into studio, gallery and office space for fine arts. The second major source of funding came through a capital campaign conducted by the University of Nebraska Foundation, which yielded significant private donations for new programs and buildings. During this period, gifts to UNL through the foundation amounted to around \$340 million. Infrastructure projects upgraded facilities across all missions of the university, including academic and research needs; student life and housing; administrative and support space; extension and outreach needs; athletics; parking; and cultural and arts space (See Table 2.1 UNL Facility Upgrades Since 1996).



Selleck Quad renovation, 2004

Table 2.1 UNL Facility Upgrades Since 1996

Facility	Function	Year
<b>Academic/Research Space</b>		
Burnett Hall	general purpose classroom renovation, space for Psychology	1997
TDC Building - Technology Park	research project incubation space	1997
Walter Scott Engineering Building	office space renovation	1997
420 University Terrace	office space renovation for International Affairs, Academic Senate and other units	1999
Beadle Center	research space renovation	2000
Agricultural Communications Building	office space renovation	2000
Seaton Hall	renovation of office space for Graduate Studies, Undergraduate Studies, Ethnic Studies and interdisciplinary studies	2000
Andersen Hall	renovation of acquired office building into additional classroom and office space for College of Journalism and Mass Communications	2001
Esther Kauffman Academic Residential Center	newly built classroom and living space for J.D. Edwards Honors Program in Computer Science and Management	2001
Teachers College Hall	newly built classroom and office space for education programs	2001
Hewitt Place	newly built center for research space and art gallery space for Center for Great Plains Studies, Lentz Center for Asian Culture and Great Plains Art Center	2001
Richards Hall	renovation of historic building for art classroom/studio and gallery space	2001
Andrews Hall	classroom renovation and addition of student study space	2001
Hazardous Materials Facility	newly built area for proper storage and handling of hazardous materials in support of research	2001
Othmer Hall	newly built addition of research, office, and classroom space for Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering	2001
Love Library	renovation of building systems, repurposing space	2003
McCullum Hall	Law library addition and renovation	2003
Barkley Center	addition of research space	2003
Avery Hall	renovation of classroom, office and research space for Computer Science and Mathematics	2004
Oldfather Hall	renovation of classrooms and addition of instructional technology for Anthropology and Geography	2005
Seaton Hall	renovation of 2nd and 3rd floor office space for Undergraduate Studies and special programs like Judaic Studies, Women's Studies	2005
Vet Diagnostic Lab	addition and renovation of research space	2005
Vet Basic Science Building	addition and renovation of research space	2005
Modular Laboratory	creation of Bio-Hazard Level 3(BL3) research space	2005
Hamilton Hall	infrastructure upgrade for research and classroom space	2005
Library Storage Facility	book and other materials long-term storage	2005
Behlen Laboratory	renovation of sub-basement area for accelerator lab	2006
Hardin Center	renovation of office, academic, and research space for School of Natural Resources	2006
International Quilt Center	new building for exhibition and research space for internationally renowned quilt collection	anticipated completion 2007

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Year</b>
<b>Student Life/Housing Space</b>		
Nebraska Union	addition of student gathering space, meeting space, auditorium and bookstore improvement	1999
Husker Courtyards	newly constructed apartment-style residence hall	2004
Selleck Quad Dining Facility	renovation of food service space and dining hall	2004
Husker Village	newly built apartment-style residence hall	2005
Harper-Schramm-Smith Residence Halls	renovation of student living facilities	2005
Harper-Schramm-Smith Dining Facility	renovation of food service space and dining hall	2006
<b>Administration/University Support Space</b>		
Facilities Management Shops-Extron Building	renovation of storage, shop, and office space in recently acquired building	2003
Transportation Services Building	renovation of office and storage space	2004
UNL Police-inside 17th and R Parking Garage	addition of office space for Police	2004
1700 Y Street	renovation of office, work, and storage space for Printing Services	2004
<b>Extension Space (facilities located outside of Lincoln)</b>		
Snyder Building	office space for North Platte outreach program	2001
Employee House-Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory	addition of employee housing	2004
Barta Brothers Ranch Administration Building	creation of administrative space	2005
Wagonhammer Building Education Center-Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory	creation of office and research space	2005
University of Nebraska/Kimmel Education and Research Center (Nebraska City)	creation of education and research space	2005
<b>Athletic Space</b>		
Memorial Stadium Skyboxes	addition of seating, press area renovation	1999
Haymarket Park Baseball Stadium	newly constructed baseball stadium (in partnership with city of Lincoln and a private entity)	2002
Haymarket Park Softball Stadium	newly constructed softball stadium and complex	2002
Indoor Practice Facility	newly constructed indoor athletic field and offices	2005
Tom and Nancy Osborne Athletic Complex	newly constructed addition and renovation of office space, weight training rooms, and athletic department service functions	2006
<b>Parking Space</b>		
Stadium Drive Parking Garage	additional parking	1997
17th and R Parking Garage	additional parking	2001
14th and Avery Parking Garage	additional parking (second phase under construction in 2006)	2004
<b>Cultural Space</b>		
Torn Notebook	major piece of sculpture by the artists Claes Oldenberg and Coosje van Bruggen, commissioned by the Sheldon Art Gallery	1996
Sheldon Art Gallery	renovation of gallery space, climate control	2002
Van Brunt Visitors Center-Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center	newly constructed visitors center and theater/auditorium space for film theater and media classes	2003

### ***Technology Upgrades***

Among the significant improvements in UNL's technology infrastructure since 1997 are the wiring of all campus buildings to provide improved speed and capacity, connecting UNL to Internet-2 to provide additional support for research, and adopting an electronic course management system (Blackboard) that includes all courses at UNL.

In 1997, UNL began assessing a per-credit-hour technology fee. Now \$6.50/credit hour, the fees generated \$3 million in 2004-05. The fees have provided funds to update technology in student labs and classrooms, support advanced networking in the residence halls and maintain a wireless network with free loaner laptops to students in all campus libraries and student unions. Students play an important role in determining how these funds will be used through a committee that advises the associate vice chancellor for Information Services. A complete description of upgrades in classrooms is available in "General Purpose Classroom Report and Appendices, 2005." [[www.unl.edu/resources/2-9](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-9)]

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-9](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-9) [unl.edu/resources/2-9](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-9)]



Graphics computer lab, Journalism and Mass Communications

The increased use of technology for instruction prompted a need for faculty development. The New Media Center is a primary means of faculty support and training services. The university makes extensive use of student expertise. Professional instructional design specialists have been hired to support distance learning and other programs. Additionally, faculty are exploring the use of technologies such as podcasting for content delivery.

The Office of Student Affairs made extensive upgrades to automate a number of student activities. These include upgrades to SIS+ (Student Information System vital to administer registration, financial aid, consolidated billing and other student account management), WAM ("What About Me" – student access via Web to Blackboard, registration, financial aid, and monthly student bill), Degree Audit, and

implementation of Talisma, which expedites and enhances marketing, student recruitment and admissions.

Technology improvements have prompted growth in the research enterprise. A critical addition was the Research Computing Facility, which houses UNL's first supercomputer, dubbed PrairieFire. The facility is available to researchers who require high-performance computing resources. RCF originated in 1998 from a successful NSF/EPSCoR proposal. Notably, the facility's existence helped UNL land a prestigious opportunity to be a Tier 2 research site for the international particle physics experiment known as the Compact Muon Solenoid project.

Since 1995, the university's consumption of Internet-1 capacity has increased 950 percent, campus

network connections have increased 780 percent, and wireless users have increased 5,500 percent. Additionally, UNL's investment in Internet-2 capacity grew from \$0 in 1995 (Internet-2 then was non-existent) to \$421,000 in 2004-05. The I-2 connection was upgraded in 2006.

Additional technology upgrades have been realized university-wide through leadership from the University of Nebraska Central Administration. These items are used by all campuses within the NU system (University of Nebraska at Kearney, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and University of Nebraska Medical Center). Among them are an enterprise business and financial system (SAP); the course management system (Blackboard); a university-wide web portal [[www.unl.edu/resources/2-10](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-10)]; a statewide education computer network for K-20 and government partners (Network Nebraska); founding and charter membership for Internet-2, Midnet, and the Great Plains Network (GPN); an Internet2-SEGP member school; and a university-wide email and office management system (LotusNotes).

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-10](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-10)

## *Strengthening the Faculty*

Significant changes have been made to improve the quality and diversity of faculty at the institution. They include changes in hiring practices, increasing the number and strategic use of distinguished professorships, internal faculty development programs, and increased rigor in faculty evaluations.

### **Hiring Practices**

Since 1997, five principal emphases have guided the hiring philosophy for new faculty. They are: a greater focus on the quality of hires; a greater emphasis on hires that contribute to racial, ethnic, and gender diversity; a broadening of the types of faculty hires; more focus on creating hires in priority areas; and greater emphasis on recruiting senior, highly distinguished new faculty. All are indicative of the renewed emphasis on matching priorities with resources.

Working through the deans, department chairs and search committees, these new directions in faculty recruiting ensure that all faculty hiring is as skillful, aggressive and ambitious as possible. Much greater emphasis is now placed on the specific challenge of attracting more new recruits from among racial and ethnic minorities and women. Training efforts inform those in the recruitment process of the university's goals in this area. In addition to distributing funding that is available system-wide to support diversity in hiring, the senior vice chancellor and IANR vice chancellor have created additional diversity funds to assist deans and departments in identifying special opportunities for faculty recruitment and enabling hires, even in cases where ordinarily funding would be inadequate.

The range of faculty positions has been clarified and broadened. Non-tenure-leading appointments, the ranks of Lecturer and Senior Lecturer, have been created. The role of Research Professor (assistant, associate, and full) has been clarified. These changes are essential to achieve UNL's ambitious research and teaching goals with a largely fixed-size tenure-track faculty that declined under the multiple state budget cuts. Under consideration at the time of this writing is a new faculty title, Professor of Practice, designed to recognize the significant teaching contributions

### ***Othmer Professorships***

**Bruce Avolio**, Donald and Shirley Clifton  
Chair in Leadership

**Luchezar Avramov**, Dale M. Jensen Chair  
in Mathematics

**Thomas Borstelman**, Elwood N. and  
Katherine Thompson Professorship  
in World History

**Chris Fielding**, Coffman Chair in  
Geosciences

**Janet Harkness**, Donald and Shirley Clifton  
Chair in Survey Research

**Michael James**, Ardis James Professorship  
in Textiles, Clothing and Design

**Sally Mackenzie**, Ralph and Alice Raikes  
Chair in Plant Sciences

**David Olson**, James and H.K. Stuart Chair  
of Management

**Kenneth Price**, Hillegas Chair of 19th  
Century American Literature

**Laurence Rilett**, Keith W. Klassmeyer Chair  
of Engineering

**Gregg Rothermel**, Dale M. Jensen Chair in  
Computer Science

**Will Thomas**, John Angle Professorship in the  
Humanities

**Mary Uhl-Bien**, Howard Hawks Chair in  
Leadership and Ethics

**Donald Umstadter**, Leland J. and Dorothy H.  
Olson Chair in Physics

**William Velander**, Donald R. Voelte and  
Nancy Keegan Chair of Engineering

**Les Whitbeck**, John Bruhn Professorship in  
Rural Sociology

made by non-tenured faculty. Faculty committees have approved this title designation and it is slated for Board of Regents approval in Fall 2006.

Finally, we have focused on reallocating and reassigning budget resources to concentrate faculty hiring more effectively in identified priority areas. Efforts to better align priorities and resources, especially with regard to filling faculty positions, were attempted throughout the last decade, with varying success. An initial campus-wide reallocation effort, conducted between 1996-98, resulted in some achievements, but overall it was judged a failure. The more formal Programs of Excellence initiative, previously described, resulted in programs that were supported in the budgeting plans of deans and or departments. In some cases, new separate funding for Programs of Excellence moved additional funds to some of these areas. The result was that the distribution of faculty hiring has been moved closer to lining up with identified campus priorities.

### ***Senior Hires and Distinguished Professorships***

In the context of the above changes, UNL has moved to increase the recruitment of senior, distinguished and highly productive individuals. In years past, very few senior hires had been made; some units had a strong predilection against senior hires, and some presumed that permission to recruit for senior positions would be denied and that such positions could not be funded. The most significant step toward changing these attitudes resulted from receipt of the \$136.5-million Othmer bequest. Chancellor Moeser pledged \$12 million from that gift, as matching funds, to create 24 Othmer endowed chairs (\$1 million each); the new chairs were explicitly reserved only for senior faculty recruited through nationally competitive searches. Additionally the senior vice chancellor and IANR vice chancellor took back from the units part of the funds that became available when faculty vacated positions, thus giving the vice chancellors funds to allocate back to units for senior, diversity or other priority hires.

Other factors contributed to the increased emphasis on senior faculty recruiting. The increased ambitions in research prompted the hiring of new senior faculty and raised UNL's attractiveness to outstanding potential recruits. As a result, additional funds have been obtained from external sources to establish more endowed chairs and professorships or to fund senior positions without an associated endowment. Standards, expectations, and ambitions for seeking endowed chairs and professorships and other senior positions have been greatly elevated. Campus leaders have created a complementary program, the Willa Cather and Charles Bessey Professorships, to recognize and celebrate the achievements of outstanding full professors already on the faculty. These professorships enhance the university's ability to retain faculty wooed by other institutions.

### ***Internal Faculty Development Programs***

The vice chancellor for research has instituted a number of initiatives to develop faculty success in grantsmanship and other areas of scholarship. In the discussion of Criterion 3 (core component 3b: "The organization values and supports effective teaching") and Criterion 4 ("The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its

mission”) later in this self study, the extensive programs to support the continuing development of faculty at UNL are described in full.

### ***Increased Rigor in Faculty Evaluation***

UNL has re-examined and greatly strengthened its processes of annual review of faculty members. We recognized that to achieve the aspirations and goals laid out in the “2020 Vision,” more effective faculty evaluation would be required, including more regular encouragement and feedback on an individual’s planned scholarship as well as assessment of his or her past performance.

The introduction of post-tenure review, a system based primarily on annual reviews, raised concerns about discrepant annual review practices in different units on campus: some units took annual reviews very seriously whereas others apparently treated them perfunctorily, thereby possibly making the application of post-tenure review unfair. This was a special concern since post-tenure review has been invoked in 19 instances. Some faculty members expressed a desire for change because anonymous student evaluations sometimes played a dominating, even exclusive role in their annual teaching evaluations. Finally, the broader emphasis on assessment (of student learning, of administrators, of advising and of program effectiveness) naturally contributed to an atmosphere that encouraged more effective assessment of faculty performance.

In response, the campus adopted a new approach. First, came an explicit commitment to focus on achieving excellence. As the *2020 Vision* states:

Departments must establish very high standards for research and creative activity accomplishments in promotion and tenure decisions. All current tenure-track faculty must be actively engaged in research and creative activity. Personnel policies and practices (hiring, workload, tenure, reward) should be oriented towards excellence in all expressions of scholarly endeavors while recognizing different missions across colleges, programs, and faculty members within programs.

Similar efforts were made to define, develop a vocabulary for, and identify excellence in teaching.

Second, and equally ambitious, was an attempt to better integrate annual evaluations within the whole network of assessment, support, and encouragement of faculty achievement, to turn annual faculty

evaluations into a forward-looking, positive, and proactive element in UNL’s effort to achieve its new aspirations and goals. We set out to link the annual review process to unit strategic planning and reviews of program effectiveness, to efforts to ramp up extramural funding, and to college- and campus-level initiatives to improve teaching quality.

To implement this agenda, several actions have been taken. The senior vice chancellor for Academic Affairs and the IANR vice chancellor, working with the leadership of the Academic Senate, agreed to place the issue of equitable and effective evaluations high on the priority list and to work with department chairs/heads and deans to achieve it. The topic of faculty evaluations was given central billing in the all-campus chairs/heads workshops over several years running with the goal of training unit administrators to do better evaluations and, more broadly, to challenge a campus culture that had been dismissive or at best indifferent on the usefulness of faculty evaluation. Newly appointed administrators participate in an orientation program that does the same. Both academic vice chancellors and the college deans are required to monitor annual evaluations in a more consistent and systematic manner than they had previously done. Each faculty member with his or her department chair is asked to do an “effort apportionment determination” to assign a percentage of time devoted to teaching, research and service/outreach. This helps increase workload accountability. Deans and department chairs/heads are encouraged to foster unit discussions among faculty to articulate what the faculty consider to be “high-quality” or “outstanding” work within their specific disciplines or fields. The results have been in some cases limited, but many units have now developed thoughtful statements expressing more appropriate standards for faculty achievement. Each unit on campus is now required to produce such a statement, approved by its respective dean and vice chancellor, which then becomes part of the unit’s official bylaws (e.g., available for use in post-tenure reviews).

In addition to this refinement of the faculty evaluation process, greater emphasis has been placed on review of teaching as part of that process. As part of its faculty mentoring programs, UNL is committed to sustain with campus funds and to emphasize the Peer Review of Teaching Project, which over time as it engages more and more faculty in diverse departments across the campus, has the potential for dramatically reformulating old-fashioned notions of annual review of teaching (see more about this project later in this chapter and in Chapter 6 on Criterion 3).

## *Increasing Support for Undergraduate Teaching*

The *2020 Vision* was the impetus for change regarding UNL's research mission. While attending to its agenda to improve research and graduate education, faculty and administrators also took measures to improve undergraduates' educational experiences. In 1996, UNL instituted a more rigorous set of high school requirements for admission to ensure that students entering the university were better prepared for the challenges of college course work. Since 1997, each incoming class has had higher composite ACT scores and better high school grades than the class preceding it. However, a drop-off in applications and enrolled students was attributed in part to these higher standards, a more competitive recruiting climate, budget cuts and tuition increases. While acknowledging these mitigating factors, university officials sensed a growing disconnection between students' educational experiences and the quality of student learning. We needed to examine fully the undergraduate learning environment.

In 2001-2002, UNL hired Noel-Levitz Consulting Group, Inc., an educational consulting firm, to assess its entire enrollment management strategy. The firm recommended a number of changes, particularly in the university's retention practices. A key tactic in that strategy was seen to be the identification of an administrator whose sole responsibility would be to focus on the undergraduate program, particularly in the first two years of students' time on campus.

In May 2003, the Office of Undergraduate Studies, under the leadership of a new dean of Undergraduate Studies, was formed to coordinate, administer and advocate for campus-wide policies and initiatives affecting undergraduate education, particularly those academic activities outside departmental degree programs and individual majors. This change visibly elevates undergraduate education to high priority status and sets responsibility for programmatic success.

The dean of Undergraduate Studies now co-chairs with the dean of Admissions the Enrollment Management Council, established in 2001 (the inaugural Enrollment Management Council was chaired by the chancellor). The council oversees undergraduate recruitment and retention policies and initiatives and its working group, the Admissions, Advising and Retention Group. The directors of the UNL Honors Program, Division of General Studies, Undergraduate Research and Fellowship Advising, Office of Academic Support and Intercultural Services, and Summer Institute for Promising Scholars, as well as the coordinators of University Assessment, Academic Learning Communities, and Transfer Student and Articulation, report directly to the dean of Undergraduate Studies. The dean is responsible for coordinating the work of the University Curriculum Committee and recommendations of student fee requests to the senior vice chancellor for Academic Affairs.

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-6](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-6)

The report, *Everyone a Learner, Everyone a Teacher* [www.unl.edu/resources/2-5], produced in 2003 by a blue-ribbon panel of faculty, student affairs professionals, and administrators, was an outcome of this effort to upgrade attention to the undergraduate program. The task force focused on the question "How do we better prepare our students to be intentional learners?" The inception of the Office of Undergraduate Studies and the response to the *Everyone a Learner* report are resulting in the development and enhancement of a number of learner-centered initiatives. Even

prior to these efforts, new programs were launched that focused on undergraduates. Two examples of such programs are:

- **Learning Communities:** Students elect to join a learning community in which they live together in a residence hall and take some courses in common typically during their first year on campus. The first communities were organized around specific majors (journalism or agriculture for example). Recently, the Melvin W. Jones Learning Community focused efforts toward leadership development for under-represented or first generation college students. And students in the E.N. Thompson International Scholars learning community study international issues, engage in service-learning activities and interact with lecturers from the university’s E.N. Thompson Fora in World Affairs as part of their curriculum.
- **UCARE:** The Undergraduate Creative Activities and Research Experiences (UCARE) program was launched in 2000. UCARE students explore a field of particular interest and learn alongside faculty mentors in a creative activity or research area. Students receive a stipend funded by the Pepsi Endowment created through the contract between the university and the Pepsi-Cola Co. More than 2,000 students have participated in UCARE.

UNL’s efforts to boost retention have paid off. More rigorous admissions requirements attracted students who were better prepared to succeed at college-level work. Other programs that were put in place, such as Learning Communities and a more-learning focused new student orientation program, have improved UNL’s retention and graduation rates.

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 track UNL’s retention and six-year graduation rates, respectively. Retention information for the class that entered in Fall 2005 was unavailable at the time of this writing, but has been updated in the virtual resource room [[www.unl.edu/resources/2-11](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-11)]

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-11](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-11)

Figure 2.1 Retention Tracking of First-time, Full-time UNL Freshmen

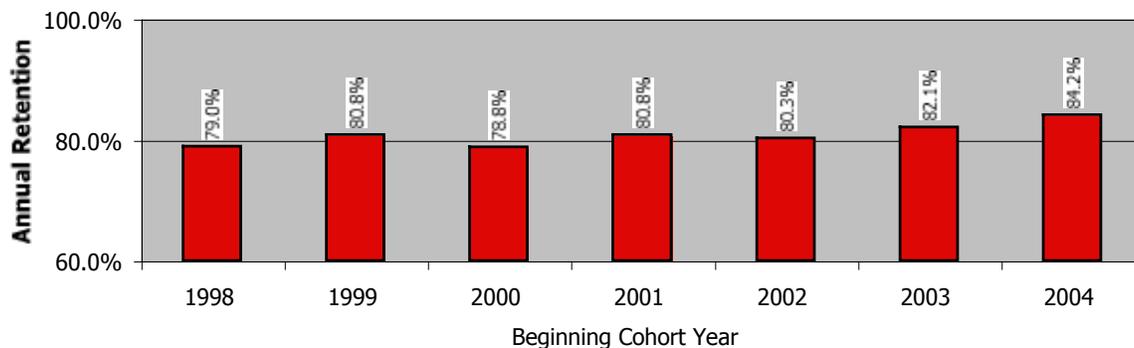
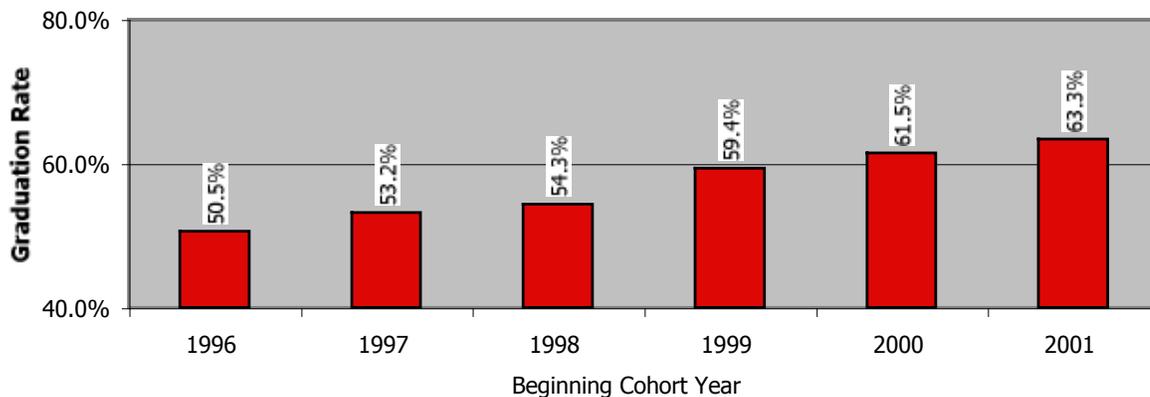


Figure 2.2 Graduation of First-time, Full-time, Degree-seeking Freshmen



The Peer Review of Teaching Project, mentioned earlier, is a major initiative for the improvement of teaching. Started in 1994, it has involved many UNL faculty working together to enhance their teaching. It is a grass-roots effort in which faculty leaders recruit other faculty for participation in developing a campus community for discussing, assessing and developing approaches for understanding, measuring and documenting classroom effectiveness. The project promotes educational reform at three different levels: by assisting faculty in evaluating and improving their students' learning, by building a campus community that supports and refines this inquiry into student learning, and by challenging a research university's attitude and policies about teaching. The success of UNL's Peer Review project was recognized in the receipt of three major national grants, including support for disseminating the model to four partner campuses (Indiana-Bloomington, Texas A&M, University of Michigan and Kansas State University). In 2004, UNL hosted a national conference, "Making Learning Visible: Peer Review and the Scholarship of Teaching," which was attended by persons from around the country. And in 2005, the project received a certificate of excellence from the TIAA-CREF Theodore Hesburgh program, which recognizes exceptional programs designed to enhance undergraduate teaching and learning. Additional information about this project and its impact on the faculty who have participated in it is available at [www.unl.edu/resources/2-12].

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-12](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-12)

Two recent developments continue the focus on the undergraduate experience. The Initiative for Teaching and Learning Excellence has sponsored nearly 40 projects aimed at improving undergraduate teaching learning and/or advising. Launched in 2004, the project competitively awards grants to faculty; the first grants were awarded in 2005 and the second round of awards was announced in spring of 2006. Funding for Initiative for Teaching and Learning Excellence projects comes from the University of Nebraska Foundation. [www.unl.edu/resources/2-13]

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-13](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-13)

Additionally, a task force is working toward revision and overhaul of UNL's General Education requirements. The current requirements, which were developed in the early 1990s, have been criticized for being overly complicated, a barrier to students' abilities to transfer from one college to another within the university, a hindrance for students wishing to transfer to UNL from another institution, and an obstacle to students' progress toward graduation. The initial program was born of a sincere effort to provide students with a liberal education, integrating critical

thinking and writing skills. Building on the faculty's continued dedication to undergraduate learning, the new program will be based on student learning outcomes, developed through intense collaboration of faculty across the university.

The upcoming Chapter 6 on Criterion 3 will more fully describe undergraduate education at UNL.

## *Refocusing and Enhancing Engagement*

UNL has a more than 90-year history of extended education, outreach and engagement, developed through our land-grant mission. In 1997, Chancellor James Moeser announced a broadening of definition, and an expansion of responsibility, for engagement activities at UNL during his annual State of the University address:

Nebraska is a leader in the field of extended education. However, without a clear strategy for the future, we may not be able to maintain that lead. We desperately need a vision for what we want to be five years from now and a plan of how to get there. ... We have chosen the term extended education quite deliberately, so as to include the traditional concept of extension, but also continuing studies and outreach. This is a change that will affect all parts of the university. We are going to attempt to transplant the traditional land grant concept of service and extension to the city campus — recognizing that the people of the state need instruction and assistance in all areas of knowledge. And we are asking our extension educators in the field to become facilitators of connectivity to every part of the university — to be, as we like to say, the real front door to the university. [www.unl.edu/resources/2-14]

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-14](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-14)

With that statement, the chancellor established that all units and individuals at the university are responsible for engagement, not just units and individuals associated with the Extension Division or the Division of Continuing Studies, which eventually was subsumed into the Office of Extended Education and Outreach (EE&O).

The Extended Education and Outreach office was established in October 1997 to facilitate increased participation by all colleges in providing lifelong learning as a core mission for UNL. EE&O partners with UNL's academic colleges to provide a variety of graduate degree programs as well as credit and noncredit programming. EE&O also helps high school students earn an accredited diploma or supplement their local curriculum. College Independent Study and Summer Reading offer flexibility in scheduling to busy on-campus students. Available via distance technology or on-site, extended education covers a variety of topics and interests. EE&O's distance education programs have experienced phenomenal growth. From 68 courses offered in 1998-1999, which attracted 712 students and generated 2,136 credit hours, the program offered 452 courses in 2005-2006, attracting 5,300 students and generating 14,525 credit hours. In 2005, EE&O launched on-line undergraduate courses available to Nebraska high school students through the Advanced Scholars program. [www.unl.edu/resources/2-15]

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-15](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-15)

The activities of the Office of Extended Education and Outreach are more fully described in Chapter 8, addressing Criterion 5.

## *Re-emphasizing Economic Development*

The university has long held a prominent role in economic development for the state. As described in the preceding chapter, university research has benefited the state, particularly its agriculture sector.

In his 2004 State of the University address, Chancellor Perlman said:

As a land-grant university we have the special responsibility to extend our teaching and the practical application of our research to the people of Nebraska. My travels across Nebraska reaffirm the important contributions our Cooperative Extension Service makes in the lives of our citizens. In this knowledge-based economy, the importance of their work, of our initiative to more actively commercialize the products of our research, and of the accessibility of citizens to the expertise of the university will, in large measure, determine the future success and prosperity of Nebraska. ...

The people of Nebraska expect and deserve our best efforts in using our talents and expertise to advance their prosperity and the quality of their lives. There are examples of our successes throughout Nebraska. Last year Cooperative Extension faculty and staff reached nearly 120,000 Nebraska youth, allowing UNL 4-H to lead the nation in per capita 4-H enrollment. We have a new chicory industry in the Panhandle attributable primarily to the work of Cooperative Extension, and Extension is also responsible for a revitalized viticulture industry centered in Southeast Nebraska where grapes and wine used to be significant economic drivers. Indeed, I would urge you to tour one or more of the 13 wineries now operating in Nebraska. We also serve Nebraska through an expanding distance education program and we are on our way to creating financial incentives for those faculty and departments who work creatively in this area. In a variety of other ways, through programs from the arts to the sciences, this University serves the people of Nebraska.

We currently have major efforts under way with the rural revitalization initiative and the emphasis on water research. These two projects must receive increased attention if we are to make a difference on these important issues. We also must continue in our efforts to find commercial applications for the products of our research. This does not mean that faculty should be directing their research toward particular commercial ends. We do not, and will not know, where much of our research will lead. Albert Einstein once said: "If we knew what we were doing, we wouldn't call it research." Nonetheless we must remain conscious of the commercial possibilities once the thrust of our research is known." [www.unl.edu/resources/2-16]

[www.unl.edu/resources/2-16](http://www.unl.edu/resources/2-16)

No single statement or example captures the entire scope of UNL's economic impact on the state and our re-dedication to economic development. However, UNL's success in wheat breeding could serve as a case study. The increased wheat yields resulting from improved varieties developed in University of Nebraska labs and field trials add more than \$56 million to Nebraska's economy each year. This increase in income results from an annual investment of less than \$500,000 for the

wheat improvement program. Currently, 77 percent of the total wheat production in Nebraska is planted in cultivars released by University of Nebraska –USDA Wheat Breeding Program.

The upcoming Chapter 8 on UNL’s fulfillment of Criterion 5 will more fully describe our economic development activity. Suffice it to say economic development has become a major focus of UNL since 1997.

## Conclusion

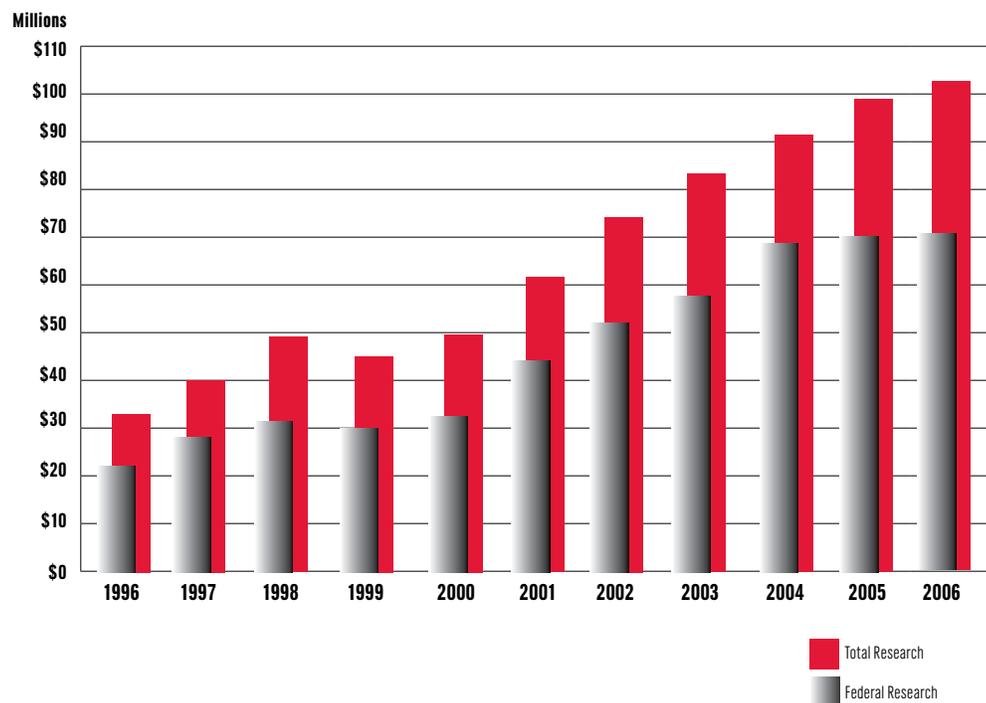
The eight newly focused strategies listed above have resulted in an improved institution across many levels. We will conclude this chapter with a few concrete examples, crossing several university areas.

The decision to aggressively pursue and hire more senior-level faculty has brought to the campus a stellar faculty. We recruited a renowned biomolecular engineer, William Velander, whose work in bioengineered blood products attracted \$13 million in funding to UNL in 2005. Hires made in English and history have impacted scholarship in Walt Whitman studies (Kenneth Price), Cather studies (Guy Reynolds), creative writing (Jonis Agee) and American studies (Thomas Borstelman and Will Thomas). Hires in computer science and engineering have elevated research in software reliability (Gregg Rothermel and Matt Dwyer). The hiring of a faculty member in physics, (Donald Umstadter), resulted in installation of an ultra-high-intensity laser system to study the interaction of light and matter. The laser has the highest combination of peak power and repetition rate of any in the United States.

External funding for research has doubled since 2000, and in FY 2006 reached a record high of \$104.6 million.

(See Figure 2.3) The University of Nebraska ranks 81st in the National Science Foundation’s survey of Research and Development expenditures as a result of combined reporting of UNL and UNMC research results. Since 2000, UNL has received federal funding enabling the launch of the Nebraska Center for Virology, the Redox Biology Center, the Center for Behavior and Reading, the Plant Genome Research Center, the international ANDRILL (Antarctic Drilling) project, the Math in the Middle Institute Partnership, and a

Figure 2.3 UNL Annual Research Awards



Materials Research Science and Engineering Center in Nanomaterials Structures. Additionally, 14 junior faculty have won competitive National Science Foundation CAREER and National Institutes of Health K Awards. Fundraising is under way to provide the 3-1 match associated with a \$500,000 National Endowment for the Humanities challenge grant for the Walt Whitman Archive.

One indicator of the prominence of faculty research is citations of faculty scholarship by other scholars. The number of citations of articles authored by UNL faculty grew from 17,082 in the five-year period ending in 1996-97 to 20,020 in the five-year period ending in 2001-02, a 17 percent increase. The ISI Essential Science Indicators Report, 1994-2004, indexes nearly 9,000 journals, tracking how often articles are cited by other authors; this report ranks UNL's IANR 16th in the world. Agricultural sciences articles published by 298 institutions worldwide, including both government agencies and universities, were reviewed for the report, which stated that UNL's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources scientists published 1,028 papers that were cited 6,056 times from January 1994-2004.

Significant faculty achievements include the election of James Van Etten, Robert Allington Distinguished professor of plant pathology, to membership in the National Academy of Sciences (2003), and in 2004, the selection of Ted Kooser, professor of English, as 13th Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress. In spring 2005, Kooser received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. Additionally, Xiao Cheng Zeng, professor of chemistry, received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in 2004. Carole Levin, Willa Cather Professor and professor of history and women's studies, and David Wishart, chair of the Department of Anthropology and Geography, each received a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship in 2003, making UNL the only university to receive two that year.

Two research projects involving UNL scientists were named among the 100 most important discoveries and developments in science in 2004 by *Discover* magazine. Physicists Greg Snow and Dan Claes were recognized for being part of an international team at Fermi National Accelerator laboratory near Chicago that established the mass of the top quark. Agronomist Ken Cassman joined with others at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines to identify some of the first negative effects of global warming on food production.

UNL's exceptional commitment to teaching also has been noted. In 2000, UNL was one of 16 colleges and universities recognized by the

Association of American Colleges and Universities for visionary campus-wide innovations in undergraduate education. In 1998, the UNL Math Department received a Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring for its efforts to recruit and nurture women graduate students.

And our students, too, are achieving at a higher level. UNL's six-year graduation rate increased to 63.3 percent in 2004-2005 from 47.1 percent in 1996-1997. The composite ACT scores of entering students increased to 24.8 in 2005 from 23.3 in 1997. The freshman to sophomore retention rate increased to 84.2 percent from Fall 2004 to 2005, from 74.1 percent in 1996-1997. GRE scores increased to 475/601 in 2003-2004 from 461/557 in 1996-1997. Survey data indicates that 42.6 percent of graduating seniors participated in an internship, co-op, or service-learning experience in 2004-2005. One-third of all students report having a meaningful research or creative activity in conjunction with a faculty member. And 602 undergraduate students (approximately 18 percent of total student body) had a Study Abroad experience during 2004-05. Since 2001, eight UNL students have received the Goldwater Scholarship, three were awarded Truman Scholarships, three were granted U.S. Department of Homeland Security awards for undergraduate study and 12 student-athletes have been the recipients of NCAA Post-graduate scholarships. During the same time period, 13 UNL graduates have earned Fulbright Scholarships, 10 were awarded NSF Graduate Fellowships and one earned a Javits Fellowship. Three students were Rhodes finalists. A number of UNL students have also competed successfully for national post-baccalaureate honors in the past decade.

Remarkably, these successes have been achieved during an era of budget cuts. As previously described, our approach to budget cuts was to continue to strive for excellence by enacting specific vertical cuts rather than debilitating horizontal cuts. In Spring 2006, an unanticipated decline in enrollment and higher energy costs forced another \$5 million budget reduction. After viewing reports from the units, the chancellor stated in an e-mail to the entire campus:

I now believe that the permanent reductions proposed to me by vice chancellors, deans and directors would unduly diminish our quality and restrain our progress. So I have struggled to figure out how to manage our situation consistent with our core value of an uncompromising pursuit of excellence.

Chancellor Perlman reinstated a process called the “assigned minus,” whereby unit budgets would, in general, be reduced by a proportion of the shortfall. These reductions would be managed by deans and directors as they best determine, allowing them to take advantage of opportunities to temporarily save money or by making permanent reductions to meet their assigned minus. As resources increase, the university will “buy back” some of these minuses in relationship to our priorities.

By many measures, we are a better university than the university that earned accreditation in 1997. Our efforts at self-scrutiny, our efforts to identify our priorities and needs, and our efforts to more effectively target and match our resources to those priorities and needs make us a stronger, more efficient, and more effective institution of learning. Guided by our core values and commitment to the pursuit of excellence, we have made bold progress toward our vision of becoming one of the leading public research universities and ranked among the strongest state universities in academic quality by our sesquicentennial anniversary in 2019.

At the same time, we have become acutely aware of our need to plan more comprehensively for the future, to have an on-going process of setting and renewing our priorities, one that protects us in times of scarce resources against spending the majority of our efforts in making decisions about what to let go, without having defined what it is crucial to preserve. Chapter 3 on our academic strategic planning efforts, the special emphasis focus of this accreditation review, describes our efforts to do just that.

