

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
2011 CONVOCATION ADDRESS
CHANCELLOR JOHN E. CHRISTENSEN

Good morning and welcome to the 2011 convocation. Thank you for attending as always, and special thanks to our guests who have made time to join us today. This is a great time in history to be a Maverick!

Two years ago, I shared my enormous pride in the strides we'd made in realizing our mission as "stewards of place" and attaining our strategic goals of being student-centered, building and sustaining academic excellence, and engaging the community through our teaching, research, and service. That progress continues today, has gained considerable momentum, and remains the foundation for achieving our vision.

Over several years, numerous campus conversations and annual strategic planning events, involving campus and community, have helped us set forth an ambitious, yet challenging vision -- to be one of the nation's leading metropolitan universities. We examined our role and mission in a new and perhaps, broader, light. We began to think big and envision a new horizon for our institution. In the words of Bob Dylan, "the time's, they are a-changin'", and we were willing to seize the moment and embrace the future.

Achieving leadership among metropolitan universities will require the support of the entire campus family acting as one, close collaboration with our community, and the ability to think, plan, and do, strategically. At the same time, we must remain nimble and adaptable to meet continuing and emerging needs of the community and campus. Simply, accepting the challenges inherent in realizing our vision is not an option, but rather, an obligation to those we serve now and in the future.

My special thanks to the faculty, staff, and students for their support and participation in this rather constant state of change. Dwight D. Eisenhower characterized change in this way, "neither a wise man nor a brave man lies down on the tracks of history to wait for the train of the future to run over him". We are a campus of wise women and men who refuse to rest or lie down until we achieve our vision of being a premiere metropolitan university, a leader among our peers. When people think of exemplary metropolitan universities, UNO should immediately come to mind.

Today, I want to spend our time together considering capacity and priorities,
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student body of that size, and I suspect we all agree that growth without quality is untenable.

By no measure, are the efforts to add space to the enterprise complete, but we have realized considerable progress. To date, we have added 832,000 additional square feet of new space (23%), and renovated or repurposed 758,000 square feet (21%). This does not happen without the generosity of our community as much was privately funded. Moreover, it requires that stakeholders believe in us and understand the critical role public universities play in their respective communities.

Today, we have a beautifully renovated home for the College of Public Affairs and Community Service, we've completed a multiphase renovation and addition to the Library, and we've added Maverick Village and Scott Court to our on campus housing options. The Student Center has completed a multiphase renovation, and we've remodeled the historic Hayden House as a Welcome center, and student services, admissions, registrar, and security, has altered spaces to better serve students.

Campus life has been enriched with major renovations to the HPER building, the south of Center Dome and related facilities. The College of Business Administration has a new world class teaching and research facility, Mammel Hall, which allowed us to transform and expand

Our next capacity priority is to finalize the funding for the Community Engagement Center which will serve as a living laboratory for effective community engagement. The CEC will link civic initiatives, nonprofit and business organizations, high schools, and faculty/staff/students, maximizing opportunities to partner, create synergies, and share costs and expertise. The center will provide a home for a public service resource center, the Service Learning Academy, a new public service student leadership program, and a staging

highest priorities at all levels will be done by late Spring 2012, if not sooner. All priorities will be reviewed systematically and adjusted as warranted.

The highest priority for the Chancellor's office will be the development and implementation of a comprehensive Enrollment Management plan. For much of our history, UNO's approach to enrollment management might best be described as "underfunded and unfocused". This is not intended as a criticism, it is simply a realistic observation that a strategic, and well-coordinated management plan has not existed, nor has it risen to the level of an institutional priority. The competition for students is fierce and our commitment to excellence is unwavering; therefore, enrollment management must be a priority.

Accordingly, Associate Vice Chancellor Thomas Wallace is leading a campus team to create a comprehensive enrollment management plan for 2020 which will address access issues, target populations for enrollment growth, goals for retention and graduation rates, and faculty and staff increases necessary to support a cultural of excellence.

The base plan will be in place by Spring 2012 and will be reviewed and adjusted according to progress, shifts in the market place, and in the higher education landscape. The current University tuition sharing formula will be a primary source of funding, and I will work with Academic and Student Affairs and Business and Finance to develop a plan for earmarking resources to support needs corresponding with growth and identified priorities.

The Enrollment Management plan will work in concert with the Strategic Communications plan for marketing and branding and will include consistent messaging in radio, television, and print media buys, and other initiatives, such as the virtual campus tour project that is nearing completion. We'll identify target markets such as Western Iowa, and individuals with college credit but without degrees, which will supplement traditional recruitment efforts in the metropolitan area, greater Nebraska, and internationally. We will also take advantage of hockey's regional and national exposure with television spots beginning this fall.

As an institution, we have moved into the fast lane. But, in doing so, it is easy to get so caught up in "doing" that we forget to reflect on the many achievements made by the campus community. As has been the case each year, the list of activities and accomplishment is extensive, and that is the good news. The bad news is: time will permit mentioning only a few:

- The University Capital Campaign continues to provide a margin of excellence across each of the NU campuses. This campaign may be the most successful in the country at this time, and UNO has been the beneficiary of this success thanks to the efforts of our foundation partners. (Ask them to stand and be recognized) Currently, UNO has received approximately 29 million dollars for academic program and faculty support, \$22.5 million in direct student support,

and \$67 million dollars in capital and equipment. This support adds significant value to our campus, and once again special thanks to our community for their support.

- As a campus community, we celebrated receiving three university wide awards in one year, which is a first. Information Systems and Quantitative Analysis received the Departmental Teaching Award, Jonna Holland from the marketing



program. UNO continues offering the Summer Scholars program and a variety of campus based academic and athletic emersion camps, and is partnering with Avenue Scholars and Metropolitan Community College to prepare at risk students for higher education opportunities and success.

- Educator preparation and continuing education has been greatly enhanced through UNO's leadership in STEM education initiatives and partnerships, providing a home to the national Oxbow Writing Project, Metropolitan English Teacher Link, and the Culture Walks and Urban Immersion initiatives. The popularity of UNO's Dual Enrollment Program continues to grow as this past year it served 3500 area high school students in 45 different courses involving 24 UNO departments. Over 1600 students have matriculated at UNO and are experiencing considerable success.
- At risk, first generation, and underserved students on our campus continue to receive extraordinary support through learning communities like the Thompson Scholars, Goodrich Program, Avenue Scholars and the new the Jim and Shirley Young Scholars.

department signed a Letter of Intent to play Men's basketball at the new Ralston Arena beginning with the 2012/13 season, allowing us to capture additional new revenue, all contributing to the financial well-being of the department.

- Finally, I'm pleased to report that, as the quality of our incoming students steadily improves, our efforts to be student centered and academically excellent seem to be striking a cord with current and prospective students. Institutional Research indicates that student satisfaction remains very high with 95% saying they would recommend UNO to other college seeking students. Personal recommendations of this sort are one of our most powerful recruitment tools and should be a great source of campus pride. Yes, it is a great time to be a Maverick.

Two years ago as we entered a new decade, I shared a vision of what UNO could look like in 2020. I would like to close today by revisiting six specific areas of consideration.

- Given the remarkable advances in building capacity I believe we should aim to be a campus of 20,000 students in 2020. Interim Vice Chancellor Reed said in the media recently, that this is a stretch goal, but doable. I agree on both counts. I'm convinced that the Enrollment Management plan mentioned earlier will provide the blueprint to guide this growth while sustaining quality.
- As the campus grows we'll need to provide additional on-campus housing. Resident housing for 20% of our student population would better align us with other metropolitan peers, translating into an additional 1,900 beds for the 20,000 student target. Student housing remains a significant aspect of our long range facilities planning going forward.
- Distance education provides a relatively new opportunity to serve on-campus, resident, nonresident, and international students. This delivery mode provides scheduling flexibility for on-campus students, accommodating work schedules or simply providing options to more quickly reach graduation. Resident, nonresident and international students could take advantage of UNO's quality programs without coming to campus or relocating. It should be noted that the Information Services Academic Partnership for Instruction has provided extraordinary support through training and technology, which will need to expand as the distance opportunities increase. A doubling or even tripling of credit hours utilizing this delivery mode appears to be a reasonable 2020 target, as exemplified by the success of the Colleges of Public Affairs and Community Service and Information Science and Technology in this regard.
- I suggested that we would want to achieve classification as a Doctoral Granting Research institution by 2020. This has recently occurred and will require nurturing of our current doctoral programs and consideration of new programs that fit our mission.
- Concurrently, research and creative activity is directly linked to the reclassification as a Doctoral Granting Research Institution. I proposed a 2S

