

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
2012 STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS
CHANCELLOR JOHN E. CHRISTENSEN

SEPTEMBER 9, 2012

Omaha – Omaha – What follows are remarks delivered by Chancellor John Christensen during the 2012 Convocation on Sept. 19 inside the University of Nebraska at Omaha Strauss Performing Arts Center in front of an audience of students, faculty, staff, alumni and the community.

Good morning and welcome to UNO's annual State of the University address. Thank you for attending, and special thanks to guests who have joined us today.

With the academic year under way, I'm reminded of what a privilege it is to be part of the UNO family. The start of the fall semester and the anticipation and excitement of Welcome Week are special times in the life of a campus, perhaps only equaled by commencement. I hope you agree with me that working at the university is clearly the best job in the world. Welcome back to returning faculty, staff, and students, and a special Maverick welcome to all who are new to the campus.

As part of realizing our vision of being a premiere metropolitan university, we have been preparing to grow in enrollment, image, and quality as part of our strategic agenda. In my opinion, the timing couldn't be better, nor the stars aligned more perfectly, to implement an aggressive agenda and direction for the future. A staff member said it well, when she remarked, "We are becoming the UNO I always knew, in my heart, we could be."

I think we've all sensed that potential for greatness that is certainly UNO's destiny. And that horizon is in sight, and potential is becoming a reality. Today's address will provide a general overview of the past years achievements which are the foundation for tomorrow's UNO. We'll also look at what's "on deck" for the coming year. By the way, students critique the address each year and one student recently quipped, "that guy is informative, but he is really boring." Well, I hope the next thirty minutes are informative, and, I'm just a boring guy!

The collective accomplishments of the faculty and staff in the recent past and particularly during the past year have provided the underpinnings for beginning implementation of the Enrollment Management Plan in 2013 and our goal of increasing to 20,000 students by 2020. We have built capacity, transitioned to a doctoral granting research university, moved to Division 1 athletics, expanded student life and housing, and reaffirmed our long term commitment to being student centered, academically excellent, and engaged with our community. This coupled with some significant and

fundamental changes to our way of doing business has placed us in a strong strategic position for success.

Thanks to the management efforts of our facilities team, we have created approximately 1.6 million sq. ft. of new and renovated teaching/learning and student life spaces, making available needed capacity for growing and creating a culture of excellence in all that we do. The Omaha community, as you know, embraces and expects excellence, and we offer heartfelt thanks for their extraordinary support. Also, special thanks to our NU Foundation colleagues led by Lori Byrne, our campaign Chair and fellow alum Jim Young for his leadership and vision, and to Clark Lauritsen who led the team with incredible energy and insight when Jim was unavailable to participate.

As we prepare for 2020 and beyond, our campus planning team is collaborating with the SmithGroup, Paulien and Associates, and HDR to create a long range facilities plan for the coming generations of Mavericks. Our team is also currently involved in implementing wayfinding, signage, and branding across the Dodge and Pacific campuses.

Reflected in the undergraduate growth is a 9.5% increase in transfers, 12.4% increase in minorities, and a 19% increase in international students. Thanks to the support of President Milliken and the Board of Regents, the Iowa MAP program has extended its' reach into 8 additional Western Iowa counties, resulting in an uptick of 11.2%. Overall graduate enrollment was down 3.9% however, the number of new graduate students grew 4% and there were small gains in international, minority, and Iowa student ranks. With the implementation of the recruitment and retention phases of the enrollment plan in 2013, I anticipate more robust growth in enrollment beginning in 2015.

The quality of our faculty/staff and academic programs is obviously a significant factor in realizing our vision. As a result of the budget challenges of the recent past, we collaboratively made decisions to bank unfilled positions where ever possible until the fiscal environment became more stable and predictable. This decision of course, required creativity and innovation as well as individuals giving that extra effort to insure that we did not compromise the quality of the operation in any way. As a direct result, we kicked off this academic year with the largest group of new faculty and staff hires in my memory.

More importantly the quality of those new to the campus is simply incredible and complements the talented and deeply committed faculty and staff we currently have at UNO. Clearly, this is a lynch pin for future success.

The Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs has instituted a new program to directly support academic quality. The Faculty Fellows program provides selected faculty an opportunity to develop administrative skill sets while applying their expertise to issues of current importance to the campus. This year the fellows will address general education, remissions strategies, research initiatives, and faculty leadership and development.

National program accreditation has long been one of the measures of academic quality. Programs, where national accreditation is available, choose to participate as part of their efforts to insure continuous improvement and quality assurance. During the past year Athletic Training, Speech Language Pathology, School Psychology, Computer Science, Management Information Systems, Public Administration, and Air Transport Administration were part of the systematic review cycle. I'm pleased to announce that after extensive selfevaluation and national site team visits and reviews, each of these programs received reaccreditation. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness has established a new performance information gateway (PING) that will also assist in quality improvement by providing progress indicators and academic department dashboards.

As we continue to monitor and address workforce needs, UNO added new degree options including a PhD in Exercise Science, an MS in Information Assurance, and a BS in Emergency Management as well as several discipline certificates suggested by

leaders in the market place. Moreover, new programs currently in the approval pipeline include a Center for Urban Sustainability, MS/PhD in Biomedical Informatics in collaboration with UNMC, and dual degrees in Social Gerontology with UNL's School of Law and the Department of Child, Youth, and Family Studies.

As the landscape of academic delivery changes, our colleges with the support of IT services, continue to carefully expand high quality online courses and programs through the University of Nebraska's OnLine Worldwide. Last year, UNO's offerings totaled more than 40,000 credit hours and I'm pleased to announce the establishment of a new Teaching and Technology Center initiated by Information Technology and Academic Affairs. The center will support the integration and application of best practices into the pedagogy of traditional, blended, and online teaching and learning.

The change in status to a Doctoral Research Granting institution not only recognizes the value of the scholarly and creative work of our faculty and students, it changes public perception and challenges us to deepen our commitment to this aspect of the mission. During the past year, extramural research funding dipped as a result of a Congressional decision to suspend federal earmarks. However, I remain very confident that we will meet and exceed our 25 million dollar target by 2020. The quality of support provided by the Offices of Research and Creative Activity and Sponsored Programs and the commitment and support of Academic Affairs, the Graduate College, and the academic units across campus is the source of my confidence.

During the past year, approximately 600,000 dollars was invested in faculty/student research support through programs such as FIRE and FUSE, not to mention the support provided by individual academic units. The number and quality of grant applications has increased and we currently have several significant proposals under review.

Upon completion, the renovation of PKI will create increased space dedicated to research clusters and the development of intellectual property while construction has begun on the world's first free standing facility exclusively dedicated to Biomechanics research. Furthermore, an historic barn has been moved to the Allwine Prairie Reserve and will be renovated into a teaching/research facility while the Elkhorn River Research Station brought online last year will be replicated on the Platte and Missouri rivers as well as internationally. These additions to our research capacity will encourage multidisciplinary and collaborative work across campus, among institutions, and in the

efforts of Information Technology Services a network upgrade has increased Library access speed to 10 Gb.

As the campus research infrastructure matures, our global agenda and presence continues to expand. The campus is now the home to approximately 1,800 international students from 131 countries. Student/faculty exchange and academic/research partnerships with 22 international institutions and 23 sister universities located in all corners of the world, afford unlimited possibilities for internationalizing our perspectives and operations in this global society.

The University Honors program grew approximately 15% during the past academic year and now serves more than 700 students while our learning communities serving first generation, underserved, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students continues to grow and thrive.

Learning communities including Honors, Goodrich, Thompson, Young, Pechar, and Avenue scholars are making a significant impact of the access and success of more than 1,400 hundred students collectively. Students' academic progress and retention rates exceeding 90%, illustrate the value of establishing cohorts, maintaining high expectations, and offering carefully planned advising and mentoring. Additionally, the support services provided by University Division, Project Achieve, Multicultural Affairs, and our academic success centers has paid dividends to our learning community students as well as the student body at large.

Our student athletes, another albeit more informal learning community, continue to represent our Maverick spirit well, both on and off the field. Perhaps most importantly, our student athletes earned a cumulative GPA of 3.2 with women's volleyball and men's hockey leading the way. As a result of private support, construction has started on the Ethel S. Abbot Student Athlete Development Center, and Hamilton Academic Excellence Room, which will continue to nurture the academic performance of our student athletes.

As you well know 2011/12 was a watershed year for UNO student athletes, coaches and staff, department leadership and all of us who wear our Maverick pride on our sleeves, and hold it in our hearts. Following very difficult and personally painful decisions regarding the elimination of football and wrestling, Athletics has successfully completed its first year of transition into Division 1 and the Summit League. And, for the first time in 11 years, the department closed out the fiscal year in the black. As a result of the department's excellent fiscal and operational leadership, UNO is one of only two nonfootball plamc3.0 () Tj E7 and the Suew appr q 0.24 0 0 0.24 155.6515 128 1 a90.25307 276.9471

soccer pitch at Caniglia Field and work continues regarding a future home for Maverick athletics on campus.

I'm proud of UNO's commitment to being stewards of place and engaged with our community. The addition of a "one of a kind" Community Engagement Center will provide an opportunity to set the standard for metropolitan university engagement, thanks to the lead gift provided by the Weitz Family Foundation. To that end, Drs. Ira Harkavy and Barbara Holland, leading authorities in university/community engagement will

- The School of Criminology and Criminal Justice cosponsored the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in Courts and the U.S. Marshal's Office Drug Enforcement Training.
- The College of Education and the Metropolitan Omaha Education Consortium have provided dynamic professional development, resulting in 32 area teachers receiving national teaching certification.
- The Colleges of Business Administration and Information Science and Technology are helping launch a new generation of entrepreneurs with a pilot program aimed at providing their students with information on business startups, innovation, commercialization of technology and growing a small business.
- Information Science and Technology hosted International workshops on CyberDefense and IT Project Management as well as an international Conference on Computational Sciences
- The College of Business' Center for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Franchising hosted a Young Entrepreneur Summit with NBDC and the U.S. Small Business Administration
- The School of Communications won its first national championship in oratory, and special congratulations to our now famous student Tunette Powell
- Mammel Hall received several design and construction honors, too many to list, and was the first University of Nebraska building to be Leed gold certified.
- The Office of STEM Education has partnered with the Strategic Air Command Museum to jointly develop extensive K12 outreach programs in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.
- Communication Fine Arts and Media won the highest civi70 50.77B,4 00r8250 T1Tj ET @ 0.24 0
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- We have two years remaining in the Capital Campaign and we will redouble our efforts as we focus on campus priorities and the original campaign priorities not yet completed.
- We will initiate a 12 month, trimester like, academic pilot program beginning in May. Essentially the pilot will explore balancing curricular offering across fall, spring, and summer sessions, taking advantage of space and parking availability during the summer, and creating flexibility for students, faculty, and programs.
- A campus forum on October 9th will provide an update and discussion of enrollment management progress. At this same time, we will begin to consider the integration of priorities, the budget, and the University strategic framework into the campus strategic plan. These discussions will be a part of the annual Strategic Planning meeting in February. Likewise, in the Spring, a second forum will be held to review progress of the strategic priorities in Academic and Student Affairs, Business and Finance, and Athletics.
- During the coming academic year, UNO remissions policies and practices will be reviewed and recommendations for change will be made, where appropriate.
- We'll remain vigilant on changes in higher ed and Federal/State policy which potentially influences our campus agenda and practice.
- Groundbreaking ceremonies for the Community Engagement Center and the Biomechanics Research facilities on October 24th.
- And finally we will be celebrating anniversary milestones: 100 years for the Alumni Association, 75 years for the Grace Abbott School of Social Ua4 0 0 0.24 113.7726 472.1