

2012

State of the University Address

UNO Office of the Chancellor
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**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.

I announced at last years' State of the University address, that enrollment management would be the overarching priority for the Chancellor's office and the campus. I'm pleased to report considerable progress during the past year in spite of some delays due to personnel changes within our consultant firm, Noel Levitz.

In conjunction with our campus enrollment management team, Noel Levitz will have recruitment and retention plans in place by January. In the interim, Institutional Research, now the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, has made enormous strides in building data sets supporting our understanding of targets of opportunity, the current retention, persistence, and completion environment, and the development of resources for evidence based decision making.

The enrollment management planning process has led to a reorganization of Student Affairs. This change in structure and philosophy closely aligns recruitment, orientation, admissions, financial aid, and student support operations to provide a seamless transition from first student contact through graduation and career placement. We have made several key hires to bring remarkable talent into this newly restructured unit.

We have ramped up our collaboration and articulation agreements with community colleges, enhanced advising through training and new technologies, redesigned Career Services to support students from arrival through job placement, and established MaV/USO to provide a one stop shop for veterans and military personnel which supports our national ranking as one of the nation's top ten universities serving veterans.

As one part of our new communications strategy, the UNO web site is being redesigned with the assistance of Lipman Hearne consultants and a campus advisory group. Our Information Technology team has been working hard to provide the expertise and new technologies facilitating the redesign, while Admissions has completed development of a virtual campus tour.

VIRTUAL TOUR VIDEO LINK (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4clchh6Vs>)

As always, big dreams require the trust and generosity of those who believe strongly in the value of our mission and vision, and in the students we serve. The University of Nebraska Capital Campaign has been instrumental in supporting our commitment to becoming a premiere metropolitan university. To date, a total of 163 million dollars has been invested in UNO's future! 93 million dollars has supported capital projects, 37 million dollars has been dedicated to supporting faculty and programs, and 33 million dollars will provide direct support to students and no, we are not finished yet!

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.

Athletics was the catalyst in the development of a new brand identity and University Relations, with the assistance of all units across campus, has made significant progress in the rebranding of UNO which has been very well received internally and in the community at large. Athletics transition to D1 has also created new opportunities for national and regional television and other media exposures, while at the same time we are preparing for marketing the campus in a variety of media venues.

Students and their families, of course, seek an excellent academic experience and career opportunities, but they also expect a vibrant and safe campus experience. Business and Finance in cooperation with the Omaha Police Department, FBI, and the US Department of Homeland Security, have reviewed campus safety policies and practices as part of a continuous review and improvement process. As result of these efforts, Risk Management, Behavioral Threat, Information Security and Safety Audit teams have been established, professional development and training opportunities have been expanded, and an emergency management handbook and response plans have been develop. It should be noted that Student Government has embraced this process and will be conducting campus walks to provide suggestions regarding safety, maintenance, image opportunities and general improvements.

Campus life has been enhanced by the renovation and additions to HPER, changes in the Student Center, access to a broad array of intermural, social, and cultural activities, not to mention a wide variety of student organizations, clubs, and Greek life opportunities. Student health and counseling services have been expanded, while opportunities promoting healthy and safe life styles have been broadened and are becoming part of the campus cultural. UNO's enrollment has grown for the last seven years albeit in small increments. This growth is less noticeable because, while we are welcoming more students into the Maverick family, record numbers of students are completing their degrees and entering the work force. During the past year, total enrollment grew by .5%, while our total undergraduate population grew by 1.4%.

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 private sector. Yes, there is every reason to be optimistic about the future of UNO's research and creativity activity.

UNO has the privilege of being the home to a "world class" library that supports our scholarly and teaching/learning agendas at the highest possible levels. Faculty and student work has been enhanced with the addition of the Web of Science and 16 new scholarly databases, the Early American Newspapers and Document Collection supported by the UNO Library Friends, the new VAST video collection, and thanks to 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 playing Division 1 programs nationally to require less than 50% state funding to operate its programs. The future of Athletics is very bright indeed, with agreements in place to play basketball at the new Ralson Arena, softball at the new Hillside Park complex, and being a founding member of Division 1's elite new hockey conference which begins play next year. Infrastructure work is underway on the new

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 be coming to campus in October. They will share their expertise regarding maximizing the use of the new center and establishing metrics that will measure the value added resulting from our engagement.

The Service Learning Academy continues to significantly impact academic quality while at the same time providing meaningful service in the community. Once again the array of service learning opportunities grew last year to 118 courses involving approximately 1,800 students and this fall, offerings for a single semester span 84 courses with enrollments exceeding 1,400 students. Dedicated University service days such as Global Youth, Martin Luther King, and three and seven days of service totaled 16 days and 3,147 participants contributed more than 17,000 hours to community betterment. The breadth and depth of community partnerships is truly remarkable and far too extensive to detail. However, the SummerWorks partnership sponsored by the Kiewit, Daugherty, and Sherwood foundations perhaps characterize this form of community engagement. This project was administered by UNO, and made available summer employment for 142 underserved and economically disadvantaged junior and senior high school students. Under the direct supervision of UNO and with the collaboration of the community and the City of Omaha, these young people made significant contributions to parks, museums, community centers, and other public facilities. Clearly, wins were created on all sides of this partnership.

As you can certainly tell by now, the accomplishments of the UNO family have been many and meaningful and at the great risk of omission I would like to offer Kudos for some very special accomplishments:

- Our Alumni Association received the CASE International Circle of Excellence Award for its Young Alumni programming
- UNO received the Energy Star Award as one of the country's top five universities for Information Technology sustainability
- The Peter Kiewit Institute was named a member of the National Cybersecurity Task Force
- And on October 1, UNO will host the Business Security Summit as a kickoff event to National Cyber Security Awareness Month.
- The Value Investor Conference, a part of the College of Business' Berkshire Hathaway Week, drew 160 participants from 22 countries across six continents.
- CPAR is serving as the lead agency for the Nebraska State Data Center
- The UNO Aviation program was named the top aviation program in the country

- 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 civic engagement award given by The Association for Theatre in Higher Education
- And speaking of engagement, this year, UNO will host the National Community Engagement Research Conference, the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities will be holding its national conference at UNO in 2015, and the campus again made the President's US Honor Roll for community engagement. And, our colleagues have received national commendation as well:
- Mike McGinnis, Director of PKI, was awarded the prestigious Vance R. Wanner Award from the Military Operations Research Society for his contributions to national security
- Gail Baker, Dean of the College of Communication Fine Arts and Media, won an Emmy Award for documentary writing
- Dan Blanke, Director of the School of Health Physical Education and Recreation , has been inducted into the National Academy of Kinesiology.
- Ann Coyne, Grace Abbott School of Social Work faculty member, received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of Social Workers.
- And Josie MetalCorbin Health Physical Education and Recreation faculty member was named Dance Scholar/Artist by the National Dance Association.

So WHAT'S NEXT:

- 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 Work, 60 years for the College of Business Administration, 40 years for the College of Public Affairs and Community Service, 40 years for the Goodrich Program, and 25 years for the College of Communication, Fine Arts, and Media's Prairie Visions Institute.

In total, the accomplishments and campus enhancements summarized today, have elevated the image and quality of UNO and will serve enrollment growth as prospective students contemplate where they will pursue their higher education.

In closing, I want to thank you for your many contributions to the momentum we currently enjoy. Our journey to achieve excellence in all we do is far from over, but together we are turning dreams into reality. I have said enough and our colleagues will close the address in one of the newly developed promotional videos that tell the Maverick story.

UNO 2012 CAMPUS VIDEO (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fG9HMwT6_s)

Please join us in the Student Union for a reception, thank you for attending and we are adjourned.