**2025 UNL Budget Reduction Proposal**

1. **General Overview**

**Budget Reduction Plan**

Chancellor Bennett communicated to campus on March 4 that “a reduction of the magnitude of $20M must be driven by UNL’s strategic priorities, informed by performance metrics, and aligned with the [NU System’s developing strategic plan](https://nebraska.edu/strategic-plan) and the needs of the state of Nebraska.” He further communicated on August 4 that UNL would develop a plan to reduce its budget by $27.5 million. This recognizes our structural deficit of $21 million (from FY24 and FY25) and an additional $6.5 million in proactive reductions. UNL structural deficits have resulted from revenue not keeping pace with expenses due to a combination of downward trends in state appropriations, net tuition and campus allocations combined with historically high inflation of operating costs, including health care, property and liability premiums, and utilities.

**Process**

In response to Chancellor Bennett’s charge and in alignment with NU and UNL’s vision and strategic priorities, every academic program at UNL was reviewed in accordance with performance metrics. These metrics were developed and refined by the Executive Leadership Team in close collaboration with college leadership teams, the Academic Planning Committee, and department/program executive officers. The following metrics align with the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Post-secondary Education criteria for the regular review of academic programs, as well as the revised and approved APC criteria for the review of programs.

The quantitative measures described below have been supplemented by qualitative assessments of unit/college mission and wholistic contributions to the state of Nebraska in relation to considerations such as needs of the state, workforce alignment, mission of Nebraska Extension, and public service/engagement.

**Strategic Categories for Academic Program Reviews**

Instruction: The guiding principles for Instructional Resource metrics are as follows:

* Growth: Is the unit/program growing?

Measures: 4-year instructional SCH share of growth %; 4-year all majors share of growth %

* Student Demand: Are the majors in the unit/program in demand?

Measure: Instructional SCH; All majors (AY 23-24)

* Efficiency: Are the resources in the unit/program used efficiently?

Measure: Instructional SCH/Instructional FTE (AY 23-24)

* Effectiveness: What are the Student Success metrics for the unit/program?

Measure: Degrees awarded/majors (5-year average undergraduate); First-year retention (5-year average undergraduate)

* Tuition: How much tuition does the unit generate?

Measure: Total tuition less instructional original state-aided budget[[1]](#footnote-1)

Notes:

* All metrics are weighted equally
* All metrics include Undergraduate, Graduate, and Professional data except for first-year retention
* HR and apportionment data are currently unavailable prior to 2020

Research: The guiding principles for selecting Research Resource metrics are as follows:

* Research Stature: At what level is the unit contributing to elevating UNL’s research stature?

Measure: AAU Phase 1 indicators normalized by T/TT headcount; Normalized federal research expenditures; Normalized highly prestigious awards, fellowships and memberships; Normalized book publications; Normalized citations. All of the above measures are defined by AAU membership policy (FY 14-23)

* Prominence and Reputation: How does the unit’s research contributions compare to its peers?

Measure: SRI percentile (per Academic Analytics) comparison to public AAU institutions

* Resource Generation: What level of external sponsorship is being received relative to state budget?

Measure: Average sponsored awards for the purpose codes research, teaching and public service (including NU Foundation) per state-aided funding (FY 20 – 24)

* Growth: Is externally sponsored research growing?

Measure: 4-year growth of externally sponsored research awards (including NU Foundation) calculated by unit’s share of UNL total growth

Notes Regarding Methodology:

* Z scores are calculated for every metric across every unit/program. Z-scores are used to provide a consistent scoring methodology across varying metrics and tell us how many standard deviations away a given value lies from the mean.
* The individual metrics (11 for instruction and 7 for research) across the Instructional and Research metrics are weighted equally to come up with a single instructional z score and a single research z score.
* Total instructional and research Z scores are weighted by instructional and research apportionment by unit/program to generate a unit’s overall z score.
* Median Absolute Deviation (MAD) scores were incorporated into the metrics to provide an alternative to z-scores. MAD provides an alternative to the use of standard deviation in z-scores and can be a better scoring system when analyzing non-normal distributions and outliers.
* A pooled scoring method was also applied. Each metric was rescaled using z-scores based upon pooled comparisons within each discipline provided by APC (Agriculture, Architecture, Business and Law, Communications, Education, Engineering, Fine Arts, Humanities, Sciences, Social Sciences).

1. **Justification for Proposed Program Eliminations**

Units/programs in the lowest tier of performance assessment, taking into account both instructional and research performance, were identified for additional, detailed review. As noted above, academic program performance metrics were developed in close alignment with the articulated criteria for supporting the reduction or elimination of programs, as specified by, “Procedures to be Invoked for Significant Budget Reduction Reallocations and Reductions” V. 1a (November 1, 2022). The academic programs that are proposed for elimination through this budget reduction process meet many of the specific criteria recommended by the APC for determining programs in which reduction or elimination may be feasible.

1. **Justification for Proposed Department Realignments**

Academic programs that are central to the overall mission and sustainable future of Nebraska have been identified through the application of consistent data-informed metrics covering research and teaching across UNL. To accelerate institutional strategic priorities for student success, research excellence, and fulfilling our public engagement and Extension mission, these units/programs must be preserved. These units/programs also present opportunities to leverage existing areas of expertise with closely aligned programs for improved synergy, impact, and greater efficiency. In accordance with APC criteria for supporting reorganization, select units/programs that “have sufficient overlap in subject matter and approach or disciplinary method” (V. 2a) have been proposed for integration. In all such cases, administrative efficiencies will be realized through the recommended reorganization plan.

1. **Lower performing units not recommended for reorganization or reduction**

In some cases, units/programs in the lower tier for instructional and research performance have not been recommended for reorganization or reduction at this time. The in-depth quantitative review of academic programs, supplemented by qualitative assessments with college leadership, identified units/programs that may satisfy some key performance measures, meet unique workforce and economic development needs for the state of Nebraska, and/or are determined to be central to the comprehensive mission of UNL.

**Proposed Program Elimination**

**Statistics**

The proposed plan would eliminate a standalone Department of Statistics offering BS, MS, and PhD degrees and move the university towards a distributed model that leverages expertise embedded across IANR, UNL, and the NU System.

The plan proposes to strategically deploy a portion of the state-appropriated funds to continue to offer selected undergraduate and graduate courses to ensure students gain essential skills in statistics and data analytics for their future careers and provide statistical consulting through the Statistical Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration and Consultation Lab (SC3L) Help Desk to support research across IANR and UNL.

Budget reductions would be achieved through the elimination of 12 FTE.

See the attached metrics analysis for the Department of Statistics with supporting documents.

1. Instructional Original state-aided budget is estimated by allocating a proportion of the unit’s original state-aided budget that matches allocation for faculty teaching apportionment. For example, if a unit has 50% of their faculty resources allocated toward teaching than 50% of the unit’s original state-aided budget is allocated toward instruction. To facilitate comparisons across all UNL units, differential tuition and remissions are not included in this calculation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)