

ALERT **TOP STORY** **TOPICAL**

UNL department runs TV ad during NU-Iowa game asking regents to oppose eliminating programs

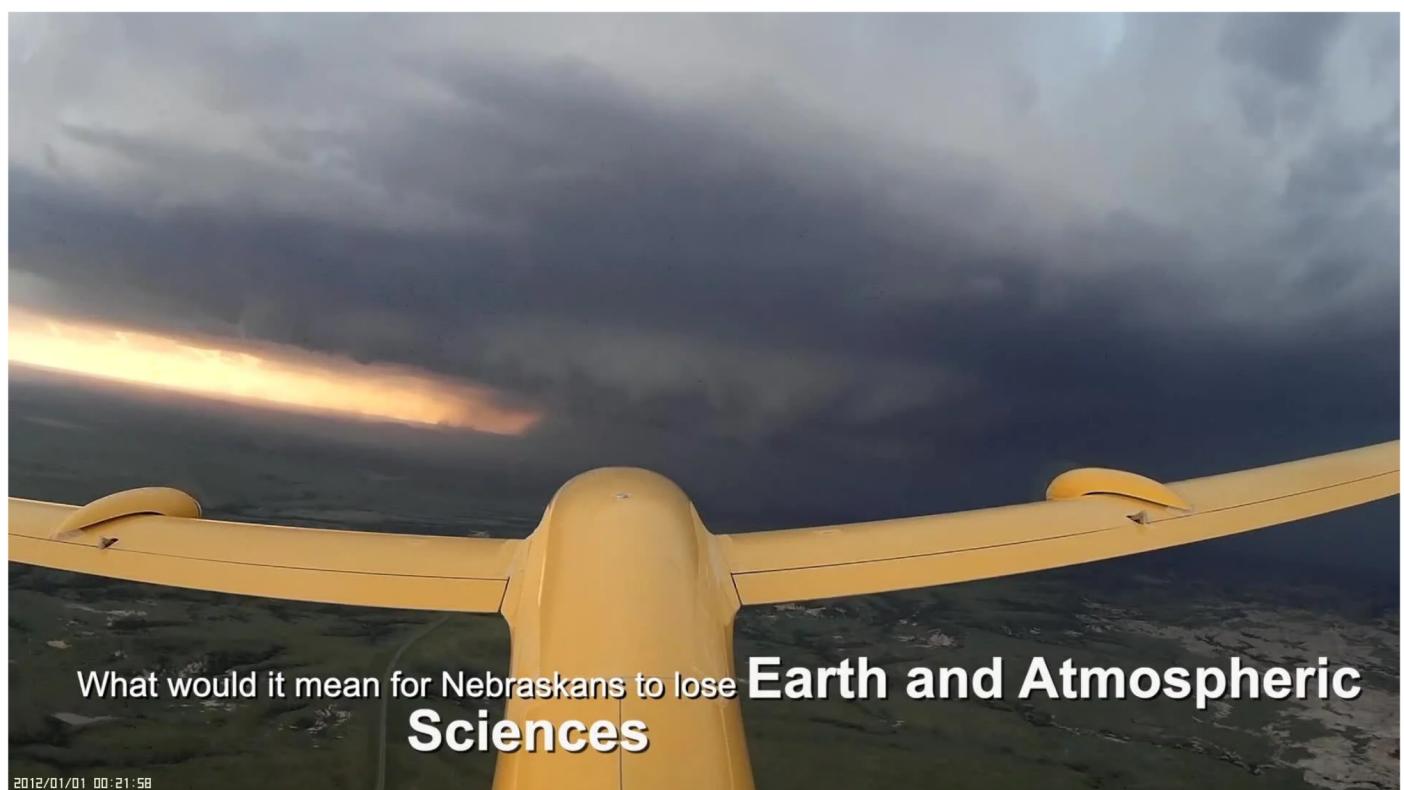
Chris Dunker

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Among the commercials that ran during last Friday's football game between Nebraska and Iowa, viewers may have been hooked by one local spot.

The **30-second ad**, which ran during CBS' broadcast, asked viewers to contact the University of Nebraska Board of Regents and encourage them to oppose cutting the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences.

Eliminating the department, one of four academic units that regents could choose to dismantle this Friday, is part of a larger strategy to cut \$27.5 million from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's budget.



A 30-second ad asks viewers to contact the University of Nebraska Board of Regents and encourage them to

oppose cutting the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences.

The spot aired as faculty across UNL have planned a “Week of Action” **leading up to the Dec. 5 meeting**, which is set to begin at 9 a.m. in the Varner Hall Boardroom at 3835 Holdrege St.

Produced by **UNL faculty in the department**, the ad from the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences asks Nebraskans to consider a future without locally trained meteorologists and geologists.

“What would it mean for Nebraskans to lose Earth and Atmospheric Sciences expertise?” a woman’s voice says over images of a drone flying into dark storm clouds.

“EAS-trained meteorologists save lives, EAS-research invests in securing Nebraska’s water and energy resources,” the voice continues as a map of the state with regents’ districts marked on it comes on screen. “Tell your regent, vote no on eliminating EAS.”

Clinton Rowe, the chair of the department, said the TV spot came out of conversations among faculty about how Earth and Atmospheric Sciences could break through to regents ahead of the meeting.

The department worked with a video expert at UNL to cut together the ad and reached out to Lincoln-based KOLN/KGIN-TV on how to run it during the Huskers’ regular-season finale.

Using discretionary dollars held for the department by the University of Nebraska Foundation, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences paid \$10,000 to have the ad run three times.

“We are pulling out all the stops we can,” said Rowe, a 40-year employee of UNL. “We think that it’s a misguided proposal and we want to try to influence the Board of Regents in whatever way we can.”

According to the regents’ agenda, the department has reported declining enrollment and scored low on metrics used to evaluate instruction and research output, although



Clinton Rowe

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

faculty have disputed the accuracy of those measurements as well as how they have been interpreted.

While administrators said Earth and Atmospheric Sciences had negative scores on 8 of 9 instruction metrics and 5 of 7 research metrics, UNL's Department of Statistics — another on the chopping block — said those indicators have been misinterpreted.

They point to a document explaining the metrics that was provided to academic units earlier this year that states positive or negative scores were used to help determine the "distance from the mean in standard deviations," not the performance itself.

"A negative score does not imply that a unit does something poorly," the document said, "nor does a positive imply the opposite interpretation."

Still, UNL said eliminating the department would result in a gross savings of \$1.85 million annually, **largely through cutting 13 full-time positions**, though faculty also argue the savings put forward by administrators do not take into account revenue created by those units.

The Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences — the only bachelor's and master's degree-offering unit of its kind in the state — says the damage done through the budget cut would be greater than the savings realized.

Faculty in the department have expertise in how thunderstorms form and intensify, winter storms that turn severe, cloud physics and severe weather warning procedures.

The 2024 blockbuster "Twisters" **drew inspiration from tornado research** done within the department **using drones**.

The department also has expertise in groundwater modeling for irrigation resource management, rare earth deposits and structural geology, as well as carbon storage and hydrogen exploration — or how humans can transition away from fossil fuels.

Cara Burberry, an associate professor with 15 years of experience at UNL, said the TV spot focused on the research that would connect with all Nebraskans using photos and video of real-life Husker students and faculty working in the field.

The imagery — in particular a tornado skirting the northeast edge of Lincoln in 2024 and students huddling in a river basin — was meant to convey the breadth of EAS' impact on the state to connect the department to all Nebraskans, she said.

"We, as a department, help protect the fabric of Nebraska," said Burberry, a former oil industry geologist who now studies how humans can transition away from fossil fuels. "That's something we wanted to try and get across."

Rowe, who helped author the 2014 report on the impacts of climate change on Nebraska, said if the proposed cuts go through, the UNL-trained meteorologists and groundwater specialists will have to go outside the state to get a college degree.

"In 30 seconds, we couldn't cram in everything we wanted to say, so we focused on the big areas," he said. "We wanted to get something out that shows what we do in terms of research and education.

"The return on that small investment is much greater to the state and the university itself," he added. "And it's pretty minuscule in the overall budget of the university."

The TV ad produced by the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences is part of a last-minute advocacy campaign launched by UNL faculty this week.

The UNL chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) announced a "Week of Action" that began Monday with a phone bank to communicate with community organizations and students about the proposed cuts.

Other events in the "Week of Action" include:

Tuesday: The AAUP will have a sign-making rally for faculty and students at the Nebraska Union on City Campus from 1-3 p.m.

Wednesday: A New Orleans-style funeral procession led by faculty from the Hixson-Lied School of Fine and Performing Arts will "mourn the potential program and faculty losses." The procession will start at 11:30 a.m. outside of East Stadium.

Thursday: The AAUP will hold rallies to boost turnout to Friday's meeting of the Board of Regents at both the Nebraska Union and East Union. The rallies are scheduled

to be held between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Friday: Faculty are expecting to “Pack the Boardroom” during the Board of Regents’ meeting, which is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m.

Photos & video: UNL Faculty Senate makes history with Bennett no-confidence vote



Kyle Broderick of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources College, right, and Corey Rumann of the College of Education and Health Sciences wait for the results of the no-confidence vote during a Faculty Senate meeting at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus on Tuesday.

KENNETH FERRIERA, Journal Star





Chris Gustafson of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Agricultural Economics, right, rests his head in his hand as he votes during a Faculty Senate meeting at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus on Tuesday.

KENNETH FERRIERA photos, Journal Star



Corey Rumann of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Education and Health Sciences reads from his computer during a Faculty Senate meeting at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus on Tuesday.

KENNETH FERRIERA, Journal Star



Elizabeth Lewis of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education speaks during a Faculty Senate meeting at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus on Tuesday.

KENNETH FERRIERA, Journal Star



John Lindquist of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources speaks

during a Faculty Senate meeting at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus on Tuesday.

KENNETH FERRIERA, Journal Star



University of Nebraska-Lincoln Senate Faculty members cast their votes electronically during Tuesday's no-confidence vote in Chancellor Rodney Bennett at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus on Tuesday.

KENNETH FERRIERA, Journal Star





John Shrader of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Journalism and Mass Communications, holds up a sheet of paper as he explains Tuesday's no-confidence vote during a Faculty Senate meeting at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus on Tuesday.

KENNETH FERRIERA, Journal Star



L. J. McElravy, of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications, right, addresses gathered members during a Faculty Senate meeting at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus on Tuesday.

KENNETH FERRIERA, Journal Star





Faculty members applaud as the vote of no confidence in Chancellor Rodney Bennett is called during a Faculty Senate meeting at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus on Tuesday.

KENNETH FERRIERA, Journal Star



Observers applaud as the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Senate Faculty vote of no confidence in Chancellor Rodney Bennett is adopted in a meeting at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus on Tuesday.

KENNETH FERRIERA, Journal Star



University of Nebraska-Lincoln Faculty Senate members listen as rules are read out during a meeting at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus on Tuesday.

KENNETH FERRIERA, Journal Star



John Shrader, of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Journalism and Mass Communications, calls

Tuesday's Senate Faculty meeting to order at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus.

KENNETH FERRIERA, Journal Star



John Shrader of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Journalism and Mass Communications, left, looks over the tallied votes with the the coordinator of faculty governance, Karen Griffin, during a Faculty Senate meeting at the Nebraska East Union on UNL's East Campus on Tuesday.

KENNETH FERRIERA, Journal Star