

# UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA SYSTEM FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**A**lmost two years ago, in the midst of a global pandemic, we launched an ambitious new strategic plan for the University of Nebraska System.

If I could sum up the theme in one word, it would be “action” – action on behalf of our 50,000 students, our remarkable faculty and staff, and the people of Nebraska who expect their university to operate at the highest levels of quality and accountability.

We set specific, bold, measurable targets for becoming an even more accessible, collaborative, impactful university system—a university doing more than ever to produce the workforce, research, partnerships, and innovation necessary to grow Nebraska for the future.

We can all celebrate the many items we’ve “checked off” from that original plan: creation of the *Nebraska Promise* to make college possible for more students, a historic deferred maintenance partnership with the state, renewed initiatives in rural prospective, national defense, and healthcare.

But we also know we can expand the reach and impact of the University of Nebraska System even further. Our state’s needs have only grown more urgent. The value proposition for higher education has never been greater.

We’ve always said our strategic plan would be a living document. And so, with input from a diverse coalition of university stakeholders, we’ve taken a fresh look at

our document. In the pages that follow, you’ll find our updated plan, with new targets for expanded student internships, increased investment in mental health services, growing the state’s educational attainment, and other areas.

What’s more, all our goals will be accompanied by metrics against which we will regularly and publicly measure ourselves.

**“We can expand the reach and impact of the University of Nebraska System even further. Our state’s needs have only grown more urgent.”**

I’m proud that your University of Nebraska is emerging from a challenging period in a position of great strength. The future growth and competitiveness of our state has never been more closely tied to its only public university—and we are ready to act, together, for the benefit of all Nebraskans.

**TED CARTER**  
President, University of Nebraska System



# INTRO

## The University of Nebraska System Five-Year Strategy

In 2020, University of Nebraska System President Ted Carter gathered a diverse team of stakeholders to help chart the university's path forward.

The team quickly agreed on broad priorities to drive the university's work: student access and success; workforce development; partnerships; culture, diversity, and inclusion; and efficient and effective use of resources. And, the team agreed that as a four-campus system with unique expertise across the state, the University of Nebraska can bring a collective impact that is virtually unmatched.

From that early work emerged an ambitious strategic plan for the NU System. Not two years later, with a number of the initial goals accomplished, Carter and the team, together with the Board of Regents, chancellors, and others, have taken a fresh look at the document.

The goal: Articulate additional targets for expanding student opportunities and growing the state's workforce and economy for generations to come. The university's fundamental priorities are unchanged. New targets reflect several key principles:

- ▶ **Workforce shortages are perhaps the state's #1 challenge.** Nebraska especially needs more healthcare workers, IT professionals, teachers, engineers, and other high-skill workers. The University of Nebraska must lead the way in producing the workforce the state needs.
- ▶ **Student access and affordability remains a North Star.** The university must help close existing gaps in attainment, and must implement new strategies for creating access for all, including underrepresented students, military learners, rural students, working adults, and individuals who have completed some college but have not earned a degree.
- ▶ **Every dollar matters.** The university will create a new model for accountability in the use of the resources Nebraskans entrust to it.
- ▶ **Partnerships are the way forward.** No one entity can solve Nebraska's challenges alone, but together, Nebraskans can make a difference.
- ▶ Finally, **the university must be a great place to learn and work, welcoming and open to all.** The university's people are its greatest asset, and its policies, practices, and investments should reflect that.

# UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA SYSTEM MISSION & VISION

## ▶▶▶ Our Mission

The University of Nebraska System exists to transform lives and communities in Nebraska and around the world. The four campuses of the University System bring unique strengths together to create an exceptional level of quality and impact—through accessible and excellent education for diverse populations of students, research and creative activity that generates new knowledge, and service and engagement that enriches quality of life.

## ▶▶▶ Our Vision

The University of Nebraska System will be America’s preeminent public university system—a broad, diverse, and collaborative system of higher learning that leads the world in education and discovery. We will be:

- ▶ **The destination of choice for students** seeking an affordable, accessible, world-class education—in an inclusive, innovative learning environment that guarantees every student the opportunity to succeed.
- ▶ **The world leader in making breakthrough discoveries** and building the skilled workforce necessary to solve urgent 21st century challenges: water and food security, infectious disease, rural community development and vitality, national and cyber security, and early childhood education.
- ▶ **The premier partner in our communities, across the nation, and around the globe** in achieving the highest quality of life and economic prosperity for all.

# STRATEGY ONE



## Access, Affordability, and Attainment

The University of Nebraska System was founded on the principle that higher education should be accessible to all, not just a privileged few. That principle is as important today as it was more than 150 years ago, with a college degree increasingly recognized as a vital pathway to individual and economic prosperity.

Nebraskans have a basic expectation of their University: That they can attend our campuses for an outstanding education, at an affordable cost, where they can graduate on time and prepared for success in life and work. And while they're here, we will provide them the most enriching collegiate experience possible, to include internships and study abroad, participation in athletics and the arts, and community service and research. That "whole-person" experience is what our students expect and deserve.

Cost must not be a barrier for any qualified Nebraska student to attend the University. It is intentional that this broad theme comes first in our strategic plan. As we chart the path forward, the affordability, accessibility, and quality of a University of Nebraska education will continue to be our North Star.

### New

- ▶ **Expand *Nebraska Promise*** annual income threshold to \$65,000.
- ▶ **Commit to educational attainment goal** and develop strategies for its achievement, with a particular focus on increasing four-year degree attainment.

### In-Progress

- ▶ **Evaluate all University-imposed costs** to students and limit increases to the greatest extent possible.
- ▶ Strengthen **pathways to higher education.**

### Completed

- ▶ **Launch *Nebraska Promise***, a tuition-free education for Nebraska families with an annual income less than \$60,000.
- ▶ Adopt and widely share an **undergraduate and transfer student graduation guarantee.**
- ▶ Evaluate **innovative academic calendar models** to accelerate time to graduation.

### Abandoned

- ▶ Shift the University's **undergraduate tuition model** from a "per credit" to a "block" basis.

## STRATEGY TWO



### Talent Development

Nebraska's talent needs are urgent and growing. The state will have more than 34,000 annual openings in high-skill, high-demand, high-wage (H3) jobs in the years ahead, and the needs exist across the entire state. Demand for more engineers, IT professionals, nurses, teachers, physician assistants, and other professions is acute. And of course, the University will lead in supporting the backbone of Nebraska's workforce and economy, agriculture, by educating the next generation of farmers, ranchers, scientists, and others who will help feed an increasingly hungry world.

The future of higher education will be about pathways—to college, to relevant internships and academic experiences, to timely graduation, and finally, to great jobs here in Nebraska. That includes educating more of our own Nebraska students, as well as attracting new Nebraskans to our state to live, work, and raise their families.

With more skilled graduates, we'll grow our economy, workforce, and strong communities across the state.

#### New

- ▶ Provide each student an **experiential learning opportunity** with a business, organization, or community.
- ▶ Strengthen University-wide efforts to deliver **micro-credentials and non-credit courses** for students and graduates in the workforce.

#### In-Progress

- ▶ **Pursue partnerships** with the Governor, Nebraska Legislature, business leaders, philanthropic partners, and others to fund scholarships in key workforce areas.
- ▶ **Develop scholarship programs** to attract nonresident students pursuing programs in key workforce areas.
- ▶ **Build and implement collaborative models to guarantee internships, jobs, and debt forgiveness** for graduates.

## STRATEGY THREE



### Culture, Diversity, and Inclusion

A growing, thriving University of Nebraska System depends on the voices, ideas, and success of all members of our community. We must be a University for everyone—a place where diverse backgrounds and ideas are welcomed and celebrated, where robust dialogue is encouraged, and where we are intentional and transparent in exploring how we can be a better place to learn, work, and study.

We will have a bias for action in evaluating and improving our internal culture. That will include honest assessments of our successes and areas for improvement. Where there are gaps—like that between UNL and UNMC faculty salaries and their peers, which has been a challenge for too long—we will put action plans in place to better support our talented faculty, staff, and students.

We have heard loud and clear from our University community that inclusive excellence must be among our highest priorities. Our students deserve to see themselves reflected in our classrooms, and all members of our community deserve to feel valued, welcomed, and safe.

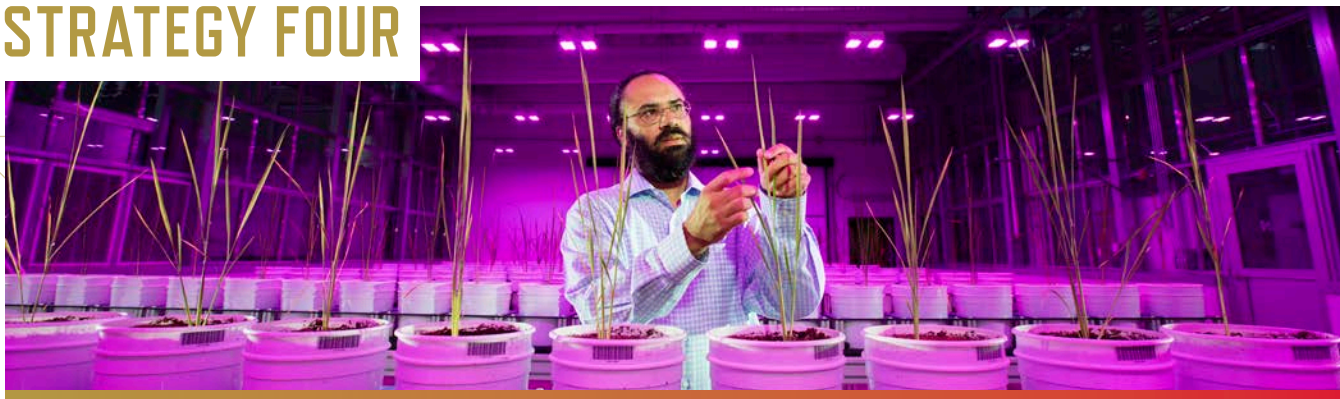
#### New

- ▶ **Fully implement standards for sexual misconduct training** across the University System.
- ▶ **Increase investment in mental and behavioral health support services** for students and employees.

#### In-Progress

- ▶ **Develop an implicit bias training program.**
- ▶ **Refine policies and procedures** to support our students and employees more fully.
- ▶ **Conduct biennial climate surveys** and develop actions plans based on the data.
- ▶ **Strive for average faculty salaries** within 98% and 102% of peer averages.
- ▶ **Eliminate gender and racial equity pay gaps** among employees through compensation studies.

## STRATEGY FOUR



### Partnerships

In pursuing excellence in and outside the classroom, we acknowledge that we can't be all things to all people. What we can do is identify a select number of areas where we can be the world leader. We will be disciplined in our investments and engagements, focusing on areas that matter to Nebraska and where we have deep expertise: Water and food security; infectious disease; rural community development and vitality; national and cyber security; and early childhood education.

Recognizing that we can't be successful alone, we will invest our time in cultivating partnerships that will advance our work—between campuses, with donors and alumni, elected leaders, our higher education partners, and with all Nebraskans, who collectively are the single largest investor in the University of Nebraska System every year.

#### New

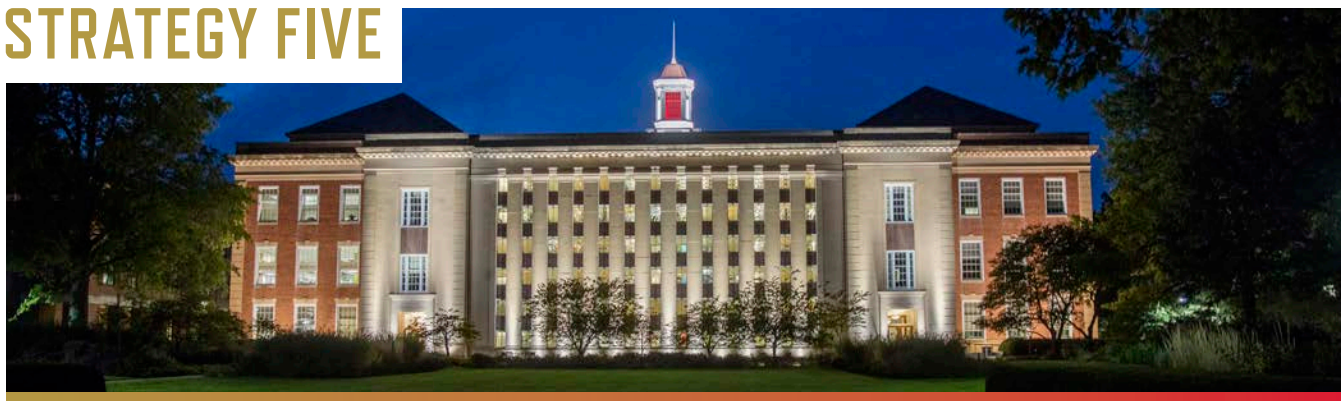
- ▶ **Promote an entrepreneurial culture and cultivate a dynamic innovation ecosystem** in Nebraska.

#### In-Progress

- ▶ **Focus University investments** in research, discovery, and creative activities, such as key programs in water and food security; infectious disease; cancer prevention; rural community development and vitality; national and cyber security; novel drug discovery; and early childhood education.
- ▶ **Increase the sense of bond and connection** among alumni and donors.
- ▶ **Increase the number of annual donors** to 75,000 by 2027.
- ▶ **Increase annual philanthropic funds received** to \$300 million by 2027.
- ▶ **Engage our nearly 400,000 alumni** in University events and leverage their voices through an advisory and advocacy network.



# STRATEGY FIVE



## Efficiency and Effectiveness

In entrusting their precious resources to us, Nebraskans expect their University to operate with common sense and prudence. We won't spend money we don't have; we will take care of the resources we do have; and we will continually look for opportunities to become leaner, more effective, and more efficient.

Of particular importance is developing a long-term plan to maintain our capital assets, including the buildings where teaching and research take place, and the information technology infrastructure that supports virtually every aspect of the academic and business enterprises. Furthermore, knowing that sustainability is a high priority for our students and employees, we will create a University-wide plan for improvement—preserving both University and natural resources.

In all of this work, we will hold ourselves to a high standard of transparency, recognizing that we have a responsibility to demonstrate accountability to those who invest their resources in us.

### In-Progress

- ▶ Develop a **5-year rolling budget**.
- ▶ Maintain a **structurally balanced budget**.
- ▶ **Improve usability of policies** and eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy.
- ▶ **Evaluate all University assets**, including intellectual property, for potential monetization and maximization.
- ▶ Establish a **University-wide sustainability plan** and goals.

### Completed

- ▶ Develop a comprehensive **University-wide capital master plan**, including facilities, infrastructure, and information technology needs.
- ▶ **Launch 2021 University Facilities Program**



## About the University of Nebraska System

The University of Nebraska System, the state's only public university, has served Nebraskans through teaching, research, outreach and engagement for over 150 years.

The university was founded on February 15, 1869, less than two years after Nebraska became the nation's 37th state. The goal of this new land-grant university was, "To afford the inhabitants of this state with the means of acquiring a thorough knowledge of the various branches of literature, science, and the arts." This goal has stood the test of time—underlying the university's dedication to the education of students, research in a broad range of disciplines, and service to the state's citizens.

**Each campus has a unique role and mission—and when viewed collectively, give the University of Nebraska a breadth that is hard to match.**

The University of Nebraska is comprised of four campuses: the University of Nebraska at Kearney, the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, the University of Nebraska Medical Center, and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Teaching, scholarly research and creative activity, and statewide outreach are at the heart of the university's work.

The university's four campuses—including an undergraduate-focused campus in Kearney, a leading Big Ten institution in Lincoln, a world-renowned academic health science center with branches across the state, and a metropolitan university in Omaha—are home to 50,000 students and 16,000 faculty and staff. The university also includes many research, extension, and service facilities statewide.





UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
System