**Effects of Proposed Cuts to the Statistics Department**

Cutting the Department of Statistics will have significant and lasting effects on the undergraduate program in the Department of Mathematics. Elimination of courses will be most deeply felt by students majoring in CAS Data Science and by students pursuing the Statistics and Data Science option and Mathematical Finance option within the Mathematics major. We were relieved to see IANR’s plan to continue to offer STAT 218, 318, 380, 462, and 463, which means there would be sufficient Statistics courses offered to complete the Data Science major and the Math major on the Mathematical Finance and the Statistics and Data Science options. However, the Statistical Modeling focus area of the Data Science major would likely need to be eliminated or greatly revised considering the proposed cuts. There would also be far fewer Statistics course options available within the Statistics and Data Science option of the Math major.

As of the beginning of the fall 2025 semester, a total of 26 students had declared a Math major under the Statistics and Data Science option, and 21 students had declared within the Mathematical Finance option. The number of students graduating in the former option has been continuously increasing since the introduction of this option in 2020. The CAS Data Science major has seen even more dramatic increases, with 17 declared majors in the fall of 2023, 59 declared majors in the fall of 2024, and 83 declared majors in the fall of 2025. The curriculum for these majors is well-balanced between Math, Computer Science, and Statistics courses, with input and shared leadership among all three departments, and we view this major as one of the most interdisciplinary majors in the university. Losing the Statistics Department would be a significant blow to this valued interdisciplinarity.

One motivating factor for the steep growth curve of the Data Science program is a strong, positive jobs outlook. This field is highly regarded across disciplines. In a 2023 conversation with Stephen Cooper, the Director of the Raikes School at the time, he declared that within five years, he expected most Raikes students would have Data Science as one of their majors. Cutting one of the three pillars of the Data Science major would almost certainly hamper this growth. Students graduating within the Statistics and Data Science option of the Math major have thus far had excellent internship and career prospects. We typically ask our graduating students to fill out a voluntary exit survey, and in 2024 and 2025, students in this option have reported completing internships at companies such as Kiewit, 84.51°, the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, and they report getting jobs as data scientists, software engineers, and a number of other positions. This field and its employment prospects are enjoying a wave of growth and popularity, and we can choose to grow with it, or we can hamstring our efforts with cuts that may ultimately prove to be shortsighted.

Finally, we understand that statistics courses will continue to be taught at UNL, but we have grave concerns about the long-term ability of the university to attract high-achieving statistics faculty with modern knowledge about a quickly evolving field, the type of faculty members who can provide high-quality instruction to our majors and who have the expertise to lead undergraduate research projects in data science. The department has been in conversations about our curriculum with Bill Anderson, a retired data science expert who held leadership positions at Microsoft, United Healthcare, and Ford, and who has consulted for senior design groups within the Raikes School. In a recent meeting, Bill reported that the use of statistics in the real world is dramatically changing. The meteoric rise of AI tools has enabled data scientists to implement new solutions with unprecedented speed, but according to Bill, these solutions require statistics for measurement – to determine to what extent new techniques are working and whether they are reliable, ethical, and fair – and the industry has not yet fully realized this need. Our Data Science majors, with their unique synthesis of mathematical, computing, and statistical knowledge are well-positioned to be leaders in their fields upon graduating from UNL, and without a thriving Department of Statistics, we may not be able to continue making this assertion with confidence.

**Effects of Proposed Cuts to the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences**

The proposed cuts to the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences would mean that most or all Geology and Meteorology-Climatology courses would no longer be offered, and many of these courses can be taken as electives in the Mathematics of Physical Phenomena option of the Mathematics major. As a result of these cuts, we would need to eliminate the Geology and Meteorology-Climatology courses from the Mathematics of Physical Phenomena option. In the fall of 2025, this option included 35 students, second only to the Standard option for Math majors.

One of these students, Lily Rippeteau, prepared a statement about the proposed cuts. Lily is a senior Math major within the Mathematics of Physical Phenomena option, and she is currently doing research with a professor in the EAS department on a project related to using AI for drought prediction. She is one of the department’s prestigious Eastman Scholarship recipients, and she was recently spotlighted as a high-achieving model student for others at our department’s Fall Welcome Event for majors.

Regarding the course work that she is completing, Lily asserts, “I see a perfect match for mathematics, computer science, and engineering students who want to apply their skills in a way that directly impacts people’s safety, economic consequences of weather events, and agricultural outlooks.” Like our offering in data science, the Mathematics of Physical Phenomena option allows students to pair their mathematics education with real-world interests and applications in other departments, and this interdisciplinarity attracts many students like Lily. Unfortunately, if Department of Earth and Atmosphere Sciences is cut, we will lose this interdisciplinary offering along with the possible connected research experiences. Ultimately, we risk failing students like Lily, who has contributed significantly to our department and to our university, and who has made so much of her education at UNL.

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