

Arian Alai's online submission is below. He sent a copy to me on LinkedIn.

Hello Chris,

I hope you are well. This morning, I submitted the feedback form to help counter the elimination of our department. As per your request for a copy of feedback submissions, I'll paste a copy of what I wrote below.

"As a current graduate student and teaching assistant who has also worked in Nebraska's workforce, I believe eliminating the Statistics Department would be a serious mistake for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. From the student perspective, this department has been crucial to my academic growth, as well as that of my peers, both inside and outside the program. Before attending graduate school, I worked as a Business Intelligence Analyst in data analytics at Sandhills Global, one of Nebraska's major employers of UNL graduates. I left that full-time role to pursue a Master's in Statistics, seeking a stronger foundation in statistical theory and methods to prepare for a career as a Data Scientist on Sandhills' Research & Development team. Even after only a year in the program, I returned to Sandhills as a Data Science intern last summer and was able to make meaningful contributions. My training in Experimental Design, Linear Models, and Bayesian Statistics directly supported improvements to the internal AI-powered chatbots in Sandhills' Retrieval Augmented Generation pipeline. My coursework in Mathematical Statistics and Statistical Computing allowed me to build a Lead Quality Meter to classify sales leads as high, medium, or low quality, ultimately increasing sales and reducing time spent manually routing clients. Sandhills Global is just one of many examples of employers who have benefited from statistics graduates from UNL. Alumni from this department are working in key roles at First National Bank of Omaha, Mutual of Omaha, Hudl, Nelnet, and many other large companies, applying their statistical training in ways that strengthen Nebraska's economy. Recruiting outside talent to Nebraska is already difficult; it is therefore imperative to prepare in-state graduates with formal, rigorous statistical training. Since UNL houses the only dedicated Statistics Department in the state, eliminating it would force future students to leave Nebraska to study statistics and would weaken the state's ability to meet growing workforce demands in agriculture, healthcare, business, and technology. In an era where AI and data science are expanding rapidly, this move would significantly diminish UNL's role in workforce development.

From my role as an instructor, I see every week how critical statistical education is for undergraduates. Some may suggest that faculty from other departments who use statistics could step in to teach introductory courses, but this misunderstands the distinction between using statistical tools and being trained to teach the discipline. Introductory statistics requires instructors who can integrate conceptual understanding with practical application, while also addressing common misconceptions -- something trained statisticians are uniquely qualified to do. And beyond introductory service courses, the department provides essential courses not only taken by statistics majors, but also by students in Actuarial Science, Animal Science, Computer Science, Agronomy, and many other disciplines who need advanced training for research or the workforce. Undergraduate programs such as Data Science and Actuarial Science also rely on Statistics Department courses that are offered nowhere else at UNL. Without this department, students across majors would lose access to critical training, undermining both their education and Nebraska's workforce readiness. The impact is already visible; the mere proposal to eliminate the department has attracted national attention, which can be seen in the numerous Reddit threads and news article comments left by individuals with widespread shock that a land-grant R1 institution would consider dismantling its Statistics Department. This reputational damage threatens UNL's standing as a serious research university.

In summary, while I understand the financial pressures facing the university, eliminating the Statistics Department would be a short-sighted decision with damaging long-term consequences. The \$1.75 million in savings represents only 6.36% of the \$27.5 million shortfall -- a minor reduction that comes at the cost of students' educational opportunities, faculty research capacity, and Nebraska's ability to produce graduates equipped for a data-driven economy. The long-term harm to UNL's academic reputation, research, and workforce contribution will far outweigh the short-term financial relief. I strongly urge leadership to reconsider this proposal and preserve the Statistics Department as a vital part of UNL's teaching, research, and service to the state."