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Board of Regents
University of Nebraska System
Varner Hall, 3835 Holdrege Street
Lincoln, NE 68503

Dear Members of the Board:

I write to express my strong concerns over the plan to close the UNL Department of Statistics and eliminate all 15 of its current faculty positions. The department was formed several years ago after a long struggle to separate statistics from the Mathematics department on the city campus, and fulfills important missions in teaching, advising, consulting, and funded research for both the university and the nation at large. Closing it and deleting all of its expertise from the University of Nebraska would be a huge step backwards and terrible mistake by the university.

I am a graduate of the UNL Department of Mathematics and Statistics (B.S., magna cum laude, 1984), and was fortunate to be the recipient of a UNL College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Association Young Alumni Achievement Award in May 1995. I went on from Nebraska to obtain M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in statistics from the University of Connecticut, and subsequently spent 29 years as a faculty member at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Minnesota. I retired from the University of Minnesota in 2018, and now serve as president of my own successful biostatistical consulting company. While the department gave me a fine education that served as the basis for the remainder of my career, statistics at UNL struggled to gain respect in both the academic and professional communities during its combination with mathematics. The decision to finally separate the two and form the Department of Statistics on the East Campus was a major win for statistics in Nebraska, and has led to enormous benefits. As you're no doubt aware, the importance of statistics as a STEM field has only grown over the last 30 years, playing a major role in a variety of fields, including agriculture, health care, engineering, environmental science, and, most recently, sports analytics. The field has spawned the new fields of data science, machine learning, and causal inference, and is now incorporating artificial intelligence as well, powering job growth and economic activity in both Nebraska and the nation at large. For UNL to "unilaterally disarm" and drop statistical thinking from its teaching, research, and service missions would do an enormous disservice to the state, and ultimately be counterproductive for UNL.

The national demand for statistical and data science expertise continues to grow at an extraordinary pace. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, jobs for statisticians and data scientists are projected to grow by over 30% between 2022 and 2032, significantly outpacing the average growth rate for all occupations. U.S. News & World Report ranks "statistician" among its Top 30 Best Jobs, including #10 in Best Business Jobs and #16 in Best STEM Jobs. The number of U.S. undergraduates earning degrees in statistics has increased more than six-fold since 2010, with over 5,500 bachelors degrees awarded in 2023, with the number of institutions offering such

programs nearly doubling over the same period (from 95 to 184). At the Master's level, statistics degrees have increased 150% since 2010 to 5,150 in 2023, while data science and analytics-related degrees increased an astonishing 15-fold to more than 12,000 in that period. The number of universities granting statistics and data-intensive degrees also grew from 70 to 300. These trends reflect the central role of statistics and data science in today's workforce; the financial benefit to UNL, Nebraska, and the overall U.S. economy cannot be overstated.


UNL has been a leader in statistical training for many years. Bachelor's, Master's, and doctoral graduates from UNL routinely graduate to high-paying jobs in academia, industry, and government. The department is highly visible, and internationally recognized for its contributions to education and both collaborative and methodological research. At a time when the amount of data is exploding and misinformation is spreading across the internet (and increasingly, even being promoted by some of our own elected leaders), the need for UNL to be a leader in the promotion of statistical literacy is more acute than ever.

While closing the Department of Statistics might save a little money in the short run, the long-term financial consequences are likely to be disastrous. Since research grants require competent leadership to continue, large grants (like the department's NIH-funded multicenter clinical trial) are likely to be lost to other universities. In addition, non-statistical researchers who depend on Department of Statistics faculty to assist them with their own research grants would be left without support, leading to a dramatic decline in grant application quality and a consequent drop in funding for the university. As a former NIH grant reviewer, I can tell you that promising and innovative research proposals that do not contain correspondingly strong statistical design and analysis sections are routinely rejected by federal grant review panels. On the teaching side, the department also generates substantial tuition revenue through its service courses, much of which would be lost without competent Department of Statistics faculty to teach those courses. Students would also be deprived of meaningful statistical training, hurting their career prospects.

In summary, preserving the Department of Statistics will enable it to expand UNL's academic programs to prepare its students for the explosive growth in data-intensive careers across industries, recruit and retain top-tier faculty whose professional and research identities align with statistics and data science, and strengthen partnerships with industry, government, and interdisciplinary collaborators, where statistical and computational expertise is a key driver of innovation. For all of these reasons, I strongly urge UNL leadership to preserve the department, so that it can continue to serve UNL students, and contribute to the university's mission of advancing education, research, and economic development in Nebraska and beyond.

Thank you for considering my reasons for retaining the UNL Department of Statistics, despite enormous short-term budgetary pressures. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need further information from me related to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Bradley P. Carlin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bradley" and last name "Carlin" being the most prominent parts.

Bradley P. Carlin
President and Founder