MONASH BUSINESS SCHOOL

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Dear President Gold,

I am deeply concerned by the plan to disband the Department of Statistics at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and to terminate the tenured faculty in this department. This is a small but globally impactful unit that significantly enhances the university's reputation.

To put this impact in context, consider just one example. To analyse enrolment and productivity data, the administration at UNL, like many researchers across campus for other purposes, relies on R, the tidyverse, and, in particular, the graphics package ggplot2. These tools are also used by millions of analysts in industry, government agencies, and educational institutions worldwide. The origins of ggplot2, and the tidyverse more broadly, trace directly to the PhD research of Hadley Wickham under the supervision of Professor Heike Hofmann, a faculty member of the Statistics department. From these beginnings, and with subsequent venture capital investment, they have become the foundational products of Posit PBC (Public Benefit Corporation).

Other key Posit products—Shiny and ggplotly—were developed by Prof. Hofmann's student, Carson Sievert, through his doctoral work and subsequent role at Posit. Similarly, software for reproducible reporting, including knitr and rmarkdown, arose from the PhD research of another of her students, Yihui Xie. While administrators may not directly use all these tools, researchers across UNL certainly do, joining a global community of millions. For example, at Monash University, our Business School analytics team relies on these tools for admissions, enrolment, and retention reporting, and our Vice-Chancellor's analytics team uses them—alongside our group's forecasting software—to estimate future enrolments and revenue.

By way of background, I am a Fellow of the American Statistical Association, a board member of the R Foundation, and an elected member of the International Statistical Institute. I have served as Editor of the *Journal of Computational and Graphical Statistics* and Editor-in-Chief of *The R Journal*. I have also served as Program Chair and Chair of the Statistical Graphics Section of the American Statistical Association. In addition, I have led research collaborations and received funding from organisations including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Genentech, Novartis, and John Deere.

Statistics has a long and essential history in advancing society, and it remains a pillar of the modern world. Understanding and diagnosing large language models requires statistical

thinking. Statistical methods underpin modern agricultural machinery and the development of new food crops. They are fundamental in studying language structure, and they even find occasional applications in art—for instance, Professor Hofmann applied principal components analysis and statistical graphics to restore the correct layout of (famous American sculptor) Chuck Ginnever's Rashomon exhibit, producing a manual to prevent future errors.

A university without a visible, thriving, and active Statistics department risks falling in global rankings for both research and education. This department is not just part of UNL's history; it is vital to shaping its future.

Yours sincerely,

Dianne H Cook