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Academic Planning Committee
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Re: Support for Retaining the Department of Statistics

Dear Members of the Academic Planning Committee,

I am writing to express my deep concern over the proposal to eliminate the Department of Statistics as part of Chancellor Bennett’s recently announced \$27.5 million budget reductions. As a faculty member whose research depends heavily on advanced statistical design and analysis, I urge the Committee to recommend retaining the Department of Statistics as an essential component of UNL’s research and teaching mission.

My soybean genomics and breeding research requires rigorous experimental design, complex quantitative genetic analyses, and collaboration with faculty experts in statistics for both project planning and data interpretation. Faculty in the Department of Statistics routinely serve on my graduate student committees, provide critical guidance on experimental designs, and train my students in advanced statistical methods. Their expertise ensures that our experiments are properly powered, our analyses meet the highest scientific standards, and our conclusions withstand scrutiny from top-tier journals and funding agencies. Without a strong Statistics Department, the quality and competitiveness of my research—and that of many colleagues across campus—would be severely compromised.

In addition to my research program, I serve as Chair of the Graduate Committee in the Department of Agronomy & Horticulture. In this role, I have witnessed firsthand how vital the Statistics Department is to the success of our graduate program. Statistics faculty provide essential coursework, serve on graduate committees, and mentor our students in sophisticated analytical approaches that are critical to modern agricultural and life science research. Their involvement ensures that our graduates are well prepared to design robust experiments, analyze complex data sets, and meet the expectations of top employers and postdoctoral programs. Eliminating this department would severely weaken our ability to train the next generation of scientists and jeopardize the quality of our graduate education.

The importance of a statistics department extends far beyond individual collaborations. UNL aspires to strengthen its status as an R1 institution and to rejoin the Association of American Universities (AAU), as emphasized by President Gold’s strategic plan. Every AAU member university and every Big Ten university maintains a Department of Statistics (or an equivalent stand-alone unit) as a core component of their research infrastructure. Eliminating ours would immediately place UNL at a disadvantage relative to our peers and signal a retreat from the standards of excellence required for AAU membership.

While budget metrics such as student credit hours or direct grant revenue may have identified the Department of Statistics for reduction, these measures fail to capture its indispensable role in supporting research and graduate education across all disciplines. Statistics is not a service that can be pieced together through ad hoc consulting or dispersed across other departments. Its faculty create new methodologies, maintain cutting-edge curricula, and provide the depth of expertise needed to keep UNL competitive in genomics, biomedical research, engineering, economics, and countless other fields.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Academic Planning Committee recommend retention of the Department of Statistics. Preserving this department is essential to maintaining the quality of UNL's research enterprise, training outstanding graduate students, meeting the expectations of an R1 university, and achieving the strategic goals set by our leadership.

Thank you for considering this feedback and for your service in this challenging process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Hyten", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Hyten
Haskins Professor of Plant Genetics
Department of Agronomy and Horticulture
Nebraska Food for Health Center
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