

College of Natural Sciences  
Office of the Dean

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO  
5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407

909.537.3384  
cns.csusb.edu

September 20, 2025

University of Nebraska, Lincoln  
1400 R St  
Lincoln, NE 68588

### **Letter in Support of the Department of Statistics**

Dear UNL Leader:

As the Dean of the College of Natural Sciences at California State University- San Bernardino, I can only imagine the challenges you are facing. I know these are not usual times, and that the higher education is facing many challenges. I feel your pain. As the 2010 President of the American Statistical Association, former Director of the Division of Mathematical Sciences at the National Science Foundation (2010-2013), former Dean of Science at Oregon State University (2013-2017), former Director of Data Analytics (2017-2018), and former Head of the Department of Statistics (2002-2010) at North Carolina State University, I felt very sad and devastated to hear the news of a proposal to abolish the Department of Statistics at your esteemed university. So, I have decided to write a strong support letter in the hope of convincing the visionary leaders at UNL to help the department thrive, not just survive.

Let me first inform you that I have known Dr. Erin Blankenship, John E. Weaver Professor of Statistics, while she was a student at North Carolina State University. I also know professionally and personally Dr. Bhattacharyya, Dr. Bilder, Dr. Chaudhuri, Dr. B. Clarke, Dr. J. Clarke, and Dr. Hofmann among others. The department has outstanding faculty and have been making significant contributions in Nebraska, and in our professional associations. None of them have requested me to write this letter nor contributed to the content of this letter.

UNL has the vision to invest in statistics for decades, having started with its roots in Biometry and mathematics, and creating a Department of Statistics. The department is an invisible backbone on your campus with an impeccable impact. It not only does its own fundamental research in statistics and data science, but also has a significant impact on the research and discoveries across the campus and across Nebraska. It is the only department in all of Nebraska that offers doctoral degrees in Statistics (UNMC offers a PhD in Biostatistics). My sincere concern is the irreversible damage a decision to abolish your statistics department will have not only on your campus, but also in the state of Nebraska. I just wonder as a Dean (not just as a statistician) whether the university is, unfortunately, killing the goose that lays a golden egg.

I understand that the undergraduate program is in its fledgling stages, and may need some continued proactive efforts to grow. I assume that the department teaches statistics across the university and provides research support to agricultural researchers on your campus- it is the bread and butter of Nebraska. Statistical literacy is key for all sciences, engineers, and business leaders. (See below) They are training future problem solvers. In the era of big data and artificial intelligence, as leaders at a

number one university like yours, I know you see the importance of your continued investment in your Department of Statistics. You will continue to reap the benefits from it. A research one university like yours may realize when it is too late, how it has been benefitting from the collaborative research and workforce development a statistics department provides. Your research one status may be in jeopardy in the future without a solid statistics department that helps with credible, reproducible and efficient research. Knowing the quality and quantity of faculty members you have recruited and mentored, I am confident that the return on investments will continue to be great. I personally have difficulty imagining a research one university like yours without a solid statistics department that you have developed over decades. It is a field that has a strong future ahead of it.

I know you have a challenging task to address the budget challenges and I would not envy your task. I just want to urge you to think about the long-term impact of this decision. I am confident that faculty across the campus recognize the contributions your statistics department makes for training future critical thinkers and problem solvers across the university, and keep UNL as the jewel in the crown of the state of Nebraska. Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can answer any questions related to statistics as a profession or as the Dean of Natural Sciences.

Sincerely,

*Sastry G. Pantula*

Sastry G. Pantula, Dean  
College of Natural Sciences

