September 24, 2025

APC,

I am writing this letter about the proposed cut of the Statistics department in UNL-CASNR. **A Land-grant/R1 institution <u>without</u> a statistics department <u>does not</u> make sense** in a society that is constantly collecting data and trying to make sense of it. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projected a 31% growth in data science career jobs from 2019 to 2029, much quicker than the average for all occupations, and we still don't know the impact AI will increase that growth opportunity in the future. In my role as CASNR Statewide Education and Career Pathways Coordinator I have witnessed first-hand this small but mighty department's vision for the future and preparation for the increase workforce needs in STATS and Data Science. Just two days prior to this proposed budget cut announcement I was sitting with the STATS department and the State Director of NJAS (Nebraska Junior Academy of Sciences) developing a plan for the creation and dissemination of basic statistics teaching modules to support the K-12 teachers and students across the state of Nebraska as they develop their statistical analysis for science fair projects; a need voiced by teachers, regional science fair directors, and science fair judges. We had a plan for implementation starting in December, that now must be paused due to this proposed budget cut. Our STATS department under the direction of their newest Department Head Bhaskar Bhattacharya is pushing the land grant mission forward and is already on their "Odyssey to Extraordinary". He and his team have a vision and plan that would impact statewide statistics understanding and that aligns with President Gould's five pillars; with this cut this plan could not move forward as it takes a community of individuals that are willing to listen to a need, co-create a solution, and have valuable relationships in place to implement such a far-reaching impact. Bhaskar and his team have also been engaging with our Omaha Public School's initiative which has brought over 1600 students and teachers to visit campus in the first year and is projected to bring even more this year. They provide opportunity for OPS Students to immerse themselves in statistical experiences during their visit. In a recent reciprocal visit to OPS schools in Omaha, it was very apparent that STATISTICS interest is up in our K-12 students as many on a student panel spoke about their interest in having a career that involves statistics or data science. These students are correct in pursuing that interest as, future career opportunities in statistics and data science are expected to grow substantially across numerous industries, including healthcare, finance, and technology, driven by the increasing volume of data and the demand for data-driven decision-making. Key roles include Data Scientists, Statisticians, Operations Research Analysts, and Data Engineers, all requiring strong tech skills and specialized knowledge in areas like machine learning, AI, and big data. If we cut this department my question is where will Nebraskan students get an in-depth passionate education in Statistics and Data science? Statistically speaking my hope is the answer to my question is inconclusive as the vote is in favor of **KEEPING the CASNR STATISTICS Department.**

Sincerely,

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