University of Pittsburgh | Human Genetics
School of Public Health

Daniel E. Weeks, Ph.D.
Professor of Human Genetics and Biostatistics

Department of Human Genetics
Public Health 3119
130 DeSoto Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15261
Tel: 412-624-5388
Fax: 412-624-3020
E-mail: weeks@pitt.edu

September 29, 2025

Re: Proposal to abolish the Department of Statistics

Dear Leaders of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln,

I am profoundly disturbed to hear of your proposal to abolish the standalone Department of Statistics and all its associated degree programs (BS, MS, and PhD) and to terminate all its tenured and tenure-track faculty.

Statistics is the engine behind advances in agriculture, science, medicine, engineering, and technology. Indeed, statistics is a core area that is crucial for success and accurate results in all areas of research, including data science, artificial intelligence, economics, crop science, genetics, genomics, education, and more. Furthermore, as reflected in your recent creation of a Bachelor of Science in Statistics and Data Analytics program, statistics faculty are playing an increasing role in offering classes, mentoring, and training workshops in the exciting new area of Data Science.

As you can see from Table 1 below, in recent years there has a marked increase in the number of students pursuing statistics degrees. Similarly, in recent years, as shown in Table 2 below, there has been an explosion of interest in Data Science and Data Analytics. As such, it makes no sense for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to deliberately decide to no longer meet this strong demand for education in this important and vital area.

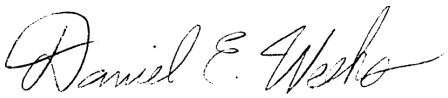
I think it is flawed reasoning to expect that the needs for excellence in statistics at UNL can be instead obtained through “a distributed model that leverages expertise embedded across IANR, UNL and the NU system” for the following reasons: (1) To achieve excellence in statistics, you need to be able to attract and retain the most talented statisticians – most are much less likely to be recruitable to UNL if they don’t have a Department of Statistics to call their academic home; (2) Statisticians working in other Departments are often overloaded with responsibilities to their own Department – for example, statisticians in our School of Medicine or in our Cancer Center have very little time for teaching and mentoring, as their primary responsibility is grant-related and project-related research; (3) Such a model would make it much more difficult to efficiently coordinate service teaching of statistics throughout the whole university system; (4) Such a distributed model would lead to intellectual isolation of your statisticians.

Eliminating Statistics would discredit UNL's national reputation, weaken countless collaborations, and undercut the discipline itself. It would extinguish a vital hub for research and teaching in statistics and inflict irreparable harm on UNL's standing as a comprehensive, research-intensive university.

I strongly urge you to retain your Department of Statistics instead of eliminating it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Daniel E. Weeks, Ph.D.
Professor of Human Genetics
Professor of Biostatistics and Health Data Sciences

Table 1:

Statistics* degrees awarded, by degree level and sex of recipient: 1987–most recent year, with percent of degrees awarded to females

Academic year ending	Bachelor's				Master's				Doctorate		
	All recipients	Male	Female		All recipients	Male	Female		All recipients	Male	Fe
1987	463	266	197	42.5%	575	343	232	40.3%	114	84	30
1988	436	242	194	44.5%	577	337	240	41.6%	140	111	29
1989	424	246	178	42.0%	637	354	283	44.4%	170	125	45
1990	449	265	184	41.0%	672	384	288	42.9%	194	152	42
1991	447	253	194	43.4%	631	355	276	43.7%	165	122	43
1992	554	296	258	46.6%	751	457	294	39.1%	170	129	41
1993	520	296	224	43.1%	761	418	343	45.1%	212	159	53
1994	534	343	191	35.8%	824	478	346	42.0%	178	131	47
1995	467	279	188	40.3%	908	528	380	41.9%	200	153	47
1996	434	257	177	40.8%	817	480	337	41.2%	164	126	38
1997	365	201	164	44.9%	795	415	380	47.8%	187	130	57
1998	350	194	156	44.6%	787	422	365	46.4%	223	153	70
1999	349	203	146	41.8%	740	424	316	42.7%	192	135	57
2000	380	195	185	48.7%	777	390	387	49.8%	219	139	80
2001	416	225	191	45.9%	802	429	373	46.5%	200	135	65
2002	454	258	196	43.2%	908	473	435	47.9%	177	111	66
2003	526	302	224	42.6%	1030	462	568	55.1%	207	133	74
2004	544	296	248	45.6%	1291	612	679	52.6%	219	147	72
2005	603	354	249	41.3%	1299	635	664	51.1%	269	158	111
2006	606	331	275	45.4%	1310	680	630	48.1%	271	147	124
2007	610	354	256	42.0%	1420	742	678	47.7%	300	177	123
2008	715	414	301	42.1%	1540	790	750	48.7%	276	150	126
2009	747	465	282	37.8%	1610	813	797	49.5%	355	205	150
2010	849	527	322	37.9%	1,745	938	807	46.2%	324	190	134
2011	1,078	654	424	39.3%	1,919	1,050	869	45.3%	344	202	142
2012	1,345	781	564	41.9%	2,026	1,071	955	47.1%	345	225	120
2013	1,656	906	750	45.3%	2,305	1,223	1,082	46.9%	379	229	150
2014	1,937	1,089	848	43.8%	2,523	1,338	1,185	47.0%	397	243	154
2015	2,305	1,283	1,022	44.3%	2,769	1,494	1,275	46.0%	395	256	139
2016	2,758	1,577	1,181	42.8%	3,253	1,694	1,559	47.9%	402	240	162
2017	3,363	1,919	1,444	42.9%	3,366	1,727	1,639	48.7%	419	275	144
2018	3,931	2,210	1,721	43.8%	3,515	1,892	1,623	46.2%	482	297	185
2019	4,386	2,459	1,927	43.9%	3,747	2,048	1,699	45.3%	474	298	176
2020	4,949	2,827	2122	42.9%	4,025	2,151	1874	46.6%	505	316	189
2021	5,291	3,078	2213	41.8%	4,211	2,271	1940	46.1%	467	291	176
2022	5,408	3,160	2248	41.6%	3,577	2,033	1544	43.2%	539	344	195
2023	5,463	3,271	2192	40.1%	4,024	2,297	1727	42.9%	568	366	202

SOURCES: Tabulated by the American Statistical Association; data from the Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Completion NSF/NCSES: Survey of Earned Doctorates. Table may not take into account revisions to data more than a year after initial reporting.

*2010 and 2020 CIP Code 27.05, with new 2020 CIP code added: 27.06: applied statistics;

^Table from: https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/statsdegrees1987-2023.pdf

Table 2:

Master's Degrees	2010-2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Business Statistics	300	236	511	720	1159	1809	1961	2958	3143	3554
# universities granting	8	12	17	26	29	42	45	55	62	61
Data Modeling/Warehousing & Database Administration	307	180	353	459	770	1241	1706	2346	2223	2472
# universities granting	3	6	10	15	21	26	28	32	32	29
Computational Science	126	84	168	311	511	682	703	791	869	1477
# universities granting	10	9	16	16	25	33	36	33	43	44
Data Science							153	271	1208	2376
# universities granting							12	17	41	70
Data Analytics							344	519	1681	4609
# universities granting							15	19	49	91
Total (degrees)	733	500	1032	1490	2440	3732	4714	6614	7916	12112
Total (Universities granting)	21	27	43	57	75	101	124	139	186	225

^Table from https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/datascienceanalyticsms_2024.pdf