

Americans who have done their country proud. May we always appreciate the magnitude of their achievement.

It's not a personality contest. I have heard it said that people either love or hate Omaha mayoral candidate Hal Daub

Community engagement greatly im

BY ROBERT S. RUNYON

The writer is dean emeritus of the University of Nebraska at Omaha library.

There were vivid images and a strong civic responsibility message in the PBS "Frontline" program broadcast April 21 on NET.

The program, titled "Poisoned Waters," was billed as a "far-reaching investigation of America's great waterways (using the Chesapeake Bay and Puget Sound as examples). They are in peril. There's a new wave of pollution that's killing fish, causing mutations in frogs and threatening human health."

Concerned citizens portrayed the situations of these great natural estuaries as public choices between the "family jewels and a great sewage dump."

After extensive interviews with field biologists and scientists who offered a growing catalog of new chemical pollution threats, reporter Hedrick Smith said the most important key to solving these problems is public engagement. Examples were offered showing how citizens in affected regions and neighborhoods, acting collaboratively, can help to reverse downward environmental spirals and aid in the reconstituting of natural habitats and, dare we say, planet Earth.

The goal of thinking globally but acting locally was also reinforced in an Omaha venue re-

cently. This was the focus of UNO's Spring Strategic Planning Advance, held again this year in the Milo Bail Student Center on the University of Nebraska at Omaha campus.

A mixed audience of more than 100 students, faculty and invited community representatives met to consider and discuss the range and quality of UNO's outreach and service to the community. The goals of the forum were to increase awareness of community engagement, establish priorities for community engagement and gather input about best practices from other universities who have been successful at community engagement.

Dr. Robert Carret, president of Maryland's Towson University, gave a challenging and artic-

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Quality contest
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such visits are extremely necessary in order
to help ensure the safety and protection of
our foster care children.

Jane Renner Hood, Lincoln
Executive director
Nebraska Humanities Council

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ulate keynote speech, followed
by an extensive Q&A. Drawing
on his experiences at two major
metropolitan universities, Carret
reviewed the components of suc-
cessful programs of university

phasized: (1) putting students
first, (2) scholarship and (3)
service to the community.
Carret saluted UNO's nation-
ally recognized, award-winning
Service Learning program, as
well as other lesser known but
highly effective involvements of
faculty and students in local gov-
ernment, nonprofit agencies and
educational institutions. Many of
these projects are volunteer
commitments that involve thou-
sands of hours of contributed
time and resources.

UNO is seeking to expand and clarify its growing role of community engagement.

service engagement and how
they can be stimulated and sus-
tained by creative commitments
from students, faculty and com-
munity members.

He spoke to UNO's strategic
plan, which for more than 15
years has consistently em-

UNO is seeking to expand and
clarify its growing role of com-
munity engagement within the
metropolitan area. Subgroups
have been working on service
definitions, management, im-
pact studies and metrics for re-
porting and public information

dissemination.
Indeed, there are so many ex-
amples of such engagement
among UNO's diverse colleges
that a new thrust is emerging to
set planning priorities and con-
solidate such projects in a sepa-
rate space on campus.
Like the Neighborhood Center
([http://www.unomaha.edu/
neighbor/about.php](http://www.unomaha.edu/neighbor/about.php)), which part-
ners with many community serv-
ice agencies, a UNO Community
Engagement Facility could serve
as a focal point and a meeting site
for students to learn and practice
the skills of civic responsibility.
These skills are greatly
needed by our community, na-
tion and planet.

■ Opinion essays reflect the writer's
views and not necessarily the edi-
torial position of The World-Herald.