

February 24, 2017

Dear Chairman Stinner and the Appropriations Committee:

Since our founding in 1908, the University of Nebraska at Omaha has operated on the same guiding principles: excellence in education, service to our community, and access for all.

I write today to urge you to reflect on the importance of access to higher education as you consider funding priorities for the next biennium.

We know that education creates opportunities, particularly for students coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and other underrepresented populations. As you have heard from President Bounds and our regents, any cuts in state funding will directly impact our ability to remain accessible for all Nebraskans. This is of vital concern to UNO's diverse student body, nearly half of whom are the first in their families to pursue higher education. I cannot overstate the importance of affordability to our students and their families.

You no doubt have difficult decisions ahead as you continue your work solving Nebraska's budget challenges. As you weigh proposals, please keep this in mind: history has shown that Nebraskans' investment in higher education is worth every cent. In fact, it's worth more than that. Each state dollar that goes into the University of Nebraska each year is returned six times over in economic impact. UNO alone is responsible for a \$583 million boost to the Nebraska economy each year. In short, higher education provides a return on investment that is hard to match.

Recently, I've been reflecting on this question: what does the future of our state look like? If we want to keep our brightest young people in Nebraska, if we wish to become a leader in the industries of tomorrow, Nebraska can't afford to lose momentum. UNO and the University of Nebraska are as committed as ever to growing our state, but we can only do it with your continued support.

Sincerely,



John E. Christensen
Chancellor