

BING CHEN TESTIMONY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA BOARD OF REGENTS ON 5-30-2014

Good morning President Linder and esteemed members of the Board of Regents. My name is Bing Chen. I would like to make three points with you this morning on the topic of the proposed CEEN-EE merger.

Point #1: CEEN being forced to move home

As parents, we wish to see our children grow and prosper, and not have to move back home again. CEEN's founders came from UNL EE and we owe a great debt of gratitude to the department that first nurtured us, but like children, we don't wish to be forced to go home again. CEEN has its own hoop dreams to be a student-centered community that supports Omaha and Nebraska industries. We do not wish to be forced to follow UNL's Big Ten vision because that will destroy who we are. We are practice oriented and our primary strength is our practice-based "hands-on" teaching and mentoring philosophy. EE's basic science research orientation is incompatible with CEEN's applied science, industry driven approach.

Point #2: The failure of meeting APC guidelines

In making its determination, APC ignored its own guidelines as well as the will of the two affected departments (CEEN and EE) who voted 10-0-1 and 19-0 against the merger, respectively. APC guidelines call for meetings between affected departments, but no meetings were held. Issues related to staffing, curriculum, promotion and tenure, integration, and financial planning were not settled by the College of Engineering before final approval by the APC. In spite of this inadequate preparation, APC felt there was no point in delaying the inevitable. During the same APC meeting, Dean Wei claimed there was confusion at Electrical and Computer Engineering Department Heads Association meetings (ECEDHA for short) because of the physical locations with CEEN in Omaha and EE in Lincoln, and that this was his justification for the merger. As the former president of ECEDHA, the missions of CEEN and EE are clearly understood and there is no confusion at the national level. My colleagues know full well what we are about in Omaha with our unique freshman retention programs, "hands-on" laboratories, and team-oriented projects.

Point #3: Violating the spirit of Dennis Smith's letter to Omaha business leaders

The proposed merger of CEEN into EE is a violation of the spirit of the Dennis Smith promise to Walter Scott and others because CEEN can no longer be responsive to Omaha needs. Chancellor Perlman claimed to the faculty senate that CEEN did not contribute to the College's research enterprise. He also stated that having the chair of the combined ECE department in Lincoln would be more responsive to the needs of Omaha students and industry. I disagree with both statements. Since 2007, CEEN has garnered over \$7M in funded research. In a meeting with CEEN students, Dean Wei admitted that current students may not benefit from the proposed merger. If UNL administration were truly committed to PKI restructuring, the new ECE chair should be in Omaha, and based on the Omaha Chamber of Commerce study, mechanical and industrial engineering should be offered at PKI. If UNL administration were truly committed to the needs of Nebraska industries, why was industrial engineering terminated in both Omaha (2003) and Lincoln (2009), much to the delight of my colleagues at Iowa and Iowa State Universities?

In conclusion, I would ask you to set aside Chancellor Perlman's merger proposal when you consider it until a reasoned and balanced study for Omaha's engineering needs is undertaken and a rational plan is

developed with the concurrence of all affected parties. Ultimately, this proposal must be judged on what is truly in the best interests of our students (both CEEN's and EE's) and our communities.

I would like to leave you with a few questions to ponder regarding the merger of CEEN into EE. 1) Are we better off with providing less diversity and choices for our students? 2) Does this merger really benefit Omaha-based students and businesses? 3) How would you expect the merger to bear fruit if the great majority of the faculty of both departments are clearly against it? and 4) Why is there this rush to merge when other alternatives should also be considered?

Thank you.