

BING CHEN TESTIMONY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA BOARD OF REGENTS ON 7-18-2014

Good morning. I have come this one last time to plead my case for keeping CEEN as the last free standing engineering department on the Omaha campus. I speak today as a representative of the department, as a witness to nearly a half century of Omaha engineering serving the Omaha community in spite of the last 42 years under the yoke of UNL administration. I would like to take a quote from Oliver Cromwell on the eve of his execution:

“I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ; think it possible, you may be mistaken.”

- Oliver Cromwell

If you vote in favor of merging CEEN into EE, know that you do this against the wishes of the faculty of both EE and CEEN departments, that you violate the promise made by a former NU President, Dennis Smith for a UNO College of Engineering, that you reduce the diversity of engineering education within Nebraska, that you ignore the unanimous UNO Faculty Senate vote resolution against the CEEN merger, and know that you create an enormous tax burden on the people of Nebraska with the “PKI restructuring” plan which in reality does very little for PKI or Omaha.

The estimated \$125M cost for “PKI restructuring” is merely another smokescreen for controlling any independent action by Omaha engineering faculty being responsive to local needs. For \$2.5M CEEN could teach Electrical Engineering in Omaha at one fiftieth the cost. The “PKI Restructuring solution” continues the illusion perpetrated by NU and UNL administration in 1996 that the PKI would somehow solve the disagreements between UNO / Omaha industry with UNL. In 1996, three Omaha Board of Regents members presented the PKI concept to us as the best compromise we could expect, somehow providing cover to protect Omaha engineering departments and keeping alive the dream of a UNO College of Engineering. My response was that the PKI was merely a stopgap solution doomed to fail because it did not address the underlying core problem: an Omaha-based College of Engineering. In 2014, Omaha remains alone among the fifty largest American cities without its own College of Engineering.

It is claimed that the programs in CEEN will not be affected by the merger with EE. How can this be true if our administrative structure is not housed in Omaha? If indeed you do decide to merge us, prove the sincerity of the PKI restructuring plan by making a resolution to have the new ECE chair live in Omaha. Also, if this plan is meant to meet Omaha’s needs, why then is there NO mechanical and NO industrial engineering included?

The Big Ten vision touted by NU in the news media incurs costs that are not sustainable. Paying “competitive Big Ten salaries” will not lead to success but only further impoverishes Nebraska’s taxpayers. Paying new Deans \$400K at UNL will not enhance UNL’s position and only widens the parity gap between UNL and the “satellite” campuses.

Akin to Big Red football going 0-12 in a season, UNL’s removal from the American Association of Universities is not only far worse, it is a staggering blow to our state’s prestige. Do you really believe that merging CEEN into EE will soften this setback?

The number of National Academy of Engineering members is a measure of an engineering college's national stature. In the past 45 years, the UNL College of Engineering has had only **one** NAE member: Dr. William Splinter. As a loyal and dedicated servant to UNL, why would Dr. Splinter advise me in our last meeting to move CEEN from UNL control as quickly as possible? Perhaps he sensed a cold wind blowing from Lincoln administration towards Omaha. You can come to your own conclusions.

Merging CEEN into EE against the wishes of the two faculties can be viewed as an act of violence against our collective department wills. Ashoka, the warrior king of India was the first leader in history to forsake violence and to adopt persuasion as the appropriate mode of correct behavior or "dharma." Perhaps you as members of the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska can take a page from Ashoka's principle of non-violence in guiding your decision on the CEEN-EE merger vote.

Thank you.