



University of  
Nebraska

Office of the President  
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June 15, 1995

Mr. Robert D. Bates  
Chairman, President and CEO  
Guarantee Mutual Life Company  
8801 Indian Hills Drive  
Omaha, NE 68114.....

Mr. John Gottschalk  
President and CEO  
Omaha World-Herald  
14th and Dodge Streets  
Omaha, NE 68102.....

Mr. Walter Scott, Jr.  
President and Chairman of the Board  
Peter Kiewit Sons, Inc.  
1000 Kiewit Plaza .....  
Omaha, NE 68131

Gentlemen: .....

I appreciate your acknowledgement of the University's commitment to meeting the needs of the business community in Omaha and the State of Nebraska. Also, I appreciate your recognition of the plans we have announced and the steps we are taking to redress past shortcomings in engineering education in the Omaha area. We plan to continue to meet these and other demonstrated needs.

How can we signal what is in fact our irrevocable commitment to meeting Omaha's engineering education needs? We can do so in tangible ways. We can build a building--and we have initiated the planning for a major new structure on the UNO campus for engineering and information science and technology. We can hire highly qualified faculty, whose tenure will make them permanent employees--and we have committed new funds for this purpose. We can develop new programs and courses to be offered on site at UNO--and we are doing that now. (A complete list of programs to be offered at UNO in the fall of 1995 and beyond is attached.) We can launch a program to attract new students, and devote new resources to recruiting--which we have done.

These investments illustrate our resolve to address the engineering issues in Omaha in ways that the creation of a college and the designation of a dean do not. Our goal is to build

UNO  
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solid, accreditable programs in Omaha, and that involves substantial investment. With the support of the Governor and the Legislature, we are adding millions of dollars in new funding for buildings and faculty in Omaha in 1995. By adding dollars where it matters--new faculty, new programs, new and renovated facilities--we are providing immediate assistance in Omaha. Omaha-based students will continue to earn accredited degrees--something that would not happen if a new college were created now.

While we understand the business community's impatience with university academic processes, we are custodians of public funds. We have limited resources available, and we must use them in the most effective manner. Public institutions lack the flexibility to take speculative risks that large numbers of new students will enroll and that sufficient resources will be provided to support an expensive new college. Given our constraints, we are moving as rapidly as possible toward building a strong and permanent engineering education presence in Omaha.

The addition of private resources in partnership with the University of Nebraska could hasten our efforts. Private commitments to assist in funding for an engineering and information sciences building would hasten delivery of services and the University's ability to serve additional students at both the undergraduate and the graduate level. Private funding to assist in recruiting faculty with distinguished credentials would enhance the engineering education we can provide in Omaha. This, combined with funding for student scholarships, would allow us to attract students to the Omaha-based programs. Such a partnership between the Omaha business community and the University would assure the most rapid delivery of needed programs, assure that the programs will respond to the needs of Omaha and the State, and provide for the most effective and efficient deployment of public resources.

Neither I nor the Board of Regents has foreclosed the idea of a separate, independent college of engineering in Omaha. The engineering task force indicated several impediments to creating a new engineering college now. In my view, the most significant of these is student demand. For an accreditable college, the task force said that at least 300 full time equivalent students are needed in the core engineering programs. A total of 87 were enrolled at the time of the task force report. I advised the Board of Regents in my recommendations last December that should the growth of engineering in the future justify a new college, I would reconsider my recommendation. We are now putting in place steps to develop new student demand and to meet that demand with quality educational programs.

We have also taken a series of steps to assure that the programs developed in Omaha will be responsive to the needs of Omaha and will be integrated into the other UNO programs. These include: (1) both the dean and the Omaha-based associate dean will sit on the deans councils at both UNO and UNL, (2) the UNO Chancellor will participate in evaluations and salary adjustments of both engineering administrators, (3) the transfer of operating budget authority of Omaha-based activities to the Omaha associate dean, and (4) the assignment of a new staff member to recruit students for the Omaha programs.

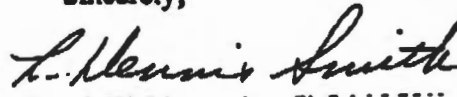
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The University's continuing commitment to Omaha's needs is an issue of accountability, and I strongly believe that the University should be accountable to Nebraskans. We have followed the task force recommendation that an independent, state-wide engineering advisory board be established to monitor progress and make recommendations for future direction. This small group of knowledgeable individuals, which Lee Kearney of the Kiewit company has agreed to chair, will offer industry-based analysis of our progress and assist me and the Board of Regents in developing plans and decisions to support business.

I believe this is the best way at this time to develop a much stronger engineering education presence in Omaha. I continue to believe that we can work together to help the University of Nebraska serve the needs of all Nebraskans.

Sincerely,



L. Dennis Smith  
President

cjb

Enclosure

cc: Governor Nelson  
Members of the Board of Regents  
Signatories of the May 5, 1995 letter

**MORE COMMENTARY****L. DENNIS SMITH***The writer is president of the University of Nebraska.*

# Engineering Commitment to UNO

Last month I received a letter signed by 100 Omaha business leaders regarding engineering education in Omaha. I have sent a letter to each signatory, and I wanted to share the key points of my response with a wider audience.

The University of Nebraska is demonstrating the commitment to Omaha's engineering education need in tangible ways. We have initiated the planning for a major new structure on the UNO campus for engineering and information science and technology. We have committed new funds to hire highly qualified faculty, whose tenure will make them permanent employees. We are developing new programs and courses to be offered on site at UNO. We are launching a program to attract new students and committing new funds for recruiting.

These investments illustrate our resolve to address the engineering issues in Omaha in ways that the creation of a college or the designation of a dean do not. Our goal is to build solid, creditable programs in Omaha, and that involves substantial investment. With the support of the governor and the Legislature, we are adding millions of dollars in new funding for buildings and faculty in Omaha in 1995. By adding dollars where it matters — new faculty, new programs, new and renovated facilities — we are providing immediate assistance in Omaha. Omaha-based students will continue to earn accredited degrees — something that would not happen if a new college were created now.

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