

EAS Statement on the Proposed Elimination of the Department and Its Academic Programs

The faculty, staff, and students of the Department of Earth & Atmospheric Sciences are deeply disappointed and concerned by the proposal by the UNL Chancellor to eliminate the department. We provide essential education and research for the state of Nebraska and beyond. EAS offers the only undergraduate meteorology degree program in the state. If the program is ultimately eliminated, future Nebraskans who want to major in meteorology will have to travel out-of-state and incur higher tuition costs. Furthermore, we have the only graduate degree programs in Earth & Atmospheric Sciences in Nebraska. In these programs, we train students who go on to vital careers in weather forecasting, hydrology, natural resources, hazard mitigation and environmental protection. These alumni form critical parts of Nebraska's workforce, including in regional offices of the National Weather Service, the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and the Environment, and major consulting companies, to name just a few examples.

"The proposed cuts to our undergraduate and graduate programs would represent a severe loss for the University and the citizens of our state," said Clint Rowe, EAS Department Chair. "For a state such as Nebraska, with an economy strongly tied to the land and the climate and where natural disasters, such as floods, tornadoes, and ice storms are frequent hazards, it should be inconceivable that these educational programs have been proposed for elimination."

The mission of the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences (EAS) is to serve as a primary resource for understanding and promoting the current and future sustainability of our planet through teaching, research, and outreach. Our tripartite mission conforms to the five pillars of the University of Nebraska's strategic plan and serves the vision of the College of Arts and Sciences, as articulated in its strategic plan, that "through imagination, innovation, and collaboration we transform lives and improve the world" .

The department's proposed elimination comes despite its strong record of success:

- The department's graduates from all its degree programs at all levels have exceptionally high employment rates in government, industry, and academia. Our meteorology alumni deliver weather forecasts on a daily basis through broadcast outlets across the state, region, and country.
- Faculty and students conduct critical research on issues vital to Nebraska, including extreme weather, climate change, water resources, mineral and energy resources, and carbon sequestration. Departmental research includes multiple

disciplines within earth and atmospheric sciences, with strong synergies among clusters of faculty members.

- Our faculty are nationally and internationally recognized and have received significant grants for multidisciplinary research in places ranging from the Nebraska Sand Hills to Antarctica. One faculty member, Sherilyn Fritz, was recently elected to the National Academy of Science, one of only five NU faculty to ever receive this honor.
- The program has long emphasized real-world field experience for its students, since long before experiential learning became a UNL priority. Internships, research opportunities, mentoring, and fieldwork have provided students with highly valuable, real-world skills that prepare them to become productive members of the workforce in Nebraska and beyond.

The Chancellor's proposal includes the possibility for "high-performing" faculty from the department to be rehired into another department. This is extremely short-sighted as the success of these faculty did not occur in a vacuum. This success is in large part a product of the supportive, interactive environment offered by EAS. Without the academic programs to attract and support undergraduate and graduate students to their research groups, it is unlikely that these faculty would be able to maintain the levels of achievement. Our instructional and research programs require that the entire department be retained and, in fact, receive additional support from the University.

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