Priority Programs at University of Nebraska at Kearney

In total, the University of Nebraska at Kearney identified fourteen priority programs, including the **General Studies Program**, which provides the liberal arts core for all of our students. The priority programs are:

- **General Studies Program**
- Music
- Psychology
- Political Science
- Health Sciences (Biology and Chemistry)
- Business
- Teacher Education
- Honors
- Industrial Technology
- Graduate Speech Pathology
- Criminal Justice
- Social Work
- Exercise Science.
Description of Priority Program and Program of Excellence Ongoing Processes at the University of Nebraska at Kearney

Each year, the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs initiates discussion of the needs and characteristics of Priority Programs with Deans Council, and individual deans gather information from their units on the matter. Subsequently, Deans Council discusses Priority Programs and prioritizes support issues for funding consideration as a part of supplementary resource allocation. These discussions and decisions are simultaneous with, and in consideration of, discussion of Programs of Excellence (POE) and their priority funding. Funding decisions for POEs are made dynamically to provide the greatest degree of stability in funding growth, while acknowledging the fact that some POEs require large levels of support, generally in equipment and expendables, in specific aspects to develop and maintain excellence, while others have much more modest funding requirements for the same level of excellence. Funding priority lists are updated regularly by reconsideration at least semiannually, and when opportunity occurs, funding of prioritized needs in both Priority Programs and POEs is provided promptly.
Strategic Planning Process and Its Relationship to Priority Programs at The University of Nebraska at Kearney

The formal strategic planning process for the period 1995-2005 was initiated in August 1994, directly addressing the recommendations of the Final Report of the North Central Association (NCA) Evaluation Team submitted in June 1994. In that report, the Evaluation Team recommended that UNK "consider the identification, development, and funding of a small number of centers of excellence." Further, the Report identified a number of academic programs that exhibited excellence or outstanding investment opportunities. Examples of the programs so-identified include Industrial Technology, Chemistry, and Honors.

The UNK Strategic Plan for 1995-2005 stated that "Colleges must achieve programmatic focus and distinction. They must organize and apply resources to address need, demand, or opportunity, and achieve excellence in what they do." The Plan also directed UNK leaders "to allocate resources to high-demand areas and to preserve or amplify strength in other capabilities that are central to UNK's mission and vision. Examples of programs identified in this manner are: General Studies, Honors, International Education, AACSB Accreditation of the College of Business, Health Sciences, and Graphic Design. Being faithful to its Strategic Plan, UNK began reallocating internal funding and seeking external funding for the programs that had been identified for enhancement.

The Priority Program identification and selection process began in 2000, when each college was directed to work with its faculty to develop a list of the college’s priority programs in priority order. These lists were submitted to the Deans Council, which developed a campus-wide set of priority programs. This list was discussed by the faculty in two campus-wide forums, and comments and questions arising from these forums was reviewed by the Strategic Planning Committee, and this committee made final recommendations and endorse a final list of UNK Priority Programs. Thus, the Priority Program identification and selection process constituted an additional strategic planning process for UNK, and the final list of priority programs included most of the programs identified by NCA and earlier strategic planning, but also added several additional programs that were of excellent quality and were seen to be vital to the education and research missions of UNK.
Description of Program of Excellence Ongoing Processes at the University of Nebraska at Kearney

Each year, the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs initiates discussion of the needs and characteristics of Programs of Excellence with Deans Council, and individual deans gather information from their units on the matter. Subsequently, Deans Council discusses the Programs of Excellence and prioritizes support issues for funding consideration as a part of supplementary resource allocation. Funding decisions for POEs are made dynamically to provide the greatest degree of stability in funding growth, while acknowledging the fact that some POEs require large levels of support, generally in equipment and expendables, in specific aspects to develop and maintain excellence, while others have much more modest funding requirements for the same level of excellence. Funding priority lists are updated regularly by reconsideration at least semiannually, and when opportunity occurs, funding of prioritized needs in POEs is provided promptly.
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<th>Unit, Program of Excellence</th>
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Benefits of UNK Programs of Excellence

Examples of Enhancement of Program Quality with Programs of Excellence Funds:

- Programs of Excellence funds have been used to create new or enhanced instructional and research facilities in several Programs of Excellence. Examples of these enhancements include the following:

  - Interior Design: Construction and equipping of an interior design studio, including a junior interior design studio, a CAD/drafting studio, and a lighting lab. This studio provides interior design students the current state of the art equipment in interior design technology.

  - Business: Establishment of Business Software and Technology Laboratory that enables faculty and students to collaborate on projects within the instructional environment. In the laboratory instructors are able to view student screens and to assist students who need help with Microsoft Access, CAD, or Solid Builder. The SynchronEyes software employed gives the instructor the power to manage the classroom, guide learning, and interact with students.

  - Teacher Education: The use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning has increased expectations for future educators with skills in using technology. Past funding for technology specific to the teaching field has come from College funds that are available at the end of the biennium as well as grants. Program of Excellence funding has ensured that state-of-the-art technology can be purchased on a regular basis. One example of the impact of Program of Excellence funds is the change in NCATE assessment. The 1997 NCATE Team identified technology as a weakness in the College of Education, while the 2004 NCATE Team identified it as a strength.

  - Graduate Speech Pathology (Communication Disorders, CDIS): Program of Excellence money has clearly contributed to quality by complementing Foundation money in the development of a state of the art speech science and audiology laboratory. This lab includes the recently purchased medical simulators. The lab, the excellence of the faculty, and the impressive departmental facilities contributed to two important developments, the addition of an excellent minority hire from Ohio University, and an eight-year accreditation recommendation from ASHA. Prospective faculty were very impressed with the lab, and ASHA noted it as well. This is a perfect example of how Program of Excellence funding positively impacts the evolution of a quality program that has abundant highlights including a 92% pass rate for the national certification exam, which is considerably higher than the national average of 79.8%

  - Music: The UNK Music Program has maintained national accreditation since 1976 for all of its graduate and undergraduate degree programs with the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) through rigorous 10-year site visit program reviews, including self-studies, active national conference participation, and annual reporting systems data. However, during the 1990’s, lack of funding and aging facilities led to inadequate maintenance of instruments. Indeed, in 2001, the Music Program site visit report from NASM reviewers noted concerns regarding the deterioration of facilities and serious fiscal concerns for the lack of adequate annual equipment budget to repair, rebuild, or replace instruments (primarily pianos). The
The quality of the Music Program has been enhanced considerably with the annual allocations of Programs of Excellence funds for Equipment and Student Research in the past four years. We have been able to replace three upright and one grand practice room pianos, have rebuilt three studio grands, and one nine-foot concert grand for the recital hall. In addition, we have had the opportunity to purchase and/or repair a large number of brass, woodwind, percussion, keyboard, string, and Orff instruments used in techniques classes and education courses. This has had a significant impact on the quality of teaching for the department as functioning instruments are fundamental to adequate instruction.

The condition of the hall was not only worn and outdated, but outright embarrassing. The condition of the facility was beginning to affect both our recruiting capabilities and the morale of our current students. In summer of 2005, Programs of Excellence funds, along with institutional funds, were used to enhance the Fine Arts Recital Hall, and it has been transformed into a respectable performance space, with new curtains and carpeting, refurbished seats, refinished stage floor, newly painted walls, Servoleer ceiling microphones, new choral shells, and musician chairs. This has already made a tremendous impact on the overall morale of the faculty and students and community patrons of arts. As thousands of people attend recitals, concerts, workshops, clinics, and other university-sponsored events in the recital hall each year, the overall impression of UNK by community members, teachers from around the state, and prospective students is greatly enhanced. We believe this will have an immediate impact on our ability to recruit exceptional students.

- The Art Department’s Visual Communications and Design Program: The greatest impact of the Programs of Excellence funding has been to enhance the design technology in the Art Department’s computer labs and classrooms. Today design technology is interwoven into the advertising and graphic design professions. The Visual Communications and Design (VCD) Program consists of more than the latest computer technology; it is a progressive program that teaches UNK design students the theory, practice and procedures for successful graphic design applications for a complex society. The VCD Program utilizes computer technology as an environment for design students, and it incorporates computer hardware and graphics software in all its courses. One objective is not only to teach the students how to use the graphic and interactive software but provide students with an understanding of why visual communications and design is essential in today’s society.

The VCD Program has also been enhanced by Programs of Excellence funding for the student-faculty scholarship research/exhibition activities. In addition to the student-faculty accomplishments with design competitions and awards, faculty have had the opportunity to attended local, regional and national “American Institute of Graphic Design” workshops and seminars. Programs of Excellence funding assisted students and faculty to annually attend the regional design advertising conference (Meet the Pros). The mission of this conference involves helping regional students create and build their portfolios, discuss internship and job placement opportunities.

Programs of Excellence funding supports faculty scholarship and research projects. Projects have ranged from exhibition artwork, television announcement and commercially printed posters. The funding assisted with materials, equipment or execution of the project. In addition, new screen-printing equipment and materials have been purchased for the students and faculty. This allows VCD Program faculty
and students to execute design projects without needing to use outside vendors.

- **Computer Science and Information Systems:** Programs of Excellence funding focused on maintaining and improving the quality of the equipment available for students and faculty. For example, in FY 2005, the Special Projects Laboratory was completely re-equipped with 15 workstations, a server, and two laptop computers, as well as new furniture. This lab is primarily used for research projects by students and faculty, as well as applied projects for upper-division students, who now have cutting-edge equipment to use. Faculty and student research, nearly nonexistent in the department five years ago, has burgeoned.

- **Criminal Justice:** The greatest impact from Programs of Excellence funding has come through equipping a Crime Scene Investigation Laboratory, which now supports both a basic and an advanced course in this field. The lab not only prepares students at an advanced level, but is an excellent recruiting attraction. Other funding has supported the annual Criminal Justice Conference, important for outreach and professional development for regional criminal justice professionals. Important support has also been supplied for travel to scholarly meetings by the increasingly research-active faculty, and stipends in support of students in their internships with agencies outside Kearney.

- **Health Sciences:** The Health Sciences programs have received the largest share of Programs of Excellence funding in College of Natural and Social Sciences. The bulk of the funding has gone to the acquisition and maintenance of equipment and furnishings for research and teaching. For instance, the Biology and Chemistry Departments have been able to equip a sophisticated Biochemistry-Molecular Biology laboratory. A well-equipped animal research facility has also been funded. Equipment such as a capillary electrophoresis instrument and a laser spectroscopy detector and UV source, usually not available at predominantly undergraduate institutions, is found in these labs. The result is that faculty and students can carry out research that results in research presentations and publications, and attracts extramural funding. For example, equipment purchased with Programs of Excellence funding served as the “matching funds” for two recent research grants from the American Chemical Society. Consequently, students have research opportunities that are seldom matched at undergraduate institutions. Furthermore, the availability of meaningful startup funding has been critical in attracting high-quality new faculty members.

- **Political Science:** Acquisition of a mobile laptop computer laboratory in 2003 was made possible by Programs of Excellence funding; it has been used in a number of upper-division Political Science courses. Additionally, funding has supported internship stipends for students in Washington, D.C., faculty travel to scholarly meetings to present research, and student and faculty participation in the Model United Nations program.

- **Psychology:** The position of Human Subjects Research Coordinator has been filled by an upper-division Psychology student annually since 2002 due to Programs of Excellence funding. This position coordinates the participation by hundreds of students as subjects in the many research projects carried out by students and faculty in the department. This research has resulted in numerous presentations (at regional and national meetings, as well as UNK Student Research Day), and a number of research publications, by Psychology students. Programs of Excellence money has
additionally supplied computer equipment, operating system upgrades, and faculty travel to scholarly meetings. Finally, Programs of Excellence funding has supported the department’s biennial High School Psychology Fair, an important outreach and recruiting event.

- Social Work: Programs of Excellence funding supports an annual Social Work Conference, which provides professional development for both Social Work students and Nebraska social workers. Money for faculty professional development through attendance at national conferences has also been made available. The greatest impact of Programs of Excellence funding has been the addition in FY 2006 of a lecturer position to serve Social Work majors, whose number has increased by 27% (80 to 109) in the past four years.

- All UNK Programs of Excellence: Summer Student Research Program: The UNK Summer Student Research Program (SSRP) was developed to increase student engagement through independent scholarly opportunities, and Programs of Excellence funding is the major sources of funds for it. The program is open to all disciplines, and has had participants from the sciences, education, business, and the arts and humanities. Exit survey data indicate participants draw on coursework—both in their major and from general studies—and use critical thinking skills during the program. They become more comfortable working with faculty, and they develop a better understanding of current topics in their field of study. Also see http://aunk.unl.edu/asmt/dptAsmt/StRschAsmt.asp.

UNK has received national attention for this program, and a custom report from the National Survey of Student Engagement shows that UNK students report more involvement in out-of-class research than do students at our recruiting competition, our athletic conference competition, and at institutions which we aspire to emulate in terms of quality.

- Programs of Excellence funding has enhanced outreach capacity. For example:

- Programs of Excellence funding came at the right time to help the Teacher Education Program strengthen its connection with partner schools and continue refining the new curriculum. Recent NCATE and State Accreditation reports as well as the Teacher Education Academic Program Report identify the renewal of the teacher education program partnerships with public schools as a strength.

- Exercise Science, Teacher Education, and Speech Pathology (now termed Communication Disorders CDIS) are heavily involved in outreach activities. CDIS faculty and students are using recently purchased equipment at Husker Harvest Days to test hearing of farmers, the Exercise Science Program is home to Nebraska On the Move, and Teacher Education provides free professional development to selected partner schools each year. The equipment, technology, and partnerships with partner schools resulting from Programs of Excellence funding have enhanced the ability of faculty to provide these services.

- Visual Communications and Design Program has established a variety of outreach projects through student internships, design practicum (student operated design studio with the goals of providing quality artwork and design projects for clients in the community and region. Students receive no pay for the design projects, but they gain
invaluable design experience and portfolio projects) and freelance projects. These hands-on projects include logo systems or branding identities, brochures, booklets, catalogs, posters, signage systems, designs on clothing apparel, packaging and websites designs. Programs of Excellence funding for equipment and technology tremendously supports these functions.

Similarly, Programs of Excellence funding has enhanced the Program’s summer computer workshop and seminar series. The workshops utilize the Design Program’s cutting edge technology by offering a variety of different technology skill levels. The workshop students (UNK degree students, community business people and art teachers) vary in background, skills and location. Each workshop promotes one-on-one interaction with the instructor and students. Not only does the student benefit from the workshops and seminars, but the Art Department builds community relationships, and potential incoming student recruitment from the art teachers across the state.

Finally, Programs of Excellence funding has improved the ability for the Program to bring professional designers from across the region and nation. The Design Program has a capstone course (art 499) where the design students create and develop an independent design project to be exhibited in the Walker Art Gallery at UNK. In the past, the Art Department was only able to bring in local designers to evaluate the students projects. Now we bring in design professionals from across the region and nation. The design professional is asked to give a presentation to the Art Department design students (open to campus and community), as well as critique and evaluate design senior’s portfolios one-on-one. This exposure has improved the quality of our current and graduating design students. In addition, this exposure has opened job opportunities for graduating UNK students outside of the Midwest.

○ The Music Program maintains a highly visible campus/statewide profile through an active schedule of artistic student and faculty performances, while also hosting a large number cultural events attracting thousands of students, faculty, staff, and community members to the UNK campus each year. Faculty-sponsored events include a wide variety of clinics, workshops, festivals, summer camps, master classes and professional conferences including Nebraska Music Teachers Association State Conferences, the College Music Society Regional Conference, and NATS Regional Conference. In addition, the department directs and participates in what may be the only true student-faculty-community member collaborative activity on the campus—the Kearney Area Symphony Orchestra. Because of additional Programs of Excellence funding, the department has been able to provide equipment and facilities in sponsoring these outreach activities and events. In addition, faculty extend their scholarly and creative talents to schools, universities, community centers, and professional conferences, workshops, clinics and adjudication through participation in state-sponsored activities such as the Nebraska Touring Artist Program. Another example of outreach is the 2004 Visiting Scholar Program sponsored by the North Platte School District wherein five faculty members each spent an entire day with high school students, working in areas of expertise—band/jazz band, choir, orchestra, musical rehearsals, solo and duet piano master classes. Student soloists, chamber groups, and ensembles contribute to the strength of the department’s visibility, with featured performances at campus-wide events such as Commencement, football and basketball games, and touring programs to schools throughout the region.
Other examples of Programs of Excellence enhancement of Outreach:

- Criminal Justice: Supports the annual Criminal Justice Conference, important for outreach and professional development for regional criminal justice professionals.
- Psychology: Programs of Excellence funding supports the department’s biennial High School Psychology Fair, an important outreach and recruiting event.
- Social Work: Programs of Excellence funding supports an annual Social Work Conference, which provides professional development for students and Nebraska social workers.

Examples of Enhancements in Faculty Recruitment

- Programs of Excellence funds have been used to enhance salary for several positions in the College of Business and Technology (Management Information Systems and Industrial Technology) and in the College of Education. These enhancements enabled hiring of faculty senior faculty that otherwise could not have been recruited with base resources. This use of Program of Excellence funds has been instrumental in enhancing the quality of faculty in these colleges.
- Programs of Excellence funds were used to create new faculty positions to meet rapid enrollment increases in health sciences and social work in Business, Health Sciences and Social Work, with resulting programmatic enhancement.
- Programs of Excellence fund use to improve equipment and facilities in Music, Multimedia/Visual Design, Teacher Education, and Health Sciences proved enormously effective in attracting new faculty from prestigious institutions who have great potential for research and scholarship in these programs.
- Virtually all UNK Programs of Excellence have or will have improved success in faculty recruiting due to quality enhancement made possible Programs of Excellence funding.

Enhancement of Extramural Funding

Unquestionably, one of the benefits of Programs of Excellence Funding at UNK is its effect on our success in gaining extramural funding. The presence of state-of-the-art equipment and other improvements made possible by Programs of Excellence funding in Business, Communication Disorders, Exercise Science, Health Sciences, Industrial Technology, Interior Design, Multimedia/Visual Design, Music, Psychology, and Teacher Education has enhanced the probability of success for faculty as they seek external funding. Direct evidence of the profoundly stimulatory effect of Programs of Excellence funding on Extramural funding can be seen in the following statistics:

- The amount of funds requested increased 50% from $9,368,375 in FY 2001 to $14,028,476 in FY 2005.
- The amount of funds awarded increased 147% from $1,627,209 in FY 2001 to $4,019,881 in FY 2005.

The vast majority of the positive changes stated above are due to our Programs of Excellence.
By far the most important consideration for future approaches to Priority Programs and Programs of Excellence is security of the funding enhancement for Programs of Excellence. The enormously positive effect of the POE funding is leading steadily to real increases in quality of programs for students and for external reputation of the University. Beyond securing the future of the programs, growth in Program of Excellence funding will lead to even more rapid quality advances. Programs of Excellence funds have a multiplier effect in many ways, and greater investment can be expected to produce through the multiplier effects huge benefits. For example, at UNK, the ratio between POE dollars invested and extramural grant dollars received is approximately 1 to 4. Clearly, POE investments give faculty and students increased confidence in the quality of the institution, greater competitiveness for grant funding, and greater numbers and quality of both instruction and scholarship.