



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Faculty Senate

FROM: Katherine S. Ankerson, Interim Chancellor

DATE: Monday, April 6, 2026

SUBJECT: Fork in the Road on Our Bold Path Forward

Members of the UNL Faculty Senate:

Less than three months into my tenure as interim chancellor of Nebraska's flagship institution, I find that we are at a critical point on Our Bold Path Forward. I know the past year has been challenging. Our campus community has been through a considerable amount. If one is to look backward, it has been difficult and even painful. I am never going to ask you to forget the past as we each have our own emotions and perspectives. While respecting that, I am also drawn to a cycle of continuous improvement and to thinking about our future direction.

I am drawn to think about the purposes of our shared governance responsibilities, and I still find the definitive principles for institutional governance established by AAUP some sixty years ago to be not only relevant but revelatory. I find in those principles a description of our shared responsibilities and a good reminder to respect opinions, while warning us to be accurate. These responsibilities fall on all of us in our respective roles. We know that external audiences may judge us by the actions we take.

I take very seriously the leadership role of the Chancellor, and the responsibility associated with it. Though I am concerned that we do not yet have a common understanding or set of shared principles, responsibilities, and shared confidence in one another, I want to approach that destination with you and establish purposeful engagement. I believe my actions in these last few weeks demonstrate that commitment.

I also know we are at a fork in the road. I remain attentive to the concerns raised and find that we are often rehashing the path behind us rather than approaching the diligent work that we have ahead of us. As you know, I continue to lead a process to engage our campus community on a Bold Path Forward with the team of leaders that include Executive Vice Chancellor Mark Button, Vice Chancellor Tiffany Heng Moss, and Interim Vice Chancellor Jen Nelson. I have and will continue to avail myself to conversations with Faculty Senate leadership, the Faculty Senate, and the faculty across this campus.

In the weeks ahead, I am committed to taking meaningful steps to rebuild trust and deepen our working relationship. For example, I will offer to meet with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee officers before the end of the academic year to establish a series of dedicated conversations aimed at charting a direction forward. These meetings will focus on three areas: defining shared goals to strengthen the relationship between the administration and faculty, identifying concrete processes to enhance transparency in institutional decision-making, and co-creating shared priorities within Our Bold Path Forward strategic framework that reflect the values and expertise of our faculty.

We already have a framework in place to conduct this effort in the twice-monthly meetings the Chancellor has with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. These provide a structured, consistent space for in-depth conversations. It is through that sustained, iterative engagement that we will develop a long-term institutional strategy to strengthen trust, improve shared governance, and advance Our Bold Path Forward together. I am confident that, if we choose this direction, the work we do in those rooms will be felt across our entire campus community.

I have described the route I hope we take toward important, respectful, and productive conversations; a future built on an understanding of our shared responsibilities, trust, and transparency. Responsibility is at the heart of what we do—in leadership, in our academic work, and in research we conduct. That shared sense of responsibility is what connects us, and it is what must guide us as we navigate this moment collectively.

As you consider the motion that is on your agenda, and we approach this fork in the road, I want you to know that I continue to have confidence in the leadership of Mark, Tiffany, and Jen and remind you our best work will be together. I invite you to join me in co-creating a positive direction for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Let's take that path so we can rebuild and re-establish trust in our processes, in our relationships, and in shared governance.