

A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Many of you, I'm sure, have heard the expression that if someone doesn't like the weather in Nebraska, he or she should wait five minutes and it will change.

We know there are hints of truth in that statement, but I would offer that the UNMC research climate is changing as fast as the Nebraska weather, as we become a world-class research institution.

In the two quarters that began this fiscal year, our researchers

gathered more support than they ever had in a previous July-through-December period. These numbers are not surprising, considering that since 1998, UNMC's research funding has grown by more than one-third. That outside, or extramural, funding equaled \$41.3 million in fiscal 2000-2001. Funding from the National Institutes of Health alone amounted to more than \$25 million. Our goal is to increase the amount of that funding by 30 percent each year, and we are well on our way to doing that this year.

With our research funding growing significantly, it was crucial that we form a new position at UNMC to provide

the leadership and vision for our research enterprise. In December, I appointed Thomas Rosenquist, Ph.D., as the first vice chancellor for research at UNMC. Tom assumed the post on Feb. 1.

Dr. Rosenquist came to UNMC in 1992 as the chairman of the department of genetics, cell biology and anatomy. He remained in that position as he later took on the roles of director of research development and, in mid-2001, interim vice chancellor for research.

While serving as interim vice chancellor, he demonstrated his outstanding abilities. He already has had significant success in building a research infrastructure on campus, directing the UNMC Tobacco Settlement Biomedical Research Development program and developing a program statement for the Research Center of Excellence. He knows the campus. He knows the city. He knows the state. And he knows the research business. He's a perfect fit for this position.

Dr. Rosenquist currently has more than \$8.3 million in funding from the National Institutes of Health. In 2001, he

received a five-year, \$5.6 million program project grant from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute to study the causes of congenital heart defects. Dr. Rosenquist's grant, though, is just one of the exciting developments that have occurred over the past year in the research arena. Here are a few others:

- UNMC was awarded a three-year, \$6 million grant to collaborate with other academic institutions in Nebraska to expand biomedical research in the state. We hope that this will encourage more top-quality students in the state to pursue a research career.
- The NU regents approved the Nebraska Informatics Center for Life Sciences (NICLS), which will facilitate the integration of information, computers, and the life sciences to understand complex biological systems. Faculty and staff at UNMC, UNO and UNL will use the information technology of the NICLS to compare scientific data that would take humans years to complete.
- UNMC received a three-year, \$2.08 million grant that will assist rural communities in "growing their own" health-care professionals. Two Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) will be formed through the grant, one in central Nebraska this year and one in northeastern Nebraska in 2003. In the AHEC program, medical schools and community centers cooperate to recruit and train health-care professionals to serve in rural areas. Each of the centers will have its own governing board and executive director.
- UNMC scientists made significant discoveries or assisted developing new treatments for cancers of the pancreas, ovary, breast and prostate, to name a few.
- We saw the first physical signs of the Research Center of Excellence, a 10-level structure that will provide 116 state-of-the-art research laboratories and other classrooms, meeting spaces and an auditorium. The privately funded, \$77 million structure should be completed in 2003.
- UNMC converted a floor of the former OPPD Building south of campus to 16 new research laboratories.

These are only a few of the exciting research developments of the past year. I know that even more thrilling advancements await the Medical Center. I'm proud of the work that our researchers are doing, and I expect additional big things over the coming months.

On UNMC's research front, more positive changes are ahead. Now, if only I could do something about the weather. *d*

Harold M. Maurer

Harold M. Maurer, M.D., Chancellor