

A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is before us that could make a difference for thousands of Nebraskans. Recently, Gov. Mike Johanns proposed an initiative that would build on the state's existing strengths in biomedical research. The legislature is currently considering a bill, LB 692, that would make this vision a reality.

If passed, this initiative would put UNMC on the map in research. UNL, Creighton University and Boys Town National Research Hospital would also benefit from these funds.

Just think of it. Recruiting and retaining the best scientific minds who would invest these precious resources to give us new treatments for cancer, prevent certain heart diseases, eliminate birth defects, stop Alzheimer's in its tracks, or find a cure for macular degeneration of the eye.

These are among the health challenges of the 21st century that can be met by a public and private partnership

between you – the people of Nebraska – and scientists.

The Nebraska Biomedical Research Initiative proposal calls for an investment of a portion of the state's tobacco settlement money – about \$10 million annually – to prevent, detect and treat diseases. Because it will attract additional funding from the National Institutes of Health and other sources, this biomedical research effort will pay dividends that far exceed the initial investment of the tobacco settlement funds.

I believe Nebraskans from across the state will back this effort and so indicate this support to state policy-makers. What better legacy could the state leave than to ensure a healthier future for its citizens?

As I reflect on the Year 2000, I am proud of the advancements that have been made at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. The faculty, staff and students have made great strides this year in setting us on the right course for the new millennium.



Harold M. Maurer, M.D., Chancellor

As part of our goal to become one of the nation's leading academic health sciences centers, we want to engage in the development of selected new technologies to advance health education, science and the Nebraska economy. We took a giant leap in this category with the arrival of the da Vinci™ Surgical System, a computer-assisted robot for minimally invasive surgery.

This past summer, our surgeons began using the system to perform specific abdominal procedures. This equipment decreases the suffering of patients who undergo these surgeries and significantly reduces the length of their hospital stays. In no way does the computer-assisted robot supplant the need for person-to-person dialogue between the patient and physician.

Although the robot can't move or think on its own, surgery personnel have named the machine. They call it "Chuck," after Mr. Charles Durham, the benefactor who brought it to UNMC. No one has been more supportive of our mission and needs than he and his late wife, Margre. Their significant gifts helped UNMC further its research in arthritis, prostate cancer and minimally invasive surgery. Few gifts can be characterized as "transforming," but that term is appropriate when describing what Mr. Durham has given to UNMC.

Research at UNMC has received another huge boost from the community. Generous gifts from Mr. Durham, Ruth and William Scott, Mary and Richard Holland and others, in addition to a \$17.5 million grant from the Peter Kiewit Foundation will support construction of the new Research Center of Excellence.

The center, recently approved by the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, will provide 116 state-of-the-art laboratories for our scientists, a new 225-seat auditorium, an 80-seat and two 40-seat auditoriums, and a variety of conference and seminar rooms. New support facilities will include a parking garage with 1,500 additional stalls and a new utility plant to provide energy to the new facilities on this growing campus.

This building will help us reach our goal of becoming one of the leading academic health sciences centers in the nation, but it's really people who will make the difference. People across the state working as a team.

Harold M. Maurer