

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Bernard McCoy** <ruconverging@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, Oct 30, 2025 at 2:24 PM

Subject: Re: Reminder- Press Conference Tomorrow- Citing New Financial Analysis, AAUP Questions \$27.5 Million UNL Budget Cuts

To: Megan Conway <megan.conway@1011now.com>, Chris Dunker <cdunker@journalstar.com>, <john.grinvalds@hearst.com>, Mike McKnight <mike.mcknight@firstalert6.com>, Justin Diep <justindiep@dailynebraskan.com>, <isabellelewis@dailynebraskan.com>, Brandon Mueting <brandon.mueting@1011now.com>, Darsha Dodge <darsha.dodge@1011now.com>, <sam.cobb@1011now.com>, <mjohnson@klkntv.com>, <lgardner@chronicle.com>, Adrienne Lu <adrienne.lu@chronicle.com>, <jpeal@nebraskapublicmedia.org>, <molberding@nebraskapublicmedia.org>, <natalia@flatwaterfreepress.org>, <sgentzler@flatwaterfreepress.org>, <ewolf@flatwaterfreepress.org>, Zach Wendling <zwendling@nebraskaexaminer.com>, Matthew Hansen <mhansen@flatwaterfreepress.org>, <bunglesbee@industrydive.com>, <cassie.crowe@firstalert6.com>, <8@klkntv.com>, <omahane@ap.org>, <news@klin.com>, <jeff@kfornews.com>, <kzumnews@kzum.org>

Dear members of the news media,

On the heels of yesterday's release and your reporting of an independent UNL financial analysis conducted by the American Association of University Professors, this press release details action taken by the UNL and Nebraska University graduate councils that have each voted to oppose the \$27.5 million in faculty and program cuts proposed by UNL Chancellor Rodney Bennett. Please see the UNL AAUP press release below for details and contacts. Thank you for your coverage of this important story.- Regards, Barney McCoy ruconverging@gmail.com 402-613-0614



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2:24 p.m. CT, Oct. 30, 2025

UNL and NU Graduate Councils Each Vote to Keep Graduate Programs Targeted for UNL Elimination

Faculty and graduate leaders challenge data and process behind proposed \$27.5 million in cuts

LINCOLN, Neb. — The University of Nebraska–Lincoln Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) announced Thursday that both the UNL Graduate Council and the NU System Executive Graduate Council have voted unanimously to retain all graduate programs slated for elimination by UNL Chancellor Rodney Bennett.

On Oct. 16, the UNL Graduate Council voted 10–0 to oppose proposed cuts to graduate programs in community and regional planning; earth and atmospheric sciences; educational administration; textiles, merchandising and fashion design; and statistics.

In its report (see attached letter), the council said the proposed eliminations fail to meet any of the university's own criteria for discontinuing programs and rely on "flawed and misapplied" data. The report also questions the accuracy of information used to justify \$27.5 million in proposed UNL budget reductions that primarily target faculty and several graduate programs. The University of Nebraska Board of Regents is scheduled to vote on the proposed cuts on Dec. 5.

As UNL Professor and member of the Graduate Council Christopher Bilder explained, "The case provided by the Chancellor's team came nowhere near the necessary requirements to eliminate the programs. Materials presented to the committee by the Chancellor's team included errors and lacked appropriate context."

The council identified several key concerns:

- **Bylaw violations:** None of the nine Graduate College criteria for discontinuing programs were met.
- **Bad data:** The administration used unreliable metrics, including misapplied Academic Analytics data.
- **No decline in quality:** The programs show strong enrollment, research output and workforce demand.
- **Student impact:** Nearly 10% of UNL graduate students could be displaced, with limited time or support to complete their degrees.
- **Governance concerns:** Faculty warned that bypassing established standards threatens tenure protections and shared governance.

UNL graduate student Colton Skinner, a member of the Graduate Council, said the proposed cuts would hit graduate students hardest. "Teach-out plans are overly reliant on faculty staying after they are fired," Skinner said. "Graduate students could lose critical mentors and research partners."

Michelle Harvey, assistant professor and member of the Graduate Council, added, "Graduate education is a key aspect of the mission of the University. Cutting these critical graduate programs would undermine our mission and the high standards that we have for research and scholarship at UNL."

On Oct. 28, the NU System Executive Graduate Council — which includes faculty from all four University of Nebraska campuses (UNL, UNMC, UNK and UNO) — also voted 8–0 to retain the same programs.

The AAUP said the two councils' votes reflect a strong call from across the Nebraska University system to protect graduate education, ensure transparency and base institutional decisions on sound data.

AAUP Executive Committee member Elizabeth Niehaus sits on the UNL Graduate Council and the NU Executive Graduate Council. "Given the lack of evidence of a true financial emergency at UNL, the only way that the administration can eliminate tenured faculty positions is through 'bona fide program eliminations," said Niehaus. "The unanimous opposition to the proposals from both councils is a clear indication that these are not, in fact, bona fide program eliminations."

For further comment:

- **Colton Skinner**, graduate student representative, UNL Graduate Council; executive vice president, UNL Graduate Student Assembly — cskinner5@huskers.unl.edu, 405-255-6162
- **Christopher Bilder**, professor, UNL Graduate Council — bilder@unl.edu, 402-472-3690
- **Michelle Harvey**, assistant professor, UNL Graduate Council — michelle.harvey@unl.edu
- **Elizabeth Niehaus**, professor, UNL Graduate Council and NU Executive Graduate Council — eniehaus@unl.edu, 949-400-4639

Background:

The UNL Graduate Council, elected by UNL graduate faculty, oversees graduate programs and policies and forwards recommendations to the NU System Executive Graduate Council and the Office of Graduate Studies. The Executive Graduate Council, with two faculty representatives from each NU campus, advises the NU Graduate Dean and Board of Regents on graduate education. The councils' votes apply only to graduate-level programs.

About the UNL AAUP:

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln Chapter of the American Association of University Professors advocates for academic freedom, shared governance, and fair working conditions for faculty. The AAUP's mission is to advance the standards and values of the academic profession and to ensure higher education serves the common good.