

Christopher Bilder

From: Christopher Bilder
Sent: Wednesday, October 22, 2025 9:15 AM
To: Mark Button
Subject: FW: Follow up from Graduate Council meeting

Mark,

Thank you for your response. Given your confidence in the data and analyses performed by your team, why not hire individuals with PhDs in statistics to conduct an *independent* evaluation? There is enough time for it.

It appears that you recognize that the “Completion Majors” metric has a problem when applied to the Department of Statistics because of the new undergraduate major. Why was this metric value presented to the Graduate Council then? This council did not have any context about why it was singled out as an “instructional outlier”. It appears this metric is being presented again to the Executive Graduate Council as well.

Has “financial exigency” now been declared or close to being declared? I ask simply because of your use of “exigent financial realities”.

Chris

From: Mark Button <mbutton2@unl.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, October 21, 2025 2:26 PM
To: Christopher Bilder <bilder@unl.edu>
Subject: RE: Follow up from Graduate Council meeting

Dear Chris,

Thank you for your follow-up message.

We are all deeply disappointed by the financial realities that UNL continues to face and personally and professionally anguished by proposals that entail the elimination of entire academic programs. However, I disagree that there have been “gross discrepancies in the data and its analysis.” I believe the detailed ELT response to the concerns raised by Statistics faculty still stands. Further, I have great confidence in the data analysis expertise of the professionals in IEA and ORI. I also hasten to add that the z score for Major completions is one score out of 18 quantitative assessments, and we did consider the important fact that Statistics began offering an undergraduate major in 2022. More broadly, the detailed quantitative data analysis was one component of a comprehensive and holistic review of every academic program at UNL.

As the APC completes its work this week, please know that we continue to consider all feasible alternative plans that would enable the university to meet its exigent financial realities.

Mark



Mark Button, PhD

Exec. Vice Chancellor, Chief Academic Officer
University of Nebraska–Lincoln
Office of the Exec Vice Chancellor
Lincoln, NE
[402-472-3751](tel:402-472-3751)

From: Christopher Bilder <bilder@unl.edu>

Sent: Monday, October 20, 2025 8:32 PM

To: Mark Button <mbutton2@unl.edu>

Subject: Follow up from Graduate Council meeting

Mark,

I wanted to follow up on our discussion during the recent Graduate Council meeting and the problems with the metrics and corresponding analyses. During the meeting, you said

And if you feel your concerns have not been sufficiently addressed, I would like to know what they are because my understanding is we provided a multistage response.

The ELT has not sufficiently addressed the department's concerns. While the October 7 statement from ELT purports to lessen our concerns, it, in fact, raised additional questions about the validity of the data analysis, as outlined in the October 9 and October 10 correspondence from my colleague Heike, as well as the department's public presentation to the APC on October 10. We would be happy to walk you and your data analytics team through our corresponding report to demonstrate the flaws in your approach. We want to help you get this correct.

Throughout the APC presentations, the affected departments repeatedly cited problems with the data and with UNL's analysis of the data. As you know, UNL has reserved a \$6.5 million buffer within the \$27.5 million total of proposed cuts. Eliminating these departments will supposedly save UNL \$7.7 million, a difference of only \$1.2 million. Given the gross discrepancies in the data and its analysis, why not hire individuals with PhDs in statistics to conduct an *independent* evaluation? I would be happy to connect you with the American Statistical Association to start the process. The reserved financial buffer and the success of the VSIP give us the time to carefully evaluate the data and analyses, which will only strengthen UNL's credibility among its constituents, its peers, and the AAU.

I was very dismayed by the background materials provided to Graduate Council less than 24 hours prior to our meeting. The materials contained errors, provided a one-sided description of departments, and lacked meaningful context. For example, with respect to the Department of Statistics, the "Grad Programs Metrics Detail.pdf" file stated:

Instructional Outliers: Completion Majors (-1.38)

The materials you provided failed to note that this metric was distorted because the department began offering its first undergraduate major in 2022, and the first students enrolled in that program have not had enough time to complete the requirements to graduate with their degree. Its value would surely increase significantly if the undergraduates were removed from the calculation (we have not been given access to enough information to calculate a new z-score).

Laying off tenured faculty (again) will perpetuate the stain on UNL's reputation, and doing so on the basis of faulty data and faulty analyses is unconscionable. UNL may never recover. It is not too late to pause the budget

reduction process. As you said during the Graduate Council meeting, it is disappointing that the state government has not allocated more funding to UNL. I agree. Eliminating departments is not the answer. We have other options, and the data-informed approach to resource allocation must be corrected.

Chris

Christopher R. Bilder, PhD
Professor
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Department of Statistics
340 Hardin Hall North
Lincoln, NE 68583-0963
Phone: (402) 472-2903
Website: www.chrisbilder.com
E-mail: bilder@unl.edu and chris@chrisbilder.com

Analysis of Categorical Data with R