Department of Statistics
Graduate program summary

Programs	The Department of Statistics has offered MS and PhD degrees in Statistics since 2003 when the department was formed.
Demand	Hal Varian, Chief Economist at Google, said in 2009 that "The sexy job in the next ten years will be statisticians." This has become true! Figure 1 shows the growth in these degree programs over time. The growth in our program mirrored this until 2014 when our Academic Program Review team told us to cut back on the number of students because of capacity concerns. We also started our first undergraduate program in 2022 that required 24 new courses. While we were promised more faculty to accommodate this great increase, we have the same number of faculty as in 2021 when the program was approved. This leaves our MS/PhD programs limited to approximately 40 graduate students.
Employment	All of our graduates obtain jobs! Current industry/government employers include the Detroit Pistons basketball team, First National Bank of Omaha, National Agricultural Statistical Service, and Sandia National Laboratories. Examples of where two or more of our graduates currently are faculty include: Air Force Academy, Creighton University, Michigan State University, and UNMC.
Coursework for majors	In addition to technical skills, our programs focus on the nontechnical skills that many programs do not. This includes our STAT 810 course which examines topics such as ethics and obtaining an internship. We also have two separate consulting courses—STAT 825 and STAT 930—that teach students how to communicate with subject-matter researchers (non-statisticians that need assistance with statistics).
Coursework for non-majors	While the Chancellor's proposal includes keeping STAT 801, STAT 802, and STAT 870, it does not account for the large number of other courses needed by non-statistics majors. Figure 2 provides the first Tableau screen showing enrollments by these students. Table 2 gives a specific example for STAT 875, where 22 different non-statistics majors took the course over its last six offerings. Students take these types of courses so that they can perform their research.
Consulting	The department has a statistics consulting center (known as the "SC3L") to help students/faculty with their research. Over the last five years, there have been 691 subject-matter researcher interactions with our statisticians across 58 NU system and Nebraska public service units. We estimate 90% of these to be interactions with non-statistics majors rather than faculty or other individuals. Again, these students use this center for their research. The center itself is staffed each year by one faculty director, five RAs, STAT 825/930 students, and other faculty (as needed). The Chancellor's plan appears to reduce the staff to only 1 FTE.
Faculty and department research	The department's faculty have the second highest proportion of American Statistical Association Fellows among Big 10 Departments of Statistics. Being a Fellow is like being in a sports hall of fame, except these are not retired faculty! Figure 3 shows the research ranking of our department fits well among AAU and the larger R1 classification of universities (public and private). Relative to public universities only, the department is ranked 27th out 123 Departments of Statistics for research.
Supervisory committees	Our faculty regularly are members of MS and PhD Supervisory Committees for non-statistics majors. This is needed for the statistical support that many of these students require to complete their dissertations.

New programs   There are three new programs that we were close to implementing but are now paused (original expected start date in parentheses):
  • Online MS program in Data Science with Computing and Mathematics (fall 2026)
  • Joint MS degree program with Vellore Institute of Technology (fall 2026)
  • 4+1 BS/MS program (fall 2027)

The Department of Statistics is deeply troubled by the Chancellor's team's metrics used to evaluate departments. Metrics are statistics, so faculty in our department are experts on the subject. We have found faulty data, faulty analyses, and faulty conclusions reached by the Chancellor's team. This has been repeatedly brought to their attention, but the Chancellor's team is not taking our concerns seriously. We have also gone as far as requesting an external review by individuals with a PhD in statistics. A reply has not been received.

For more information about our appeal of the Chancellor's proposal to eliminate the Department of Statistics, please go to SaveOurStats.com. This web page includes our presentation to the Academic Planning Committee on October 10 and our corresponding report.
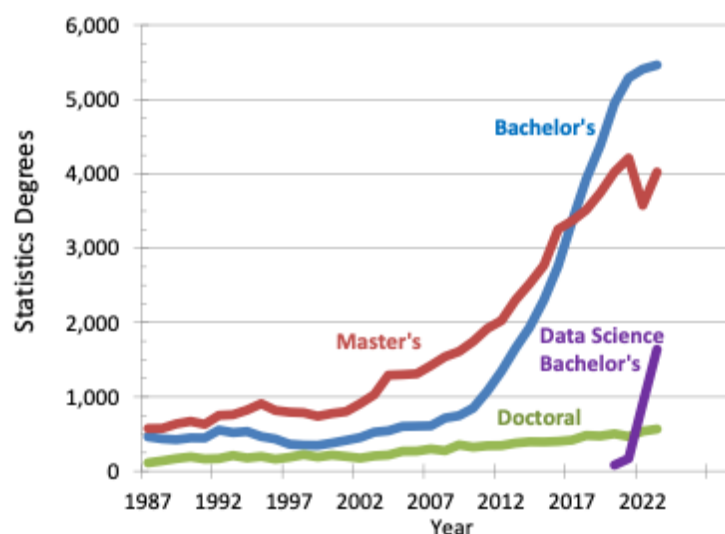

Figure 1. Number of statistics majors in the United States (source: *AMSTAT News*).
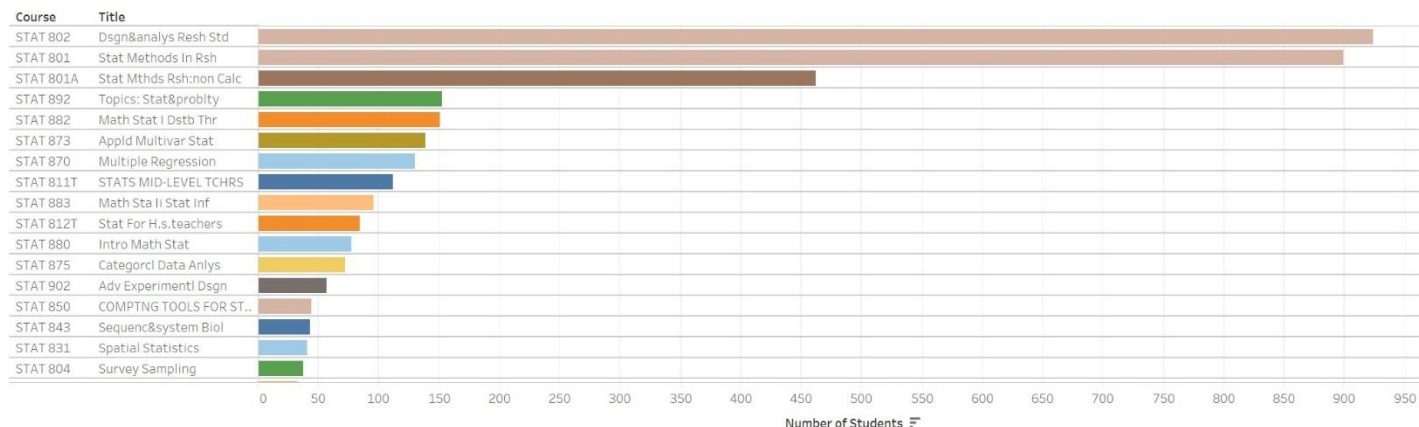

Figure 2. Tableau screen for statistics courses taken by non-statistics majors.
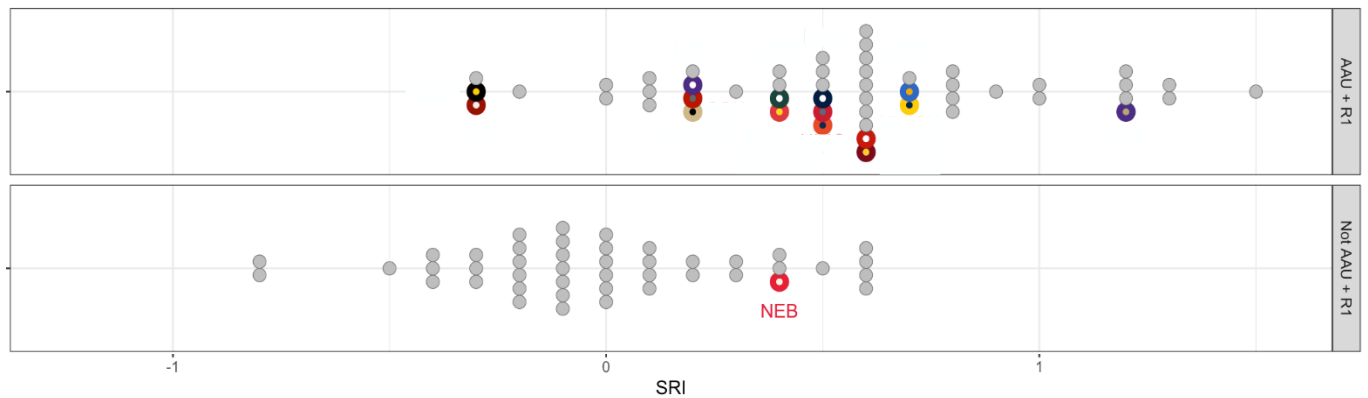
Figure 3. Scholarly research index (SRI) for R1 schools, where only AAU schools are in the top panel and only non-AAU schools are in the bottom panel. Big 10 universities with Departments of Statistics are labeled.

Major	Count	Major	Count
Accounting	3	Early Childhood Education	1
Actuarial Science	2	Ecology	3
Agricultural Economics	3	Educational Psychology	7
Agronomy	2	Entomology	1
Animal Science	5	Environmental Engineering	1
Atmospheric Science	1	Finance	1
Biosystems Engineering	3	Food Science	5
Civil Engineering	10	Natural Resources	1
Biology	1	SRAM	1
Communication Studies	1	Textiles	1
Construction Engineering	3		

Table 1. Number of non-statistics majors who took STAT 875 during its last six offerings.