

PRESIDENT NESTER, TESTIMONY ON LB 160

Chairman Withem, members of the Education Committee, my name is William Nester, and I am president of Kearney State College. I am here to testify in favor of LB 160. I thank you and I thank the members of the State College Board of Trustees, who have allowed me to represent my constituency, the faculty, staff and students at Kearney State.

I believe there are really only two issues which are inherent in the discussion of the merits of LB 160. First, is Kearney State a University? Second, if it is a University, then does Nebraska need one University system or two? My comments will center on the first issue, because the second issue is a political decision and will be made by you and the Governor, as only you have the statutory authority to make such decisions.

First, some background on Kearney State. I have handed out some materials showing the significant growth exhibited by our institution over the past 30 years. Kearney State had 1608 students in 1958, and 9275 last fall. There are 602

universities in the United States which are smaller than Kearney State; there are only four four-year colleges which are larger.

Kearney State has exhibited great service to the central portion of Nebraska. We offer courses in Ogallala, North Platte, McCook, Lexington, Holdrege, Grand Island, Columbus and York. More than 90 percent of our FTE students, however, are those students taking courses in Kearney. We also offer service through our Nebraska Business Development Center, our Center for Rural Economic Development, the Nebraska Art Collection, our in-service teacher training and many other types of services.

Our students come from all 93 Nebraska counties. We are one of two institutions in Nebraska, the other being UN-L, which are considered to be "statewide" in nature. Ninety-eight percent of our students are residents of Nebraska. Our numbers of first time freshmen enrolled is second only to UN-L in the state of Nebraska.

We also serve a significant percentage of graduate students at Kearney State. Of the 14,018 different faces who

attended classes for credit at Kearney State during the 1987-88 academic year, more than 5,900 were graduate division students. About 80 percent of the graduate students in the state college system are from Kearney State.

We offer a diversity of programs at Kearney State, including 32 undergraduate and 19 graduate programs. We offer five bachelor's degrees, three masters, and the specialist degree in education.

Kearney State is organizationally structured as a University. It is primarily a teaching institution, but the faculty are engaged in significant applied research for the betterment of the region and the state. Rural economic development has been a major focus of those research efforts.

What factors determine whether an institution is a college or university? First, size, of which Kearney State certainly qualifies. Second, quality and diversity of programming, and Kearney State also qualifies under those criteria. Third, research initiatives, and Kearney State has developed a major role in applied research in greater Nebraska. Fourth, etc.

TALK ABOUT CARNEGIE COMMISSION

TALK ABOUT COORDINATING COMMISSION CRITERIA

CONCLUDE WITH **DE FACTO** UNIVERSITY

II. GOVERNANCE

WHAT WILL IT DO FOR NEBRASKA? TALK ABOUT TWO NEBRASKAS,
TELL HOW THIS WILL BRIDGE THE GAP.

TALK ABOUT BENEFIT WHICH WILL ACCRUE TO GREATER
NEBRASKA.

TALK ABOUT POLITICAL DECISION--YOU MERELY GIVE OPINION,
IT IS UP TO POLICY MAKERS TO DETERMINE LONG-RANGE BENEFITS
AND DETRIMENTS.

III. CONCLUSION--KEARNEY STATE IS A UNIVERSITY AND YOU
BELIEVE CITIZENS OF NEBRASKA WANT ONLY ONE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM.
THEN LB 160 SHOULD BE ADVANCED.