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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I read with interest your articles reprinted from the Grand Island **Independent** regarding the University of Nebraska at Kearney — LB 247 debate. I wish to point out some inaccuracies and misperceptions in the article written by Mindy Mozer.

Ms. Mozer appears to be trying to make the point that the state appropriations “pie” will remain constant with Kearney State’s addition to the University of Nebraska system. According to Ms. Mozer, the three other campuses composing the system, UN-L, UN-O and the UN-Med Center will “suffer” because of the “four mouths to feed” from the same pie.

Ms. Mozer obviously has chosen to ignore that Kearney State is already a state-funded institution and that the dollars currently appropriated to Kearney State will be added to enlarge the “pie.” Yes, Kearney State is underfunded. And yes, Kearney State will be competing for funds with other state-funded programs, including those programs administered by the three other campuses of the university system.

What Ms. Mozer does not understand is that Kearney State currently competes for dollars with the university system. And we will continue to compete for dollars, whether we are in the university system or not.

I am also puzzled by Ms. Mozer’s statement that the University system “received only a 26.9 percent increase in funding.” According to the legislative fiscal office, that increase calculates to “only” \$52.3 million in new general fund support. Fifty million is not an insignificant sum of money, and most if not all University personnel who I have come in contact with are pleased and gratified by the support of the legislature and Gov. Orr.

As a person with a degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I certainly am not threatened that the value of my degree will fall with the addition of UN-K to the system, as Ms. Mozer appears to be. And I certainly do not agree that Kearney will lose the qualities which have allowed this institution to excel.

The passage of LB 247 was more a recognition of what Kearney State has become (a

university) than a prediction of what it should be in the future. Kearney State students will continue to see professors in the classroom. They will continue to thrive in a friendly atmosphere. Kearney State will continue to be the Nebraska university in a non-urban setting and will continue to attract students from all 93 Nebraska counties.

More important, a university presence in greater Nebraska will be an important step in uniting the urban east with the remainder of the state. Job creation, investment and positive economic development will enhance the quality of life in greater Nebraska.

Kearney State is a university. Nebraska needs only one university system. We believe the legislature and governor made the right choice in the passage of LB 247. And we will do whatever we can to ensure that their confidence in our university is justified.

Thomas J. O’Neill, Jr.
Vice President for
College Relations