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SURVEY OF OMAHA VOTERS

Merger of Omaha University  
and  
Nebraska University

November 25 through 27, 1967

Central Surveys, Inc.

Shenandoah, Iowa

## INTRODUCTION

This survey is based on a total of 481 personal interviews with Omaha adults who indicate they are registered and qualified to vote. Interviews were in selected precincts, with all 14 wards proportionately represented according to their voting strength. The interviews include 401 that are classified as a city-wide cross section, and an additional 80 interviews in the western part of the city intended to give greater reliability for separate tabulation of the areas described in the report as "North," "South," and "West," Omaha.

The interviewing was on Saturday, November 25, and on Monday, November 27.

## SURVEY RESULTS

Omaha voters indicate strong support for the merger, with 55 percent saying they favor it and only 8 percent that they oppose. The other 37 percent are undecided.

Four different reasons are given quite frequently in support of the merger. Tax advantages and the idea of lower tuition or less expense for students attending Omaha University are each mentioned by 27 percent of those favoring the merger, while the idea of an improved financial position for Omaha U, and of a stronger academic position, are each mentioned by 25 percent.

Other ideas mentioned less frequently are that it will lead to the growth of Omaha U, that it will make for a more efficient or more economical administration of the University, that it will generally benefit the city, etc.

Examples of all of these types of reasons are quoted beginning on Page 9.

The only two reasons mentioned very often for opposing the merger are the fear of increased taxes and desire to continue the status quo, for reasons of sentiment or otherwise.

It appears that the other measures that will be on the December 12th ballot also have an excellent chance of success. While individual questions were not asked regarding these, survey respondents were asked a more general question as to whether they favor or oppose the other measures dealing with police, firemen, parks, streets, and sewers.

All five of the other measures have at least plurality support, with the police and firemen receiving the most support. Slightly over half support the police and firemen measures, while only 8 percent and 9 percent respectively say they oppose these. The other three measures are supported by 41 percent or 42 percent, with 11 percent or 12 percent opposing. Nearly half do not indicate any opinion either way regarding parks, streets, and sewers.

A big majority apparently do not differentiate too thoroughly between the other measures, at this time. The survey includes 38 percent who say they generally favor all five of the others, only 7 percent who express general opposition to the various other measures, and 39 percent who say they have not made up their minds. Only 16 percent volunteer that they favor certain measures and oppose others, usually that they support the police and firemen, but not the others.

A total of 82 percent claim that they "definitely plan to vote", which would appear to suggest a large turnout. However, experience has indicated that answers of this type are of little value as a predictor of total turn-out, since the socially accepted answer is to say that one plans to vote. The real purpose of this question was simply to provide a basis for identifying "likely voters". If those are excluded who either admit they will not vote or say they are not certain, the replies divide 62 percent to 9 percent, in favor of the merger, with only 29 percent undecided. This is roughly the same ratio as found in the total survey.

The analysis on Page 8 shows the division of opinions among various geographic and demographic subgroups of voters.



This indicates that the strongest support for the measure will be found in West Omaha, where 73 percent favor and only 9 percent oppose. The least support is in South Omaha, where 45 percent favor and 10 percent oppose. The main difference is that only 18 percent are undecided in West Omaha, but nearly half in South Omaha. Answers in North Omaha divide very similar to the city-wide figures given previously.

The more education an individual has had, the more likely he is to express support for the merger of the two universities, but there is no significant variation in the amount of opposition by different levels of education. The difference is simply that those with less education are also less certain as to how (or whether) they will vote.

The top income group in the community gives the measure the greatest support, with 83 percent expressing support and only 3 percent opposed. In the lowest economic group, 41 percent favor the merger and 12 percent oppose it.

There is good support by all age groups, with the least support found among persons over 60. But even in this group, 45 percent favor and only 12 percent say they oppose the merger.

Relatively more men than women express opinions, but the ratio of support is about the same in either group.

By occupations, by far the strongest support for the merger (by 72% to 6%) is found among white collar persons other than business owners or professionals. This is the largest single occupational group in the survey. There is also very strong support by the other major occupational group, including skilled, semi-skilled and industrial workers. In this group there is 58 percent support.

The least support is found among the group comprising elderly, retired, widows, divorcees, etc., which largely overlaps the "over 60" group mentioned. In this group, which would have the least interest in education, there is nevertheless a ratio of about 3 to 1 favoring the merger. A very high proportion are undecided in this group, which may simply indicate lack of interest.

Only a very small number of business owners or professional people (or their wives) were included in the interviews, and they may not be entirely typical. At any rate, this group does not show as much support as would be expected, only 45 percent to 14 percent. Since there is such a strong evidence of maximum support by both top income and top educational groups, answers by this small group of "business owners and professional" would seem to be no cause for concern.

#### Conclusion

There is every reason for optimism about the merger carrying by a healthy majority, although the present ratio of 55 percent to 8 percent is hardly realistic for any election. Those undecided probably will tend to be negative if they bother to vote, but there is nothing at this time to suggest any motivation for them to even show up on election day.

A large and representative vote, especially in West and North Omaha, is probably the best insurance of a favorable end result.

Present support for the merger is solidly based in terms of both geographic and demographic components, and it is based on sound reasons of finance and civic progress. The scattered opposition does not appear to have found a rallying point on any one reason or slogan, nor any one population group that would function as a cadre for carrying on an organized campaign.

SURVEY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

NOTE: All percentages are based on 401 respondents in Omaha sample, unless otherwise designated.

Q. 1: Are you a registered voter?\*

Q. 2: How long have you lived at this address?\*

Q. 2a: (If less than 1 year on Q. 2) Have you re-registered since you moved?\*

\*Replies to these questions were not tabulated, as they were asked solely to qualify respondents. All respondents are registered and qualified to vote December 12.

Q. 3: There will be an election December 12 on merging Omaha University and the University of Nebraska. Do you favor or oppose the merger?

Favor merger	55%
Oppose merger	8
Undecided	37

Q. 3a: Why do you favor the merger?

	Number favoring	(221)
Tax advantages		27%
Lower tuition or expense for students		27
Financial improvement for Omaha U		25
Academic improvements		25
Will aid growth of Omaha U		6
Efficient or economical administration		5
Generally of benefit to city		4
Greater educational facilities in Omaha		1
Miscellaneous other reasons		1
Nonspecific		6
No reason		4

Q. 3a: Why do you oppose the merger?

	Number opposing	(33)
Fear of tax increase		30%
Status quo, sentimental type reasons		30
Fear "Lincoln" administration		6
Miscellaneous other reasons		18
No reason		16

Q. 4: There will be 5 other measures to vote on, dealing with the police and firemen, parks, streets, and sewers. In general, do you favor these or oppose them?

Police:

Favor	53%
Oppose	8
Undecided	39

Firemen:

Favor	52%
Oppose	9
Undecided	39

Parks:

Favor	41%
Oppose	12
Undecided	47

Streets:

Favor	42%
Oppose	11
Undecided	47

Sewers:

Favor	41%
Oppose	12
Undecided	47



Q. 5: As of now would you say that you will definitely vote in the December 12 election, will definitely not vote, or that you aren't sure yet?

Definitely will vote	82%
Definitely will not vote	2
Undecided	16

Q. 3: There will be an election December 12 on merging Omaha University and the University of Nebraska. Do you favor or oppose the merger?

	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Undecided</u>
		(Percentages read across)		
Survey Total	481	57%	9	34
<u>Income:</u>				
Well-to-do	35	83%	3	14
Upper middle	106	72%	6	22
Lower middle	276	52%	10	38
Poor	64	41%	12	47
<u>Age:</u>				
21 to 29	57	61%	9	30
30 to 39	97	67%	7	26
40 to 49	123	60%	9	31
50 to 59	82	56%	7	37
60 and over	122	45%	12	43
Men	228	71%	11	18
Women	253	45%	7	48
<u>Occupation of Head of Household:</u>				
Business owners and professional	22	45%	14	41
Other white collar workers	183	72%	6	22
Skilled - industrial	156	58%	10	32
Miscellaneous others	36	44%	12	44
Retired and widows	84	32%	11	57
North Omaha	176	55%	7	38
South Omaha	155	45%	10	45
West Omaha	150	73%	9	18
<u>Education:</u>				
College graduate and some college	169	66%	10	24
High school graduate	196	58%	9	33
Some high school	45	33%	9	58
8th grade or less	61	41%	8	51
Q. 5: Will vote	398	62%	9	29
Will not vote or undecided	83	34%	11	55

Attitudes Toward the Omaha University and  
The University of Nebraska Merger

Q.3: "There will be an election December 12 on merging Omaha University and the University of Nebraska. Do you favor or oppose the merger?"

Q.3a: "Why do you (favor) (oppose) the merger?"

(481 total respondents)

275 FAVOR THE PROPOSED MERGER.

79 mention academic improvements.

37 "The standards of the school will be better - higher scholastically," "Better education," "It will improve the school and credits," "It should give us better education and make a better school out of it," "I think it will provide a better education and universally accepted credits," etc.

24 "They will offer more subjects, such as engineering," "More subjects will be offered," "It will improve Omaha University's academic standing - right now they offer no engineering," "They would probably be able to offer more subjects," "I feel it will strengthen the academic structure. The University of Nebraska is stronger and offers more courses than Omaha University and Omaha University students on campus will have these courses too," etc.

18 "It would probably do for better education; pay the teachers more and more courses of study," "They will be able to retain good instructors," "So they can keep qualified teachers and attract more teachers," "Better teachers," "Better utilization of professors - may be able to trade them back and forth," etc.

79 refer to tax decrease: "It will make it less costly to the public - should help out on our taxes," "It's supposed to cut the property tax down," "Taxes would be cheaper," "It could cut down on taxes here in Omaha," "The taxes wouldn't be so high," "It will be good - spreads taxes throughout the state and not just the city of Omaha," "It will be better for Omaha as far as taxes are concerned," etc.

65 refer to lower tuition or less expense for students: "Tuition would be lower and more students could afford to attend college," "Lower tuition rates," "Students will benefit because of lower tuition," "By merging, tuition would be less," "It would cut down on tuition costs," "I think it will help the students economically," "Tuition will be cheaper," "It will lower the cost per student," etc.



- 64 mention financial advantages for Omaha University: "It will save Omaha University from closing - they will get tax money from the whole state," "Omaha University is low on money so it will help for the two to go together," "It will improve Omaha University as far as money to work with," "I think they will get better financial help by merging," "With the financial problems Omaha University has, maybe they wouldn't have the financial problems if they merged," "We should save Omaha University and this is the only way to do it; they apparently don't have the resources to expand without state aid and if it doesn't expand, it will fold - the city can't support it," "It would be a financial help for Omaha University," etc.
- 16 believe it will help Omaha University grow: "Omaha University is very overcrowded and it would help to correct this," "It will become larger and more students can attend," "It would become a larger college," "It's the only answer to the growth of Omaha University - it can't grow like it stands now," "It will result in a bigger school," "It will make it a larger school," etc.
- 15 mention more economical or efficient operations: "Easier to control as one instead of two schools - one group can take care of all the business instead of having two groups doing the same work," "I think they will have better management under the Board of Regents," "I think they could operate the two on less money than by operating them separately," "More economical," "It will improve the efficiency of both schools," etc.
- 9 believe Omaha will benefit generally: "It would be best for the community - a lot of men work in Omaha while attending school here," "It will be good for the city - it will put us on the map and we'll be more recognized," "It's an improvement for the future of the city," "With a campus in Omaha it will benefit the city," etc.
- 3 believe it will provide increased educational facilities in Omaha: "I think it will provide better education for our local schools," "It will make more educational opportunities available for this area," or "It will expand our education here in Omaha."
- 5 give miscellaneous reasons.
- 2 "My husband attends the University and believes it's the right thing" or "My husband said it would be good for Omaha University so I will go along with his decisions."
- 1 "I'm for public education and anything to improve it."
- 1 "It would be an advantage to the Omaha students."
- 1 "Omaha students could attend a state university."



17 are nonspecific: "It's a valuable college that the state should have," "I just think it would be better all the way around," "I just think it would be a good idea," "Mainly because I went there and feel it would be best," "Because Omaha University favors it," etc.

10 can give no reason for favoring the merger: "I don't know," "No reason right now," "I don't know - I don't know enough about it yet," etc.

#### 43 OPPOSE THE MERGER.

13 refer to taxes or believe taxes will be increased: "For tax reasons mostly, I guess. It seems to me a larger university will raise taxes," "I'd oppose it because there would be more taxes," "We've spent our local money here and I think we should keep it here - it will just cost us more tax money," "I think it will mean the taxes go up again," "I just think it's another way to get our taxes," "I have a feeling it would make the taxes go up," "I think the merger would cause our taxes to be raised again," etc.

13 give sentimental, stubborn, or status quo types of reasons.

6 "I would rather see Omaha keep its own university - there are so few municipally supported universities. I think it's a good school," "Omaha University was founded by Omaha and should remain the property of the city," "Taxpayers paid for Omaha University and therefore it should belong to the city," etc.

5 "I think they are O.K. the way they are now," "I think it's all right the way it is now - my son graduated from Omaha University and I like it the way it is," "I would rather see Omaha University stay independent. I've been here since 1931 and they have turned out some good scholars," etc.

1 "I am a graduate of Omaha and I guess for sentimental reasons I would rather Omaha keep it for their own."

1 "The school is for Omaha children."

2 oppose dictation from Lincoln.

1 "Basically, because Omaha University will not get the money from the legislature. The budget committee has ten out of state and two city members."

1 "I feel it might be run by people in Lincoln and Omaha won't have anything to say about it."

8 give miscellaneous other reasons.

- 1 "I just don't see a purpose for this at all; I'm in favor of small colleges."
- 1 "I don't believe in helping educate other people's kids."
- 1 "I just believe you get less done in grouping things together."
- 1 "I don't have any use for the young people these days. They want everything for nothing and this would be helping them too much."
- 1 "They tell me we will lose Elmwood Park, and we need parks and that is a nice park and I can't see losing it."
- 1 "I think I will go along with the majority and I feel the majority opposes it."
- 1 "I doubt if there will be a tax decrease. Also, I wonder if the quality of teaching will be as high in Omaha if there is a merger."
- 1 "We live in District 66 and have no voice in Omaha University." (sic)

7 can give no reason for opposing the merger.

- 5 "I don't know," "I have no reason at all," "No reason - I just oppose it," etc.
- 2 "I won't answer that" or "It's none of your business."

163 ARE UNDECIDED ON THE MERGER.