

Director

Bruce Dvorak, Interim Director, 2009-present
Kyle D. Hoagland, 2000-2009

Vision and Mission

The vision of the UNL Water Center is to assist the University of Nebraska in becoming an international leader in water research, teaching, extension, and outreach. Part of that vision is facilitating and promoting UNL programs that will result in UNL becoming a premiere institution in the world in the study of agriculture water use. The UNL Water Center implements and facilitates water-related research, extension, teaching and public outreach/education on



all aspects of water resources with a focus on Nebraska, in the context of the region, while addressing issues of national and global concern.

Background

Established in 1964 as part of the Water Resources Research Act (WRRA) passed by the U.S. Congress, the UNL Water Center is one of 54 water institutes nationwide, with one in each of the 50 states, typically at the land grant institution, plus Guam, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C. Through three name changes and eight directors, the fundamental goals of the Water Center have not changed, as reflected in the original charge from the WRRA:



1) arrange for competent research that addresses water problems or expands understanding of water and water-related phenomena; 2) aid the entry of new research scientists into the water resources fields; 3) train future water scientists and engineers; and 4) distribute the results of sponsored research to water managers and the public. Congress reauthorized the Act in 2006, in P.L. 109-471.

An independent panel appointed by the Secretary of Interior evaluates the performance of each institute regularly. The UNL Water Center passed its last U.S. Geological Survey review in 2004.

The UNL Water Center focuses a majority of its efforts on: 1) facilitating research by competitively awarding seed grants; 2) facilitating research and training new scientists by holding, for example, an annual Water Research Colloquium, water summits, and a spring water seminar series; 3) conducting extensive outreach education, such as an annual summer water tour.

Faculty and Staff

There are more than 100 UNL faculty who work directly on water, including faculty from five colleges (Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources, Architecture, Arts & Sciences, Engineering, and Law), and more than 15 academic units. In addition, there are several water faculty members at other institutions in Nebraska who are affiliated with the Water Center. Current Water Center staff members are highly skilled, dedicated employees who each have many years of water-related program experience. The Water Center staff increased threefold over the past two years, in large part as a result of Water Resources Research Initiative activities and related funding.





Linkages/Collaborations

The Water Center collaborates extensively with federal, state, and municipal partners, including elected officials, with businesses, and with educational and non-governmental organizations. Federal partners include the Department of the Interior, USDA, USGS, and EPA. State partners include departments such as Natural Resources, Agriculture, Education, Health & Human Services, and Environmental Quality, and the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission. Other collaborators include the Nebraska Environmental Trust, Audubon Nebraska, and the Nature Conservancy; irrigation districts; Nebraska Well Drillers; agricultural producer organizations; various environmental engineering firms and law firms; science education organizations; municipal utilities and health departments; power companies; and more.

Funding

The Water Center has received nearly \$5 million in state and federal funding since 2004.

Role of the Water Center in SNR

The Water Center is an integral part of SNR. Several staff members have served or continue to serve on SNR standing committees. The Water Sciences Laboratory director is currently co-leader of the SNR water faculty group. Six of the new Water Resources Research Initiative faculty hires have full or partial appointment in SNR and serve to integrate SNR with other water-related units across campus. As new water-related units on campus come into being, such as the Global Water Institute, the role of the Water Center both in SNR and at UNL in general will undoubtedly evolve. Given

that the water institutes nationwide continue to be reauthorized and appropriated by the U.S. Congress, they will also continue to have a national role to play.



Future Prospects

As issues of water availability and quality become more urgent in Nebraska and globally, the need for statewide coordination, facilitation, and advocacy for water research, education, and outreach/extension will continue to increase. The history, track record, and overall importance of many of the functions served by the Water Center in these three primary areas clearly justify not only continuing its current efforts, but also strongly suggest that its flat budget over the past ten years or more should be reexamined and enhanced.



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