Regents resolve to put Iowa's needs first

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On behalf of the Iowa Board of Regents, I offer our thanks to all Iowans for the privilege of representing them in the governance of the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, the University of Northern Iowa, the Iowa School for the Deaf and the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School.

Each of Iowa's public universities and special schools is committed to making Iowa the best-educated state in the nation, through excellence in teaching, cutting-edge research and direct service to Iowans, including economic development.

The success of Iowa's public universities and special schools would not be possible without the support of the governor, Legislature, congressional delegation and, most important, the Iowans we serve. As we enter a new year filled with much economic uncertainty for Iowans, we offer two resolutions:

First, our commitment to provide world-class teaching, research and service to Iowans will not waver.

Second, in these challenging economic times, the Board of Regents and each of our institutions will place the needs of Iowa first and foremost. During the remaining six months of fiscal 2009, we will adjust to $17.5 million in budget reductions announced in December and continue to address the roughly $250 million in flood damages on the U of I campus.

As the Legislature considers the state's budget this session, we will work together to protect and enhance these vital educational institutions, while at the same time keeping tuition costs below the median for our peers, improving productivity on our campuses and continuing to provide affordable access.

Our first priority is educating Iowans. In fall 2008, Iowa's public universities enrolled a record 70,000 students, nearly 70 percent of whom are Iowans. Our academic quality is world-class. At the U of I, graduate programs in the arts, humanities and health sciences rank in the top 10 nationally, led by the world-renowned Iowa Writers' Workshop. Many graduate programs at ISU, including those in statistics, engineering and chemistry, rank among the top 25 nationally, and several programs of the College of Design rank among
the nation's best. UNI has been ranked second among Midwest public comprehensive universities by U.S. News and World Report for 12 consecutive years. UNI enrolls the most math- and science-education majors in Iowa, and is the home of the Board of Regents Mathematics and Science Education Institute.

Our research efforts are directed to developing new knowledge that demonstrably improves the quality of life for Iowans. In 2008, the U of I announced a $25 million gift from the Fraternal Order of the Eagles that will fund diabetes research in an effort to develop a cure. This is one of many research initiatives planned for the new U of I Institute for Biomedical Discovery, which will provide cross-disciplinary research in the biomedical and life sciences to develop new treatments and cures and to bolster Iowa's economy through new jobs and business partnerships.

Also in 2008, ISU was named a National Research Center for biochemicals by the National Science Foundation. This designation will bring $18 million in external research funding to Iowa, solidifying ISU's position as a world-class center of research in the bioeconomy and providing a competitive advantage for Iowa in this important emerging industry.

The natural disasters of 2008 presented a special opportunity for our institutions to serve Iowans. At the U of I and its Hospitals and Clinics, countless individuals fought valiantly to protect the state's investment in campus facilities, to continue vital services without interruption and to quickly resume educational and research activities.

UNI provided essential disaster-recovery services to Parkersburg following the May tornado, as well as assistance to the Waterloo/Cedar Falls area through flood-protection services and shelter.

The Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School provided refuge for many Vinton residents impacted by high flood waters. And the disaster-recovery services of ISU Extension and the UNI Regional Business Center provided immediate assistance to numerous communities statewide, including thousands of rural small businesses.

Iowa's public universities and special schools are significant engines of economic development. Nearly 53,000 employees and more than 211,000 university alumni, including many of Iowa's top professionals, contribute to the state's work force of taxpayers and industry leaders. And, due to the excellence of our programs, our universities consistently attract significant external funding, which totaled a record $697
million in fiscal 2008, and record private giving from alumni and friends, which totaled nearly $310 million in the same period. As a result, for every $1 in state funding, the universities generated $1.58 in external gifts, grants and nonresident tuition.

The Board of Regents will not forget the many extraordinary challenges of 2008 and the accomplishments of our faculty, staff and students. We look forward to another year of great accomplishments by Iowa's public universities and special schools as they continue to transform the lives of students and contribute to the health and vitality of our state.

David Miles, President
Board of Regents, State of Iowa