

Experts answer grassy questions

New center will allow more study

By Chad Lorenz
Staff Reporter



No matter where you stand in Nebraska, there is a 50 percent chance you will be standing on grass. Half of Nebraska's landscape is grassland. Grass is an important natural resource in Nebraska, because it has an impact on other areas of environment: soil, water, fish and wildlife, agricultural, livestock ranching, landscaping, recreation and economy, said Martin Massengale, a former University of Nebraska president and UNL chancellor.

With so much depending on Nebraska's grassland, Massengale is establishing and will direct a Center for Grassland Studies to integrate all these disciplines.

"It provides for one-stop shopping," Massengale said.

The center is actually a union of experts rather than an actual place, he said. Those involved with the grasslands center offer to share their knowledge and research.

They will organize workshops to study grassland, work to raise environmental concerns, exchange ideas and act as a network of consultants and experts in various fields, Massengale said.

Anyone can consult the center's experts with questions or problems.

The center is not limited to serving the university, but Lowell Moser, in agronomy professor, said the center could benefit the university in six ways:

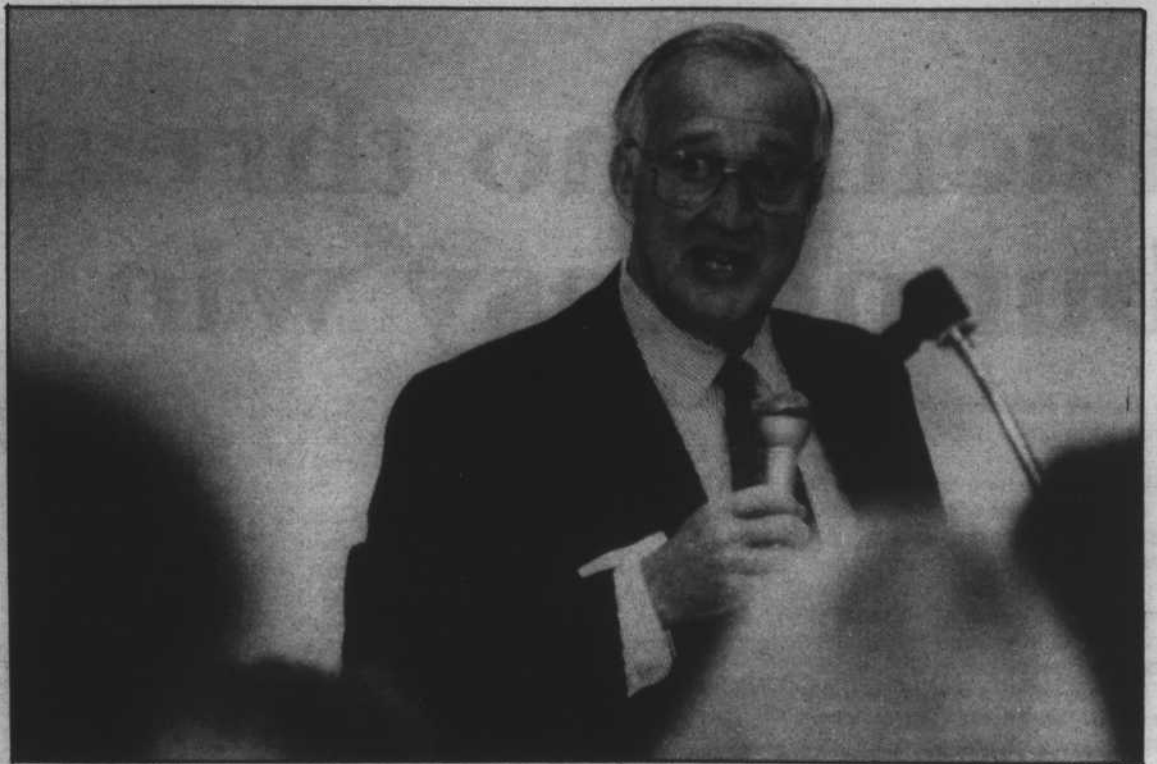
- New courses could be created through the integration of grassland studies.
- Connections with experts in grass-related fields could provide a more diverse faculty.
- Experts who work with the center could be used as a teaching resource for environment-related classes.
- The companies and institutions involved could provide internship opportunities.
- Likewise, more graduate study programs would be available.
- There could be more employment opportunities for students.

The idea has been in the making for eight to 10 years. Massengale said the idea for such a center was discussed within different organizations.

But nothing emerged until last year when a task force of university faculty began work on a proposal to create the center, he said.

That proposal was passed by the Board of Regents in July, and the task force asked Massengale to direct the center.

In addition to finding office space and hiring a receptionist for the center, Massengale has been establishing connections with organizations such as the National Parks Service, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Agricultural Research Center, Center for Great Plains Studies and departments in the university such as biological sciences, agriculture and turf management.



Shaun Sartin/DN

Republican gubernatorial candidate Gene Spence speaks Sunday at a debate among candidates for U.S. Senate, House of Representatives and governor.

Debate

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Kerrey, who is a member of a "mainstream" group of senators trying to pass a compromise health care plan, said he was disappointed that health care legislation wasn't enacted by Congress this year.

The problem with health care, Kerrey said, was that people wanted high-quality health care and didn't want to pay for it. He said people would need to take more responsibility in the future dealing with health care.

Abboud said Stoney was wary of turning over one of the best health care systems in the world to the federal government. He said Stoney wanted to fix the problems of affordability and accessibility, but to not radically alter the sys-

tem.

Spence said his son had cancer twice, and the second time, his insurance agent canceled the policy. He said there had to be some changes.

However, Spence said, the changes have to be made carefully.

"I don't want a bureaucrat standing in between me and my doctor," he said.

Abramson said the governor had researched the health care needs of Nebraskans and had tried to help. He said the governor had tried to get doctors to areas of the state that did not have them before.

Candidates were asked if Christianity was the religion of the United States, if they supported tax-funded vouchers for students wanting to go to private schools and the teaching of creationism in

public schools.

Protexter said Christensen supported vouchers to foster competition between public and private schools. He said competition would make the schools better.

Government should not infringe on people's right to practice any religion, Protexter said. Schools should teach creationism in an academic format, not as a religious idea, he said.

Hoagland said Christensen's religious views were extreme and challenged the idea of teaching creationism in schools. He called the idea a terrible mistake.

"Who's interpretation of the book of Genesis are we going to teach?" he asked. "We must be very firm on enforcing the separation of church and state on these issues."

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