Remarks to the
Transportation, Infrastructure, and Capitals Appropriations Subcommittee
February 17, 2011

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Senator McCoy, Representative Huseman, and members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for this opportunity to describe Iowa State’s request for funding to complete the Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering Complex—the university’s top capital priority.

We're very grateful for the work that you do, and for the strong support that this body and the State have shown the university in the past. Because of the economic downturn, we know that this year presents real budget challenges, and we appreciate your consideration of this appropriations request.

Let me briefly describe the ABE Complex. The first phase—a building called the Biorenewables Research Laboratory—has already been completed. It was dedicated last September, and our faculty and students are now using that laboratory to develop new technologies to produce biorenewable chemicals and fuels. Over $8M of externally funded research will be conducted in that building this year with support from 20 companies and federal agencies—including a $22M grant from ConocoPhillips, and an $18M grant from the National Science Foundation. In short, the State of Iowa is realizing a good return on its investment. I invite you to visit campus for a tour: our research and courses in biorenewable technology are world-class, and truly a point of pride for our state.

We are requesting the state appropriations necessary to construct the second phase of the Ag and Biosystems Engineering Complex: two wings that will house classrooms, laboratories, and offices. Phase two will become the new home for the Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering. It will be funded as a public-private partnership, with the state appropriations spread over the next two fiscal years: $19.4M in FY12, and $41M in FY13. It is important to note that we have already secured significant gift commitments from our alumni and corporate partners: over $12M toward a private fundraising target of $14.1M. Iowa State alum Virgil Elings has generously made a gift to name one of the complex’s wings. The Sukup family, John Deere, and other friends of agriculture and engineering at Iowa State have likewise stepped forward with their financial commitments and endorsement of this project’s importance.

The modern classrooms and laboratories of the ABE Complex will enable Iowa State to remain at the forefront of agricultural engineering and the bioeconomy, supporting our students and their learning, and building Iowa’s workforce and economy. And because the current home of our agricultural engineering department is 80 years old, significant savings will be realized through lower maintenance and energy costs.

Again, thank you for your time this morning, and I would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.