

Barbara and Wally Weitz pledge \$25 million to Only in Nebraska campaign



Barbara and Wally Weitz

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News Release

Omaha philanthropists commit \$19 million to UNO and \$6 million to Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture

Omaha philanthropists Barbara and Wally Weitz have made a \$25 million gift commitment to invest in strategic priorities and leadership at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and redevelop a historic building at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) in Curtis, Nebraska, to support student growth and success.

The Weitzes have pledged \$19 million to UNO and \$6 million to NCTA through the University of Nebraska Foundation.

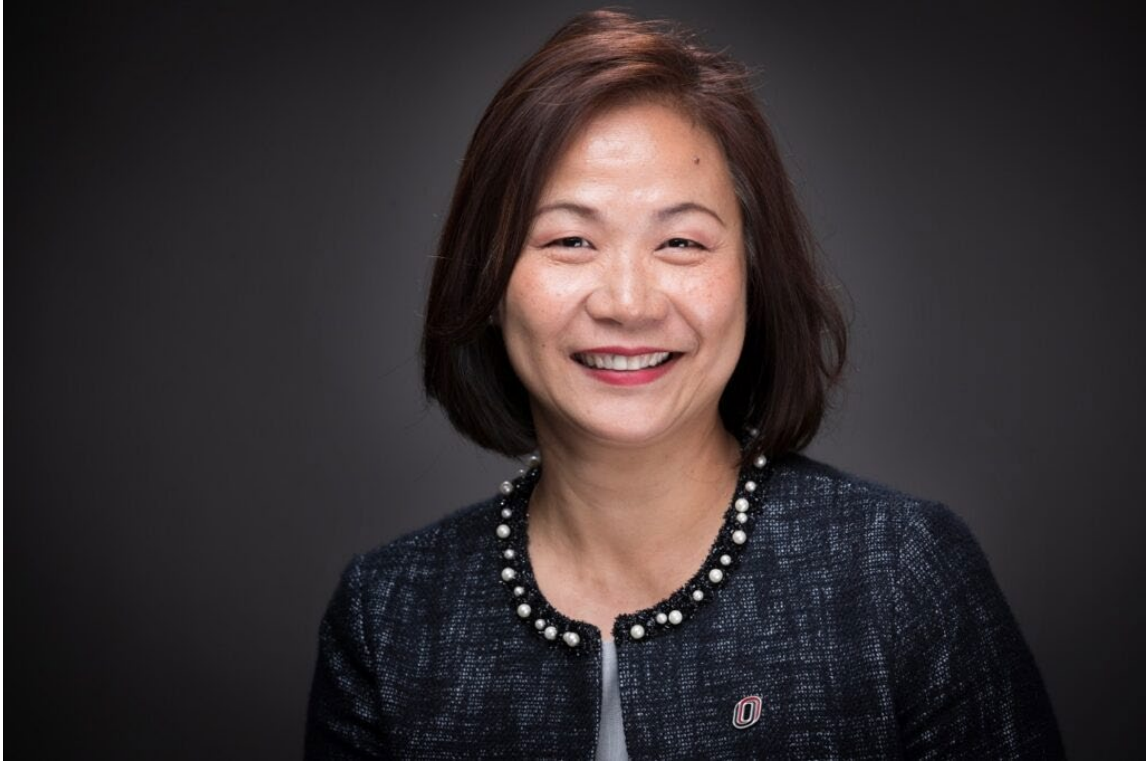
The Weitzes' gift was made as part of *Only in Nebraska: A Campaign for Our University's Future*. The campaign is a historic effort to encourage at least 150,000 benefactors to give \$3 billion to support University of Nebraska students, faculty, academic and clinical programs and research to address the needs of the state.

At UNO, the couple's gift will create the Weitz Innovation and Excellence Fund and establish the Barbara and Wally Weitz Endowed Chair in Higher Education Leadership.

"It is thrilling to be a part of a place that is doing the kind of things that are happening at UNO," Barbara Weitz said. "This institution, and the University of Nebraska as a whole, are incredibly valuable because of the education they provide and for their importance to the economy of the state. We must have well-educated citizens for Nebraska."

UNO Chancellor Joanne Li, Ph.D., CFA, said she is humbled by the gift.

"On behalf of UNO, thank you for making this smart investment in our university," she said. "This sends a signal to our faculty and staff that you believe in the work they do, as well as UNO's strategic focus on improving the economic and social mobility of our students. This gift is significant, and it means a great deal to our campus."



Joanne Li, Ph.D., CFA, Chancellor of the University of Nebraska at Omaha

Weitz Innovation and Excellence Fund

The Weitzes designated \$14 million of their gift to create the Weitz Innovation and Excellence Fund, to be awarded to strategic UNO priorities that may benefit from new investment. The fund's purpose is to elevate particularly good programs to nationally recognized ones while addressing critical areas of need in Omaha and the state of Nebraska.

"UNO will have discretion in how to use these funds. We have trust in the people doing the work to come up with the best ideas for our students and the community," Wally Weitz said.

From 2024 through 2029, the UNO chancellor will annually ask for proposals. An evaluation committee, made up of senior faculty, will then

review the proposals based on criteria that include how well a proposal addresses a campus priority, the nature of the need being addressed and the likelihood of success.

“Truly, this gift is an investment not only in UNO, but also in the entire Omaha community and the state of Nebraska,” Chancellor Li said. “The Weitz Innovation and Excellence Fund will support our faculty to dream big and realize opportunities to make the future of Nebraska’s teaching, working and learning a reality. All projects supported through this funding will be selected with an eye toward how they strengthen our community as a whole.”

Barbara and Wally Weitz Endowed Chair in Higher Education Leadership

The Barbara and Wally Weitz Endowed Chair in Higher Education Leadership, supported by a \$5 million gift, is the first endowed chair in higher education leadership to be attached to a chancellor’s position in the University of Nebraska System.

The endowed chair, to be awarded to the UNO chancellor, will aid in the recruitment and retention of top leadership at the university.

The gift will be invested permanently in the endowment and provide an estimated \$200,000 in annual distributions to support the UNO chancellor and her/his strategic priorities.

“We are living in a time of immense change and opportunity, requiring skilled, strategic leadership from people who not only deeply understand the issues, but can set a bold vision for the future and inspire others to come along,” University of Nebraska System President Ted Carter said. “The Barbara and Wally Weitz Endowed Chair in Higher Education Leadership will help to ensure UNO always has strong leadership to move the university and the Omaha community forward.”

Student Success and Activity Center

At NCTA, the couple’s gift will support a \$12 million project to create the Student Success and Activity Center on campus. The Weitzes’ challenge gift will be matched by \$6 million in other private funding, with work to begin after fundraising is complete. Donations may be made **online**.



Conceptual image of exterior of Student Success and Activity Center at Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture



Conceptual image of interior of Student Success and Activity Center at Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture

“It took visionaries to create this rural arm of the University of Nebraska over a century ago, and now the Weitzes are the visionaries who are helping to lead us into the future,” said NCTA Dean Larry Gossen, Ph.D. “We are truly overjoyed to receive a gift of this magnitude to allow our campus to evolve with a new Student Success and Activity Center. It will be an awe-inspiring gathering place to be proud of — for students to study together, have social events, and, most importantly, an accessible dining hall. It will draw in students living off-campus and generate the energy and excitement our students need to feel a sense of belonging.”

The gift to renovate and expand “The Barn,” originally built in 1917, will be the single largest monetary donation ever received by NCTA.

“This campus in Curtis charmed me after my first visit to attend graduation. It is a seemingly small but remarkably important part of our commitment to bring resources, faculty and students to improving our agricultural knowledge and

workforce in Nebraska,” Barbara Weitz said. “NCTA is a too well-kept secret south of North Platte.”

The gift was inspired by a desire to promote workforce development in the agriculture sector and improve educational opportunities in rural Nebraska.

“At NCTA, we are teaching agriculture ‘in the field’ at the collegiate level, with the latest technology and practices in our academic programs,” Dean Gossen said.

“These include agronomy, animal science, ag education, equine industry management, ag mechanics, irrigation technology, agribusiness and veterinary technology. Improvements to campus facilities are included in NCTA’s master plan and are central to our enrollment goals to grow from under 300 to 500 students in the next 10 years.”

About Barbara and Wally Weitz

Barbara Weitz is a member of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, and Barbara and Wally Weitz are chairs of the **UNO campaign committee** for the *Only in Nebraska* campaign. The Weitz Family Foundation, established by the couple, was the lead donor to the UNO Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center, which was dedicated in 2014.

Barbara Weitz is also a retired faculty member of UNO’s Grace Abbott School of Social Work. Wally Weitz is the founder and co-chairman of the Omaha investment firm Weitz Investment Management.

“Barbara and Wally have given generously of their time and resources as volunteer leaders of the *Only in Nebraska* campaign — both as members of our campaign

executive committee and as campaign chairs for UNO. Additionally, Barb previously served as a member of the foundation board, in addition to her current role as an elected regent," said Brian F. Hastings, president and CEO of the University of Nebraska Foundation. "Their leadership and generosity demonstrate the lasting impact the *Only in Nebraska* campaign will have across the state."

About the University of Nebraska Foundation

The University of Nebraska Foundation grows relationships and resources that enable the University of Nebraska to change lives and save lives. During the most recent fiscal year, a record 60,571 donors gave \$300.6 million to the foundation to aid UNK, UNO, UNL, UNMC and its clinical partner, Nebraska Medicine, and NCTA. The foundation raises more than \$7 for every \$1 spent. *Only in Nebraska: A Campaign for Our University's Future* is its current campaign with a goal to raise \$3 billion from 150,000 unique benefactors to support the University of Nebraska. More information is at OnlyinNebraska.org.

About the University of Nebraska at Omaha

Located in one of America's best cities to live, work and learn, the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) is Nebraska's premier metropolitan university. With more than 15,000 students enrolled in 200-plus programs of study, UNO is recognized nationally for its online education, graduate education, military friendliness and community engagement efforts. Founded in 1908, UNO has served learners of all backgrounds for more than 100 years and is dedicated to another century of excellence both in the classroom and in the community.

About the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture

Part of the University of Nebraska system, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is a two-year institution with a statewide mission of preparing students for successful careers in agriculture, veterinary technology and related industries. NCTA is known for its affordable tuition, high job-placement rate for its graduates and the success of student teams in competitive activities, including crops judging, ranch horse events, livestock judging, shotgun sports, stock dog trials and intercollegiate rodeo. The college is consistently ranked as one of the best two-year schools in the nation.