

Dennis Potthoff

After a ten-year career teaching and coaching in public junior and senior high schools in Nebraska, Kansas and—through the Fulbright International Teacher Exchange Program—in Ontario, Canada, Dennis Potthoff moved into higher education in the field of professional teacher education. In 1996, the Palisade, Nebraska native experienced “a homecoming of sorts” when he was appointed Associate Professor in the College of Education at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

The University of Nebraska at Kearney has its roots in teacher education, and it continues to be the institution that has provided undergraduate education to more than a third of Nebraska’s elementary and secondary school teachers. Dr. Potthoff’s recollection of “the enormous stability” of his own small-town background and his experience as a secondary school teacher shapes his commitment to educating Nebraska’s future teachers. He is active in the Nebraska Network for Educational Renewal, a partnership of college and public school teachers dedicated to improving teacher education and revitalizing public school systems—a program in which UNK cooperates with the Kearney Public Schools. Through the partnership, UNK College of Education students gain firsthand experience while the public school students benefit from additional personal attention.

D. Potthoff defines the University of Nebraska at Kearney’s tradition of scholarly teaching as “a fierce commitment to teaching, in which faculty are learners, too. Teaching, scholarship and service are all of a piece here.” He believes that the training of teachers is an act of public service. “Thomas Jefferson knew that a knowledgeable citizenry is essential in maintaining a strong democracy,” contends Dr. Potthoff.

A graduate of both the undergraduate and doctoral programs at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Dr. Potthoff is the author of numerous articles in the professional teacher education field on topics such as field experience placement, mentoring and institutional collaboration.



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