

those options and many of them are already at work out there in the field serving the needs of one-half to two-thirds of rural Nebraska and simply need an upgrade of training. It isn't going to be easy for some of those folks because of the distances but we are still putting them a lot closer to training and disrupts their families a lot less than if we asked them to go to Lincoln or Omaha. We have made a commitment. We have got 40 freshmen students in that program right now and it simply is unreasonable, I think, to change that right now, given a history of the school and the needs in the area. Many of you are saying there are too many schools. Well, don't forget, we have done a pretty good job of cutting the University's budget and I think if our intention is clear to the Regents there, they really are appropriately the ones that have to reconsider that and should they wish to make changes some place in terms of the Lincoln program, that is certainly within their realm. Finally, let me make a point that concerns me. Some of you seem to be saying, well, the west is such a Godforsaken place nobody would want to live out there anyway and there is no sense spending any more money out there. If you have been to Scottsbluff lately, if you have been to the Panhandle lately, you will see some things that I think will surprise you. That is one area that is working very hard towards bringing itself back in an economic crisis. The health care community is, as all of you know, an extremely important component of that economy, and, in fact, you are making a choice here about whether to invest in that area and create opportunity that will eventually bolster state revenues, or if you are simply going to further that spiral of decline that is plaguing much of the state. So, in no way, is this a new program. It is a wise investment and should, in the long run, pay off great benefits for this state. So I urge you to reconsider your decision and reinstate the Scottsbluff program. Thank you.

SENATOR CARSTEN: Thank you. Senator Chambers, on the Scofield amendment, please.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Chairman and members of the Legislature, I supported this program last session, last regular session. Is that when we put it in? And I support it now. The other day when I made the move to have it put back among the cuts is so that all of these programs would start off on the same footing and we would have to make deliberate, conscious decisions about all of them. And my feeling is that we should consider the merits of each and every one of these items because each and every cut is hitting a group of people who are benefited and we