Biography: President Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D.

On Jan. 12, 2015, the Board of Regents appointed lifelong educator Hank M. Bounds, Ph.D., as the seventh president of the University of Nebraska. Bounds began his tenure as president on April 13, 2015, bringing with him a demonstrated record of expanding opportunities for students, improving higher education outcomes and efficiencies, and building successful partnerships with policymakers, donors and business leaders.

Bounds grew up on a small farm in rural Mississippi, where his family raised hogs and cattle and he hauled hay. His service in the Army National Guard helped him pay for college, and he earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Southern Mississippi and a doctorate from the University of Mississippi.

Bounds has devoted his 25-year career to helping change students' lives in the same way education opened doors in his own life. He began as a high school teacher, then rose to principal, superintendent and state superintendent before becoming Mississippi’s commissioner of higher education in 2009. In that role, he oversaw a complex system of eight public universities including research universities, regional universities, an academic health science center, historically black institutions, a law center, a school of veterinary medicine and 200 institutes and centers. Together the system enrolled 85,000 students, employed 26,000 faculty and staff, and operated with a combined annual budget of $4.5 billion, including $500 million in research and development.

During every year of Bounds’ tenure as commissioner, student enrollment and degrees awarded by the institutions in the Mississippi system increased, by a total of 13.3 percent and 11.4 percent, respectively. He advocated with legislative leadership for improved faculty compensation and providing greater opportunities for students. He also provided oversight for private fundraising in excess of $250 million per year.

Bounds worked with the Board of Trustees to implement a performance-based allocation model that distributed funds equitably and rewarded universities for operating efficiently and achieving attainment outcomes. He designed an efficiencies plan that saved more than $90 million, an internal audit function, and a comprehensive diversity initiative that led to increased diversity among Mississippi faculty, staff and students.

Bounds also worked with partners to increase educational attainment in Mississippi, including a Center for Education Innovation focused on improving learning opportunities for disadvantaged children. Bounds created an office to foster relationships among university researchers, business and industry, and economic developers. He was tapped by the business community to chair a major statewide initiative to create an action plan to improve Mississippi’s competitive position.

Bounds brings this experience to the University of Nebraska, which he believes can serve as a catalyst for change and growth in the lives of students and people in the state and around the world. He is working to make the University of Nebraska a giant in higher education—for the benefit of the state, the country and the world.

Bounds holds faculty appointments in the College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and in the Colleges of Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the University of Nebraska at Kearney. He and his wife, Susie, are the parents of a son, Will, and a daughter, Caroline. They reside in Lincoln, Nebraska.