REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA VITICULTURE PROGRAM (UNVP) TO THE NEBRASKA GRAPE AND WINERY BOARD FOR THE 2024 – 2025 FISCAL YEAR

Numerous accomplishments that were supported by the funds granted to the UNVP by the Nebraska Grape and Winery Board took place during the time of funding from July 1, 2024, through the beginning of June 2025. Highlights of research and educational programing are as follows:

A BioChar study on Frontenac grapes, launched in the spring of 2024, explored the effects of BioChar as a soil amendment. In addition, a high tunnel project for growing Vitis vinifera varieties, such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Riesling, experienced setbacks in spring 2024 due to wind damage and extreme cold, which caused plant dieback and minimal crop yields. Plants are rebounding and the team is considering new winter insulation methods like soil mounding for better winter protection.

The Itasca grape cultivar, which suffered from herbicide drift damage in 2022, has recovered and is now seen as a promising variety for dry and off-dry white wines in Nebraska. Other successful cultivars like Petite Pearl, Marquette, La Crescent, and Brianna are also proving valuable for local growers. Additionally, the NE2220 Multi-State Evaluation project continues to evaluate emerging grape cultivars and clones, assessing their suitability for different U.S. regions and their potential economic impact on the wine industry.

Support for Steve Gamet and Ben Loseke. Funding from the Nebraska Grape and Wine Board was instrumental in retaining and supporting Steve and Ben. Their contributions to the industry were immeasurable and helped make the University of Nebraska Viticulture Program truly helpful to the Nebraska grape and wine industry.