INTSORMIL Helps Improve Varieties of Grains in Developing Countries

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Perspectives

At work for Nebraska.

These four words hold a wealth of meaning in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. We use them often to describe both what we are about, and why we are here.

We are at work for Nebraska, educating tomorrow’s citizens and leaders, and serving as an economic engine for our state. The work we do helps keep Nebraska farmers and ranchers competitive, efficient, and effective, and helps Nebraskans protect and sustain our state’s valuable natural resources. With agriculture Nebraska’s leading industry, both are absolutely vital.

We are at work for Nebraska providing knowledge people can put to immediate use. We contribute to Nebraskans’ health and quality of life.

We strive, along with our many and diverse constituents, to identify the concerns and issues that face Nebraskans today, and will face us tomorrow. Scanning for the future is an important part of what we do, crucial to remaining leaders in providing solutions to Nebraskans’ concerns and issues.

We are at work for Nebraska all across our state, through teaching, research, and extension education programs. These three legs of the land-grant university mission are closely entwined in IANR, where each builds on and fosters the others.

When I speak to groups I often explain that when I say IANR is at work for Nebraska all across our state, what I mean is work done in the Institute benefits all Nebraskans, and reaches across both rural and urban areas. We are proud of our agricultural heritage in IANR, and we know its importance to Nebraska.

Look at our spires of excellence, built over time by faculty expertise responding to Nebraskans’ needs: beef systems; water, climate and environment; crops of the (continued on page 2)

The Leading Object

The Morrill Act of 1862 established a Land Grant University in each state where the Leading Object would be instruction in agriculture and related fields.

INTSORMIL helps improve varieties of grains in developing countries

International efforts to aid food production in developing countries are based within the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln.

The International Sorghum and Millet Collaborative Research Support Program (INTSORMIL CRSP) was established at UNL’s East Campus in 1979. Its goal is to improve the development of sorghum, millet, and other grains in Central America and Africa, said John Yohe, director since 1988.

“We’re making a tremendous contribution to humanity,” said Yohe, who is responsible for coordinating the multi-disciplinary program.

Before the assistance of INTSORMIL scientists, grain production in developing countries was from landrace, or native, varieties and plagued with diseases and pests.

INTSORMIL has helped improve grain varieties to resist pests such as striga, a parasitic weed, Yohe said.

INTSORMIL was created by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to solve food and nutrition problems in developing countries through land-grant university expertise. Eight U.S. universities, including UNL, were competitively identified and became participants in the new program. UNL became the management entity and headquarters.

Yohe, who had previous international agricultural experience in South Korea and Brazil, worked for USAID in Washington, D.C., from 1977 to 1984. He moved to INTSORMIL in 1984, becoming director a few years later.

INTSORMIL has had several accomplishments since 1979, such as helping developing countries grow sorghum free of tannin — a chemical that interferes with digestibility. Other successes have included helping countries lower the cost of producing food and making their grains more resistant to aflatoxin molds.

In Tanzania, for example, INTSORMIL has helped women support their families by selling bread made with sorghum flour.

Currently working with UNL are scientists from Kansas State University, Texas A&M and West Texas A&M universities, The Ohio State University, Purdue University, and a pearl millet breeder from (continued on page 4)
Lindgren retires from UNL after 34 years

Dale Lindgren, horticulturist at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s West Central Research and Extension Center in North Platte, has retired after nearly 34 years.

Lindgren’s research includes biotechnology and gene manipulation, with a career highlight involving Penstemon. His Husker Red Penstemon was named plant of the year in 1996 by the national Perennial Plant Association. Penstemon cultivars developed at WCREC now are grown all over the world.

Lindgren also helped evaluate dry edible beans at WCREC. He was co-developer of about 20 breeding lines and cultivars of dry edible beans.

Lindgren helped initiate the North Platte Farmers Market, helped organize the Master Gardener program in west-central Nebraska, and was the first chairman of the North Platte Tree Board.

Masek given March KUDO award

Leonita Masek, personnel generalist with the Natural Resources Business Center, has received the March KUDO award from the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

An excerpt from a letter supporting her nomination states “Leo is a true professional who shows a real passion for the work she does.” Another reads, “Many will simply learn the task at hand. Leo asks the whys and hows in an effort to truly understand how one task relates to the whole.”

Masek received the award at the March regents meeting.

McAndrew receives service award

T.J. McAndrew, assistant facilities coordinator in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture at the Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead, has received the 2010 IANR Exemplary Service Award.

An excerpt from a letter supporting McAndrew’s award read: “The research farms under his management have made considerable improvement in their professional appearance and income potential.” Another read: “T.J. has always gone the extra mile and he has also spent innumerable hours helping us repair or alter some of our plot equipment to help us get our job done.”

The award will be presented April 19, where McAndrew will receive $500 and a plaque.

Vet sciences building gets new name

The veterinary sciences building on the UNL East Campus now is named Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences Hall.

The building’s new name is consistent with the name of the School of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, which it houses. The new name also will make it easier for campus visitors to find the administrative offices of the school, said John Owens, NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR, who proposed the name change in February.

A sign with the new name will soon replace the old sign, which read the Veterinary Basic Sciences Building.

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served in various capacities for Agriculture Builders of Nebraska, Inc.

“We’re fortunate to have such informed, enthusiastic CARET delegates,” Owens said. “We in IANR really appreciate the work of these insightful and dedicated individuals.”

Fritz accepted into leadership program

The Food Systems Leadership Institute (FSLI) has announced Susan Fritz, interim dean of IANR’s Agricultural Research Division, has been accepted into its leadership development program for academia, industry, and government.

The two-year FSLI program enhances personal and professional development by emphasizing leadership competencies, skills for organizational change, and a broad, interdisciplinary perspective of food systems.

“The program offers the flexibility to tailor learning to fit my context of IANR, and links my learning to the national food system,” said Fritz, UNL’s first participant in the program.

Year one includes assessments for scholars to increase their self awareness about leadership style and implement a personal development plan. During year two participants develop and carry out an individual leadership project.

The program is affiliated with the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities.

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the USDA Agricultural Research Service.

As a result of INTSORMIL, about 1,500 students from developing countries have attended UNL and partnering institutions since 1979, taking back to their home countries valuable information on food production, Yohe said.

INTSORMIL had been grant-funded until 2006, when USAID started a new five-year, $9.6 million funding program for the organization under a cooperative agreement funding arrangement. That figure has since been raised to $12.6 million for the period of Oct. 1, 2006, to Sept. 30, 2011.

“I can honestly say in 25 years I’ve never had a day where I dreaded coming to work,” Yohe said. “I work with a wonderful core group of scientists and staff. It’s a joy.”

— Lori McGinnis