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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.

IANR

June 2007

Perspectives

John C. Owens
NU Vice President and
Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR

"Innovation is the specific tool of entrepreneurs, the means by which they exploit change as an opportunity for a different business or a different service."

I share that quote by Peter Drucker because I am thinking a great deal about entrepreneurship these days, and how important entrepreneurs are to Nebraska's and our university's future.

I'm thinking, too, about change, which Drucker mentions, and a quote by John F. Kennedy: *"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future."*

Lucky for us — and lucky for all Nebraska — we in the Institute are not about to miss the future, because of our faculty's and staff's entrepreneurial innovation.

Entrepreneurship is evident throughout IANR, in research, in extension education, and in teaching, where creative thinking and innovation prompt new majors and new options. When our educational entrepreneurs successfully meet expanding and new needs by building on our strengths in creative ways that require little additional resource, they clearly add value to our product.

Consider the new plant biology major approved in August 2006.

A recent story in the *Lincoln Journal Star* reported the trade magazine *Business Facilities* ranks Nebraska third nationwide in overall depth of biotechnology leadership (because of the state's high ranking in agricultural biotechnology) and fourth in overall breadth or range of biotechnology.

The plant biology major, offered through either CASNR or the College of Arts and Sciences, allows students to explore plant biology at any developmental level, from the molecular to the ecological. This can only strengthen Nebraskans' knowledge in biosciences, which the "At Work for Nebraska" independent study

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Wilhite Named Director of School of Natural Resources

Donald A. Wilhite will become Director of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln School of Natural Resources on August 1.

Wilhite, founder of the UNL-based National Drought Mitigation Center, succeeds Mark S. Kuzila, who is leaving the post after four years but will remain an SNR faculty member.

"I'm very excited for the opportunity to move this already world-class natural resources academic organization ahead for the benefit of our students, future students, and for all Nebraskans," Wilhite said.

"I'm flattered to be following Mark, who has done such an outstanding job of getting the school firmly established."

Wilhite founded the National Drought Mitigation Center and International Drought Information Center, both housed in SNR, more than 10 years ago. The drought mitigation center produces the nationally published weekly U.S. Drought Monitor map through a partnership with the USDA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The center also is actively engaged in drought planning and mitigation activities at the local, state, and national levels in the U.S. It also works with numerous foreign governments and international organizations, including several agencies of the United Nations, on drought management issues.

John Owens, NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, calls Wilhite a highly successful faculty member whose contributions to the university, state, and nation are widely recognized and highly valued.

Wilhite

"As director of SNR, Dr. Wilhite brings impressive leadership qualities, a worldwide vision, and a record of high achievement," Owens said. "He has very strong interests in undergraduate education, research, and graduate studies, service to the state, and extension education programming, and he possesses a proven track record of fostering teamwork that yields success."

Wilhite has received more than $20 million in grant funding over the past 25 years. He received a doctorate in geography/climatology and water resources from UNL in 1975, a master's degree in geography/climatology from Arizona State University in 1969 and a bachelor's degree in geography from Central Missouri State University in 1967.

Kuzila, a research and soil scientist at UNL for more than 30 years, also directs UNL's Conservation and Survey Division, which is now a part of SNR. The school recently completed a move to the newly-renovated Hardin Hall, which brought

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recently done for IANR by Battelle identified as a growth area for our state.

Starting this fall are our new food technology for companion animals undergraduate major, a joint program between our food science and technology and animal science departments, and our new undergraduate forensic science major.

The food technology for companion animals major will prepare students for successful careers in the rapidly growing companion animal food manufacturing industry. As you know, that industry recently was thrust into national and international spotlights because of serious concerns about the safety of pet foods.

The forensic science major has two options, forensic biology for students interested in a laboratory-based career, and crime scene investigation for those interested in a field-based career.

Other new majors bringing students to our campus recently include insect science, hospitality, restaurant and tourism management, and landscape architecture.

Hospitality, restaurant and tourism management is offered with the College of Education and Human Sciences, which offers six of the eight options. Members of the tourism and hospitality industry sought help from the university to meet the industry's needs for well-educated employees. All across the Institute, faculty and staff have partnerships that help inform us of Nebraska's needs.

The five-year bachelor of architecture degree is offered through the College of Architecture with major input from CASNR via Agronomy and Horticulture.

Not only do new CASNR majors meet the demands of changing times, they also attract a broader base of student interests and backgrounds, as our professional golf management major has done. By attracting more students, these majors help us protect funding for core traditional programs in agriculture and natural resources as we maintain and build our strengths.

Our faculty also are entrepreneurial in providing students new educational options.

Options, such as those in agricultural finance and banking, microbiology, applied climate science, equine sciences, and food products marketing and management, often can move nimbly through the approval process to help us respond quickly to the needs of our state.

Thanks to each of our academic entrepreneurs who help build IANR's entrepreneurial culture and whose innovation allows us to reinvent ourselves and strengthen our programming to meet today's needs so we can build a successful and productive future. You are making a significant difference.

Commission Approves Two New Degree Programs

Two new undergraduate degree programs have been approved for students beginning this fall.

Programs in forensic science and food technology for companion animals were approved in May by the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education.

The forensic science program has two study options. The forensic biology option is aimed at students interested in a laboratory-based career focusing on the analysis of biological evidence such as DNA and blood. The crime scene investigation option is for students interested in a field-based career in forensic science.

UNL's program will be only the fifth undergraduate program in the Midwest and the second in the Big 12 Conference, said David Carter, coordinator for the program for the Department of Entomology in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

The food technology for companion animals major is offered jointly through the Departments of Animal Science and Food Science and Technology. It is for students interested in developing and producing food for companion animals, said Lisa Karr-Lilienthal, companion animal lecturer in Animal Science.

Other universities offer courses in companion animals but Karr-Lilienthal believes UNL is the first to offer a major focused solely on the development of pet food.

Need to meet with the

Vice President/Vice Chancellor?
Drop-ins each Friday from 3-5 p.m.*

John C. Owens

NU Vice President for
Agriculture and Natural Resources
and Harlan Vice Chancellor of IANR

202 Ag Hall • (402) 472-2871

*Occasionally Dr. Owens will be called away on University business.

Retired UNL Research Scientist Brakke Dies

Myron Brakke, a retired UNL plant virologist and the first faculty member from Nebraska to be elected to the National Academy of Sciences, died on June 15. He was 85.

Brakke came to UNL as a USDA employee in 1955 and retired in 1986. He returned to UNL part time between 1988 and 1990. He moved to the Seattle area a few years ago, said James Van Etten, a Professor of Plant Pathology and himself a member of the National Academy of Sciences.

"Myron was a fantastically creative and outstanding research scientist," Van Etten said. "He also was a wonderful person to interact with."

Brakke was world-renowned for his work in plant viruses. Besides the academy, he was a Fellow in the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a Fellow of the American Phytopathological Society.

Wilhite Named Director

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together faculty and staff who had been in eight different buildings.

"Dr. Kuzila has done a splendid job as director of the SNR with academic leadership that has resulted in a strong foundation on which the SNR is now firmly established," Owens said.

Editor - Lori McGinnis • Layout - Anne Moore

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106 ACB, 0918; via e-mail (lmcginnis2@unl.edu) or via fax (402-472-0025).

Alumnus Helps Hawaiian Farmers with Conservation

Kent Matsutani experienced quite a lifestyle change when he moved from Sidney, Nebraska, to Honolulu, Hawaii.

It was all part of the job for Matsutani, a 1978 University of Nebraska–Lincoln College of Agriculture graduate in agronomy and animal science. Matsutani, an employee of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, was promoted to his job in Hawaii 3 ½ years ago.

"Going from being landlocked to ocean-locked was quite different," he said.

Matsutani is assistant director for programs of the NRCS's Pacific Islands area. His job is to help farmers interested in conservation techniques acquire funding they need to pay for their efforts. He helps distribute about $12 million in federal funds annually to about 150 applicants.

For example, it may cost a farmer $20,000 to install an erosion control system on land, but the federal money will help pay for it.

Matsutani, a Hershey native, became interested in conservation farming while he was still at UNL. He started working for NRCS while a UNL senior at field offices in McCook and Lincoln.

After graduation, he worked in NRCS offices in Hastings, Stanton, and then Sidney, where he stayed for 25 years. In 2000 he commuted to Washington, D.C., to help craft the conservation security program in the 2002 Farm Bill. He then returned to Sidney until his transfer in 2004 to Honolulu.

He quickly found a vastly different life. His area includes the seven principle islands of Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Saipan, Rota, and Tinian. All but Hawaii are American territories. Matsutani flies to the different areas as part of the job.

"Agriculture is diverse and intensive ranging from subtropical to tropical environments," he said. "Most land can be cropped twice in one year with production agriculture being as little as one acre."

Matsutani attributes his UNL education with helping him learn how to stand up in front of people and promote conservation. Some of his best college memories, he said, are when he was on livestock judging teams and had to talk about the attributes of animals in front of judges. Talking about conservation is similar, he said.

Kent Matsutani

"If I hadn't believed in conservation from the start, I would have had a hard time promoting conservation for 30 years," he said.

Seeing conservation on the land is one of the most satisfying aspects of his job, Matsutani said. Seeing the long-term impacts created through terracing, vegetative barriers, and wetland restoration is heartwarming to him, he said.

"My work is not big and glamorous," he said. "I tell kids at career day how many jobs you can find where you blend science and technology into helping farmers maintain viability, reduce non-point pollution, and get down and dirty."

– Lori McGinnis

SNR Graduate Students Help Children Learn About Environment

Many of the children who attend Lincoln's McPhee Elementary School live in places where they can't run barefoot through the grass in their yards and pick flowers from their gardens.

That's because very few of them have yards and gardens.

The children who attend McPhee near downtown Lincoln do not live in homes where yards or parks are easily accessible, said Principal Bess Scott. As a result, the children lack environmental, scientific experiences in their play and learning time, she said.

Once two graduate students from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's School of Natural Resources learned about the situation at McPhee, they stepped in to help bring change.

Kimberly Payne, a master's student in soil science studies from Benton, Arkansas, and Marcy Pummill, a master's student in wildlife ecology from St. Louis, have been helping McPhee students learn about environmental science for about the past year and a half.

Payne and Pummill, who will graduate in August, wrapped up their work as Lincoln Public Schools ended classes for the academic year.

"The main goal was to show kids that science is fun and you don't have to be a genius to do science," Payne said. "All you have to do is wonder about it."

Payne and Pummill began their work in the 2005-06 academic year by starting a science club at McPhee and helping them conduct science projects. They also worked with children of all ages, from the preschool Head Start program through fifth grade, teaching them about such things as water, soil, climate, and ecology.

Scott said the graduate students began work at McPhee as the school was in the midst of a Greenspace project to transform its inner city, concrete, and pebble playground into an outdoor education classroom.

Students at McPhee typically live in low-income apartments and 85 percent of them qualify for free and reduced lunches. Fifty-five percent are students of color. Many of them don't know what it's like to play outside in a yard or grow plants in a garden, Scott said.

The hands-on lessons led by the UNL students taught the children more about the concepts of nature, Scott said.

Jim Brandle, Professor in the School of Natural Resources in UNL's College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, said the project first arose after the SNR's Graduate Student Association decided to get involved in a community service project.

Brandle, whose wife Carolyn works at McPhee, suggested to Payne and Pummill that they do a project at the school. They enlisted the help of other SNR graduate students, and during the past semester, 15 to 20 graduate students were involved in the project.

"A lot of them didn't realize many of the issues these kids were facing," Brandle said. "We were calling on our students to use their expertise and share their excitement on these subjects with the kids."

– Lori McGinnis

Awards

Van Vleck Receives Pioneer Award from National Dairy Shrine

L. Dale Van Vleck, Professor of Animal Science and Research Geneticist with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, was selected to receive the Pioneer Award from the National Dairy Shrine.

The award will be presented during the World Dairy Expo October 2-6 in Madison, Wisconsin. The National Dairy Shrine recognizes several pioneers of the dairy industry each year.

Levis Makes National Hog Farmer Masters List

Don Levis, Swine Specialist and Animal Science Professor at the Northeast Research and Extension Center, has been named Master of the Pork Industry by National Hog Farmer magazine.

The Masters of the Pork Industry are a special, handpicked group of pork industry visionaries. Levis specializes in working with pork producers and extension educators in providing information on ways to improve reproductive efficiency in swine and to construct and manage swine breeding facilities.

Nebraska Forest Service Manager Receives Award

Bob Vogltance, Fire Resources Manager in the Nebraska Forest Service, has received the Silver Smokey Bear Award.

The national award is given to a maximum of only five organizations or individuals annually. It is sponsored by the National Association of State Foresters, the USDA Forest Service and the Advertising Council.

The Silver Smokey Bear Award honors an organization or an individual who has provided outstanding regional service with significant program impact in wildland fire prevention over a period of at least two years.

Bauer Named Interim Director of NREC

Dennis Bauer, an extension educator based in Ainsworth, is the new Interim District Director of the Northeast Research and Extension Center in Norfolk.

Bauer, who has been on the UNL staff since 1978, has served Brown, Keya Paha and Rock counties as an educator. He started his new position on June 8. John Witkowski has retired from the position.

Terry Mader, Professor-in-Charge of the Haskell Ag Lab for the past nine years, will continue in that position and will assist Bauer in research administration.

Bauer "brings a wealth of successful programming and multi-county administrative experiences to this interim position," John Owens, NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor of IANR, said in announcing the appointment.

Bauer

"We are most fortunate and appreciative that a professional with the skills such as Dennis has is willing to take on this important temporary position," Owens said.

A search advisory committee has begun the process of seeking a permanent director.

New Student Services Post Created at NCTA

The Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis has merged student services under one staff member.

Sue Shaner recently began work as Director of Student Services. Shaner will oversee admission, recruitment, financial aid requests, student records, housing, and food service in her new position.

Weldon Sleight, Dean at NCTA, said the major reason for the merger of student services was to allow students to have a one-stop shop for all their needs.

"Frequently students have need of all student services to solve a problem and had to go from office to office," Sleight said. "Now NCTA students can come to the Student Services Center on the second floor of Ag Hall and have all their needs addressed in one location."

Shaner

Shaner came to NCTA from Mid-Plains Community College in McCook, where she was Dean of Economic Development. She also has worked for the University of Illinois, Iowa State University, and Weber State University in Ogden, Utah.

Three Receive Outstanding Employee Awards

Delores "Lori" Howlett, Jerry Leach, and Christine Steggs have received Outstanding Employee Awards from IANR.

Howlett

Howlett, an Ag Research Technician with the Panhandle Research and Extension Center in Scottsbluff, received the OEA for office/service staff for June. A nominator wrote "Lori is dedicated to working hard, taking the time to make sure the job is done right, and delivering materials that are of the highest quality.

Leach

Leach, a Groundwater Technician with the School of Natural Resources, received the OEA for office/service staff for July. A nominator wrote "Jerry has admirably adapted to numerous and quite varied job assignments during his nearly 40-year tenure at the Conservation and Survey Division."

Steggs

Steggs, Assistant to the Director at the School of Natural Resources, received the OEA for managerial/professional staff for July/August. A nominator wrote "Many people helped in the recent move of the SNR faculty, staff, and students to Hardin Hall. If I have to pick one individual to whom the majority of the credit should go for this successful move, that person would be Christine."

OEA recipients receive $250, a certificate, and a lapel pin.