

June 2008

The Leading Object: June 2008

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Perspectives

I've seen an international flair in the air the last couple months as I've been privileged to travel to Costa Rica and China with IANR colleagues, looking to enhance relationships with universities in both countries.



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

We met such talented people and had wonderful opportunities to advance our understanding of these countries and their universities and students. We did our best to also increase their understanding of UNL, and how pleased we would be to have their students come study with us.

Both trips were productive, invigorating, and just plain fascinating. Yet as interesting as they were, I do think one of the most delightful trips I've been on in a long time occurred much closer to home, when it was my pleasure to participate in the May Roads Scholars Tour to northeast Nebraska.

About 35 of us from IANR — faculty and staff with one to five years of university service, IANR Liaison Committee members, and IANR administrative leaders — boarded a bus early May 15 and headed north.

The trip, designed to provide people relatively new to IANR an opportunity to better know our state, what's done here and our role in it, was also a wonderful opportunity for us to increase awareness of how IANR is at work for Nebraska with all we met.

At West Point Implement and Design we learned about the production of agricultural equipment, with Erv Eisenmenger, owner/manager, demonstrating his company's major lines of equipment and manufacturing processes.

At Knobbe Feedyards, owner Harry Knobbe of West Point talked about the business — and challenges — of running a feedlot and closely monitoring the national cattle market.

The Center for Rural Affairs, its mission, priorities, and current projects, was continued on page 2

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*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.*



June 2008

IANR contingent visits northern Nebraska in first Roads Scholars Tour

A group of about 35 IANR administrators, faculty, and staff members are more knowledgeable about northeast Nebraska following IANR's inaugural Roads Scholars Tour.

The May 15-16 tour of businesses and IANR facilities was sponsored by IANR and coordinated by the IANR Liaison Committee. Committee member Allan Vyhnalek, extension educator based in Columbus, said the tour was to promote cross-departmental cooperation and collaboration.

"It was to get faculty members together and get new faculty members exposed to grassroots Nebraska," he said.

Amalia Yiannaka, assistant professor of agricultural economics, said she went on the tour because she saw it as an opportunity to see a different part of Nebraska. Yiannaka teaches agribusiness management and wanted to see real examples of agricultural businesses in Nebraska.

"It was fantastic. It was very valuable," she said. "I had no idea some of these businesses were that innovative. I highly recommend it and I would do it again in a heartbeat."

One of the stops on the tour was West Point Implement, where manager Erv Eisenmenger demonstrated the company's major lines of equipment, including its Spread-All spreader, largely manufactured with recycled materials to spread manure.



Harry Knobbe, center, speaks to Allan Vyhnalek, left, and John Owens during the IANR Roads Scholars Tour. Knobbe owns the Knobbe Feedyards in Cuming County, one of the stops on the tour.

Lori McGinnis

Amy Ziems, extension educator in plant pathology, said the implement operation was one of the highlights of the tour for her. It was interesting to learn how the operation developed manure spreaders for clients, she said.

"It was nice to interact with individuals in the community and see how innovative they are in their thought process to help their clients," Ziems said.

A discussion of agricultural-related issues at the Center for Rural Affairs in Lyons, led by Executive Director and NU Board of Regents Chairman Chuck Hassebrook, attracted the attention of Lowell Sandell, weed science extension educator.

The center, Sandell said, is "a strong voice out there and to realize they're in small-town Nebraska was interesting to me."

The information gained overall on the tour was valuable, Sandell said.

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the topic in Lyons as Regent Chuck Hassebrook, executive director at the Center, and other Center staff spoke with us.

We learned about some local culture with a stop at the Neihardt Center in Bancroft, then went on to the Haskell Agricultural Laboratory at Concord, where we learned more about the highly productive work conducted there.

As part of the day we also had an update about the 4-H and family and consumer science programs in northeast Nebraska.

The next day we visited the Lifelong Learning Center in Norfolk, headquarters for the Northeast Research and Extension Center, then were off to Progressive Swine Technology in Humphrey, where founder Dr. Jim Pillen provided his insights into pork production. Near Monroe Andy Daniels, owner of Daniels Produce, talked

about his intensive, fresh-vegetable operation that markets its crops throughout Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, and, believe it or not, as far away as Texas and Florida.

In Columbus we learned about an extension grant-funded after-school program, and saw local development projects capitalizing on local agriculture and natural resources.

It was a great opportunity to learn, to talk, to meet new people, and to be updated about the many ways IANR is at work for Nebraska. The Roads Scholars Tour was a great idea from the IANR Liaison Committee and I look forward with real enthusiasm to future Roads Scholars Tours to different parts of our state.

At the same time we were on the road with the Roads Scholars Tour, that international flair I mentioned at the beginning

of this column was active in Lincoln. Neil Parish, chairman of the European Parliament's agriculture committee, visited the Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead as part of a two-day Nebraska visit sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

At ARDC, Parish was particularly interested in our work on genetically-modified crops. He also heard about our research on no-till farming and carbon sequestration.

That he traveled to Nebraska to explore such topics is greatly appreciated, and can make all Nebraskans proud.



Crop technology interests European agriculture official

Genetically modified crop technology attracted the attention of a leading agricultural official from Europe who visited the Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead.

Neil Parish, chairman of the European Parliament's agricultural committee, visited ARDC in May. His two-day visit to Nebraska was sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

Parish, a member of Britain's Conservative party, showed interest in IANR's work

on genetically modified crops. He has advocated biotechnology in Europe to a somewhat skeptical public.

Parish said the unbiased research done by land-grant universities such as UNL is more likely than members of the food industry to convince Europeans that genetically modified crops are safe.

UNL is the nation's leading university in field testing genetically modified crops, said Sally Mackenzie, head of UNL's Center for Plant Science Innovation.

Parish also learned about IANR's research on no-till farming and carbon sequestration. No-till farming reduces soil erosion and conserves soil moisture. Carbon sequestration research is an effort to capture carbon in the soil through various cropping systems to reduce global warming.

"We want him to understand that farmers are good stewards of the land," said Dan Duncan, assistant dean of IANR's Agricultural Research Division.

IANR contingent visits northern Nebraska in first Roads Scholars Tour

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"I liked interacting with producers and seeing their operations," he said. "It gives me a perspective on what we're doing here in our individual programs and how we can craft our educational programs so we can more effectively help people."

Another benefit of the trip was the opportunity to get to know other faculty members within IANR, participants agreed.

Busy schedules make it difficult to network with faculty in other departments, Ziems said.

"I thought it was great," she said.

The Liaison Committee hopes that the information learned by the participants will be useful in their teaching, research and extension responsibilities, said Debra Schroeder, committee chairman.

"The over-arching goal in this whole process was we wanted to provide opportunities for new faculty to be exposed to different areas of the state," she said. "We want to increase awareness in the state of what's going on within the Institute and connect faculty and people within the state."

John Owens, NU vice president and IANR Harlan vice chancellor, has expressed interest in sponsoring annual trips around Nebraska.

—Lori McGinnis

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

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

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Career planned in production agriculture takes a detour

John Campbell majored in animal science at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln with intentions of going into production agriculture. He had no clue at the time his career path would lead him into a whole different area.

Campbell, senior vice president of Ag Processing Inc. (AGP) in Omaha, has spent his career working in agricultural policy and in value-added agriculture. His academic credentials at the UNL College of Agriculture, even though they were in production agriculture, have proved to be beneficial throughout his career, he said.

Campbell said it never once crossed his mind that he would be doing something other than production agriculture.

The North Platte native graduated from UNL in 1979 with a degree in animal science. His father, Jack Campbell, retired last year after 37 years as a research and extension entomologist at the West Central Research and Extension Center in North Platte.

“I grew up around livestock and enjoyed the idea of being in that business as a career,” John Campbell said.

His first job was with Rocking Chair Hereford of Texas, traveling around the United States to show cattle. His next job was with the USDA’s Agricultural Conservation and Stabilization Service, today known as the Farm Service Agency.

A year later, Campbell accepted an offer to work for Nebraska’s then-Rep. Virginia Smith as a legislative assistant, and spent five years working on agricultural and energy policies.

His service in Washington continued when he worked for the Senate Agriculture Committee under three different chairmen. In between stints with the committee he spent a year in Sydney, Australia, working on a post-graduate program in agricultural economics.

Later, President George H.W. Bush appointed Campbell deputy undersecretary of agriculture, and he worked with then-Secretary Clayton Yeutter for three years. He was the “point person” for the 1990 farm bill, he said.

Working in Washington, he said, was like going to “a giant graduate school.” He was working in an element unlike Nebraska yet his work was relevant to Nebraska, he said.

Campbell returned to Nebraska in 1991 to become assistant vice president at AGP, a soybean processing and vegetable oil refining company. The cooperatively-owned company makes soybean meal for the livestock industry, which enabled Campbell to, in a sense, return to the industry in which he started out.

AGP, based in Omaha, is the nation’s fourth largest soybean processor with plants throughout the Midwest.

Campbell says he owes his diversified career to the time he spent at UNL and the extracurricular activities in which he was involved. Organizations such as Block and Bridle and a variety of student boards on which he served helped him develop leadership and social skills, he said. Working with other students and UNL faculty was a highlight.

“I do believe that having academic credentials in production agriculture gave me a definite grounding and certain standing for policy work in Washington, D.C., and for evaluating investments in the renewable fuels industry back in the Midwest,” he said.

– Lori McGinnis



| John Campbell

OEA awards given to three employees

Outstanding employee awards have been awarded to three IANR employees.

James Gurnon, research technologist in the Department of Plant Pathology, received the OEA for managerial/professional staff for July/August. Letters of support call Gurnon “an outstanding researcher who is proficient in molecular biology and virology procedures.” One writes he is “the most important person in my laboratory and if he left for another job it would have a significant impact on the productivity of the lab.”

Susan Harvey, agricultural research technician at the Panhandle Research and



| James Gurnon



| Susan Harvey

Extension Center in Scottsbluff, received the OEA for office/service staff for June. Her supporters wrote “without her meticulous work it would have been difficult to even contemplate most of the research we have collaborated on in the past, yet alone bring them to timely fruition with the publication of six journal articles.”

Laura Dailey-Heath, accounting technician at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, received the OEA for office/service staff for July. Her supporters wrote she has “embraced the changes and responsibilities set before her and put to use her well-developed leadership skills and valuable team-playing skills.”

The recipients will each receive \$350, a certificate, and a lapel pin.



| Laura Dailey-Heath

UNL student groups fare well in competition

Two UNL student organizations have received awards at national conferences.

The student chapter of Hospitality, Sales, and Marketing Association International won the award for best collegiate chapter-small chapter at an annual leadership conference in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The award was given based on how quickly the chapter was formed — within three months of the beginning of the hospitality, restaurant and tourism management program — and the size of the chapter. It has 29 members.

The student chapter of the National Agri-Marketing Association was named a semi-finalist in student marketing competition at the annual conference in Kansas City, Mo. It is the first time the UNL group made the semi-finals since 1999.

The group placed fourth in the outstanding student chapter and the John Deere Signature Award competitions.

Teaching and Learning awards aim to improve writing skills

Blogging about food will be a new requirement in a Department of Food Science and Technology course thanks to grant money won by professor Robert Hutkins and project specialist Nina Murray.

Hutkins and Murray applied for the Initiative for Teaching and Learning Excellence Award to begin the blogging exercise as part of his course called Contemporary Issues in Food Science. The grant is for \$17,500.

"I had done some research on the value of blogging," he said. "It's a more comfortable form of writing for students."

IANR faculty members Erin Blankenship and Walter Stroup also received awards.

Hutkins said he wanted to help improve writing skills of his students and felt blogging would be a good way to do it. Students will go to a Web site to set up their blog, in

which they will write their personal feelings about issues related to food.

The awards are given by the Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. This is the fourth year for the awards and this year \$200,000 was available for projects to help students become better writers.

Stroup, head of the Department of Statistics, and Blankenship, associate professor, sought their grant to teach graduate student instructors to become better teachers of writing and better writers themselves, Blankenship said.

Graduate students teach Statistics 218 to about 700 undergraduates a semester. It is important for those undergraduates to have strong writing skills so they can more effectively explain their statistical analy-

sis and become more critical readers of statistical results in popular and academic articles, Blankenship said.

The department is contained within both the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and the College of Arts and Sciences. Blankenship and Stroup shared the award with Shari Stenberg, associate professor of English.

Statistics graduates "get really caught up in the numbers" and typically give less attention to quality writing, Blankenship said.

"To ask them to teach writing to undergraduates was a stretch," Blankenship said.

The \$36,000 in grant money will be used to develop a semester-long writing course to prepare them to teach better writing skills to the undergraduates, she said.

PGM program head becomes PGA professional

The head of the Nebraska's successful Professional Golfer's Association (PGA) Professional Golf Management (PGM) program now is a golf professional himself.

Terrance Riordan, Cyril Bish professor of horticulture and PGM program director, recently completed all the requirements and was elected to membership as a Class A PGA professional. Riordan pursued the goal to understand what his students go through.

"I have done everything related to the PGA component that students must do while working on their undergraduate

degree" he said. "It is not easy, but they know that if I can do it, they can do it."

Besides a PGA-accredited university PGM program, the other route to membership is through the PGA's apprentice program. Both routes use the same educational materials and requirements.

Riordan entered the apprentice program in 2005. The first step was to pass the PGA's golf playing ability test, a 36-hole tournament conducted by the PGA in which one must score between 150 and 156, depending on the difficulty of the course. Passing this test after four tries proved to him that the

test could be passed with practice, preparation, and persistence, he said.

Next he spent two years completing the PGA's Level 1, 2 and 3 materials. After each level was approved, he was tested and attended seminars at the the PGA Education Center in Florida.

UNL's PGM program begins its fifth year this fall with approximately 150 students.



Terry Riordan

Lyon receives Fenster professorship of dryland agriculture

Enhancing dryland agriculture in the Panhandle is the intent behind a new professorship within IANR.

Drew Lyon, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension dryland crops specialist at the Panhandle Research and Extension Center in Scottsbluff, has been named the first Fenster Professor of Dryland Agriculture.

It is the first established professorship for IANR faculty who are at an off-campus location. The professorship is supported by the Charles R. and Eunice R. Fenster Professorship Fund. Professor emeritus Charlie Fenster spent several decades conducting research and extension activities into dryland crops in western Nebraska. He and his wife, Eunice, live in Gering.

Fenster helped innovate conservation farming in Nebraska, working on conservation tillage and ecofallow that is fundamental to the environmentally sound cultural practices used in dryland farming today.

The Fenster professorship aims to support research and

extension programs that enhance the profitability and sustainability of dryland agriculture in the Panhandle.

As the dryland cropping systems specialist at the center since 1990, Lyon currently is pursuing funding to initiate research into dryland organic crop production at the High Plains Agricultural Lab near Sidney.

Lyon was named Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy in 2005 and received the 2001 Gamma Sigma Delta Research Award of Merit.



Drew Lyon, right, has been named the first Fenster Professor of Dryland Agriculture. The professorship is supported by Charles and Eunice Fenster.