

March 2008

## The Leading Object: March 2008

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## Perspectives

It has been a little over a year since the independent "At Work for Nebraska" report, prepared by Battelle of Columbus, Ohio, was released.

As we look toward the season of spring planting in Nebraska, it seems a good time to review key highlights of that report, thinking about the seeds we in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources daily sow for Nebraska — through our classroom and laboratory teaching, our research, and our extension education programs.

The report is both a strategic planning and accountability tool for IANR. It provides some great insights and information as to how we are at work for Nebraska, one of our favorites being that IANR provides Nebraskans a 15-to-1 return on state tax dollars invested with us!

In January in this space I shared with you a vision for the future based on the importance of agriculture, natural and human resources in our powerhouse agricultural state, and IANR's significant role in helping Nebraska build a successful, sustainable future.

In February I shared more of that vision in an e-mail to all members of the IANR community, highlighting the importance of world-class excellence: in the life sciences, ranging from molecular to global systems; in sustainable food, fiber, and natural resource systems that support a bio-based economy; in quality environments and economies for a sustainable future; in human capital development for youth, families and communities.

I also said our success depends upon achieving consensus for a vision of IANR that recognizes the importance of investments along the full spectrum of IANR's critical missions of teaching, research, and extension education.

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

# 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.



March 2008

## Nine faculty positions opened in IANR

Increasing enrollment dollars and other factors are providing the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources an opportunity to strengthen IANR through strategic investments, starting with the release of nine faculty positions.

In the 2007-2008 school year, the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources led all University of Nebraska-Lincoln colleges in increased enrollments for fall (11.7 percent enrollment increase, 152 more students) and spring (11.5 percent enrollment increase, 143 students).

"I think it's striking that CASNR, a relatively small college, is leading all UNL colleges in percentages and absolute numbers," said John Owens, Harlan vice chancellor of IANR and University of Nebraska vice president. "We celebrate that achievement with everyone who has worked so hard to make it happen."

The newly released positions are in keeping with IANR's strategic plan and this draft vision: *The Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources serves Nebraska by providing internationally-recognized science and education to assure the state's competitiveness in a changing world.*

"There is some risk in releasing these nine positions," Owens said, because financial projections for Nebraska's state budget are cloudy at best. In late February the Nebraska Economic Forecasting Advisory Board projected lower tax receipts than earlier expected.

Yet, he added, to help Nebraska build for the future, IANR must make hard choices on where to invest scarce resources for best return to the state.

IANR traditionally provides Nebraska vital research across a wide continuum from fundamental to applied, with both critical to meeting Nebraska's needs, Owens said. For those who argue there is too much of one or the other in IANR, he quotes Louis Pasteur who said to people wanting to make an absolute distinction between basic and applied science, "There are no such things as applied sciences, only applications of science."

The full spectrum of IANR research projects, combined with strong educational programs on campus and carried across the state through extension education, are vital to keeping Nebraska strong and successful for the future, Owens noted.  
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**The Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources serves Nebraska by providing internationally-recognized science and education to assure the state's competitiveness in a changing world.**

Perspectives continued from page 1

This is in keeping with what Battelle told us in the "At Work" report, noting, "Much of what is required for 21<sup>st</sup> century success (innovation, technology transfer, human capital enhancement, productivity improvement, networking, and quality of environment and place) is directly addressed through the mission and operations of IANR."

The report also noted: "In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, challenges such as globalization, competitive market pressures, technological advances, and the preeminent importance of innovation and talent are restructuring the economy. Against such a backdrop of rapid and dramatic change, can a system such as agricultural research and extension, established in the late 1800s, be relevant? **The surprising answer — that agricultural research and extension institutions**

**may well be more necessary and relevant than ever before** — is a testimony to the foresight of those who ensured the creation of IANR ..."

Throughout the last year, we've developed a number of tools we all can use to tell the story of how IANR is at work for Nebraska. The latest is the At Work video (visit the At Work Web site — [atworkfornebraska.unl.edu](http://atworkfornebraska.unl.edu) — look in the left-hand column; the video is listed there). Each IANR department and center, as well as each county office, has a DVD of the video, and you can also download it from the Web.

The video is a ready-made program when you're asked to speak to community and other groups. It's an excellent overview showing the great diversity of work IANR does for our state, and the value we

bring. It's also a terrific introduction and springboard for any specifics you wish to talk about regarding your own work and the work of colleagues.

An example: "I've brought along an exciting video that shows some of the many diverse ways we in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources are at work for Nebraska. After we see it, I'm going to talk specifically about (my) (our) work in...."

We all have a leadership role to play in telling the tremendous story of the myriad, valuable ways IANR is at work for Nebraska every single day.



## Nine faculty positions opened in IANR (continued from page 1)

The nine positions recently released are:

- mucosal immunologist in the Department of Food Science and Technology
- microbial geneticist in the Department of Plant Pathology
- animal molecular geneticist in the Department of Animal Science
- horticultural molecular geneticist in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture
- plant molecular geneticist in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture
- bioenergy engineer/mechanized systems management in the Department of Biological Systems Engineering (BSE)
- early childhood specialist in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies
- nutrient water agronomist in BSE at the West Central Research and Extension Center
- range scientist/cow calf in the departments of Agronomy and Horticulture and Animal Science at the Panhandle Research and Extension Center

Thirty-two other positions will be released as funds become available, based on how much of additional UNL tuition revenue is allocated IANR in the FY09 budget, and other positions that come open.

Owens also said IANR is releasing one-time dollars to meet equipment and facility renovation needs that have been postponed due to past budget shortfalls.

## Holling Family Award recipients announced

The Holling Family Award Program for teaching excellence in agriculture and natural resources has presented four senior faculty, one junior faculty and two teaching assistant awards for 2008.

Receiving the senior faculty awards and \$5,000 stipends were James Brandle, School of Natural Resources; Tom Dorn and Gary Zoubek, both of the Southeast Research and Extension Center; and Richard Sutton, Department of Agronomy and Horticulture.

Receiving the junior faculty award with a \$3,000 stipend was Jennifer Rees of the Southeast Research and Extension Center.

Teaching assistant awards with \$1,000 stipends went to Tierney Brosius of the Department of Entomology and Joel Lechner of the Department of Biochemistry.

The award program is made possible by a gift from the Holling family to honor their pioneer parents. John Holling was a 1912 electrical engineering graduate and his brother, Gustave Holling, attended the College of Agriculture before farming the family's land in the Wood River area.

The awards were presented at a ceremony on March 12.

### 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.

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103 ACB, 0918; via e-mail ([lmcginnis2@unl.edu](mailto:lmcginnis2@unl.edu)) or via fax (402-472-0025).

## UNL prepared Robinson for varying career roles

A family-owned business started long before he was born directed Rob Robinson's career path.

Robinson worked for the J.C. Robinson Seed Co. from age 12 until the company was sold to Syngenta in 2004.

Robinson Seed was started in Waterloo in 1888 by Robinson's great-grandfather. It was a thriving family business when the younger Robinson started doing some detasseling and nursery work while still a boy.

His work for the company convinced him to go to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and major in agronomy. During his busy college career, Robinson still managed to do some work for the family business.

After graduating in 1978, his first job for the company was as a production trainee. He worked his way up rapidly, becoming sunflower seed product manager, soybean seed product manager and international manager.

In 1983 he started the company's international business in Europe and focused on hybrid corn seed. In 1991 Robinson hired an international manager to take his position. Robinson then led sales and marketing and later research.

"We were in the top five in the United States in terms of corn breeding programs," he said.

The company's Golden Harvest brand, which it helped create with four other companies, grew to third in U.S. hybrid corn seed market share through the late 1990s and early 2000s.

When Robinson Seed was sold to Syngenta, it was like losing a longtime friend, Robinson said.

"We had been in business for 116 years. There are a lot of emotional ties to a family-owned business and it was difficult to sell it, but the industry had changed," he said.

The seed industry was moving more toward biotechnology and the family business did not have the resources to compete in that arena, he said. The family thought it was best to sell to a company that was helping lead the way in biotechnology.

Syngenta, headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, is the world's largest crop protection company. The former J.C. Robinson Seed Co. plant in Waterloo is one of Syngenta's two seed production plants in Nebraska, the other being in Phillips.

Robinson now works for Syngenta as business transformation lead, a project-oriented position working on corn and soybeans.

Robinson said his time at UNL helped him get to where he is today.

"The university taught me how to learn. It allowed me to prepare for the different roles that I've taken on," he said.

Robinson's numerous activities while in college helped him learn how to work on a team and with different personalities from different backgrounds, he said.

It also spurred him to get involved after college in a variety of organizations. Robinson is president of the American Seed Research Foundation, which funds basic research in seed through land-grant universities. He also is on the Farm Foundation Roundtable and Steering Committee for the Farm Foundation, which works to improve the economic health of agriculture.

– Lori McGinnis



| Rob Robinson

## Two receive Exemplary Service Awards

Linda Arnold, administrative assistant in the IANR vice chancellor's office, and Rosanna Johnson, administrative assistant for Communications and Information Technology, received the 2008 IANR Exemplary Service Award.



| Linda Arnold

One supporter of Arnold wrote: "Invaluable doesn't even come close to describing how important Linda is in the process of hiring faculty and administrators at IANR." Another wrote: "When non-university people need to contact her for information they remark about the quality of service they receive. She

projects a very positive image for the university."

A supporter of Johnson wrote: "Rosanna is a tireless worker and sets an example for professionalism everyone on campus would do well to emulate." Another said: "In working side by side with her, I have seen the devotion she has for her job and the perfection she puts into it."

The awards will be presented at an IANR awards luncheon at the Nebraska East Union on April 21. In addition to a plaque, Arnold and Johnson each will receive cash awards of \$500.



| Rosanna Johnson

## KUDO Award goes to Applegarth

Andy Applegarth, manager of the Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory, has received a University of Nebraska Board of Regents Kudo award for January.



| Andy Applegarth

A nominator stated, "Under Andy's supervision, the cattle are cared for properly, institutional animal care practices are followed, and research is conducted without injury to cattle or people." Another said, "GSL has grown and developed into a world-class research and teaching facility for range livestock production. Andy has been an integral part of this success."

## Four UNL faculty members relish role in Nobel-winning report

The issue of global climate change is becoming a topic of increasing awareness, in part due to the awarding of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize to former Vice President Al Gore and an intergovernmental panel, say Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources faculty members who had a role on the panel.

Terry Mader, beef specialist at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Haskell Ag Lab at Concord, was a contributing author for one chapter of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report. Gore and the IPCC shared the peace prize last fall for, according to the Nobel Prize Web site, “their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change and to lay the foundation for the measures that are needed to counteract such change.”

IPCC reports are written by teams of writers from all across the globe who are recognized as experts in their fields. Assessment report authors represent more than 130 countries. Authors represented three work groups: groups on physical science; climate change, impacts, adaptations and vulnerability; and mitigation of climate change. There were 300 to 400 authors for each work group, Mader estimated.

Also contributing to the work were

Tsegaye Tadesse, Mark Svoboda, and Cody Knutson of the National Drought Mitigation Center in IANR. The three reviewed chapters of the IPCC report at various stages in the process.

Mader contributed to the chapter on food, fiber and forest products for the working group assessing climate change impacts, adaptation and vulnerability. He was asked to provide input based on correspondence from the coordinating author who was aware of Mader’s modeling efforts on adverse weather and climate change.

“I provided input on the impact of projected temperature change on the production of beef cattle, dairy cattle and swine,” Mader said, adding additional input was provided on the effects of climatic conditions on cattle reproduction. “These data were derived from a summary of studies which utilized beef cows in Nebraska.”

As a result of his contributions, Mader said he spends much more time explaining greenhouse gas and global warming concepts to colleagues and friends. He also has spoken to community-based business organizations regarding the potential effects of climate change on animal agriculture.

Tadesse served as an expert reviewer for a chapter of the IPCC report on Africa.

“When I heard about the news I was so

happy because it helps in publicizing these serious climate change issues that concern me a lot,” he said. “Even though my contributions as an expert reviewer are limited, I felt inner satisfaction that the time dedicated to do so was worthwhile.”

Svoboda was an expert reviewer on two chapters of the IPCC report, one on freshwater resources and management and another on North America.

“I was blown away, yet very happy to see the effort and cause get recognized like this,” he said. “It is amazing to see and hear what this report has done to heighten awareness of the issue by the global community.”

Knutson was an expert reviewer for the chapter on freshwater resources and management.

“From my interactions with people internationally and here in Nebraska, the stronger language and science in the documents have given people more confidence in discussing climate change and a sense of urgency in doing so,” Knutson said.

IPCC is a scientific intergovernmental body set up by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Program to provide decision-makers and others interested in climate change an objective source of information about the subject.

## Weatherfest and symposium event expects to attract about 4,000

People love talking about the weather, and the School of Natural Resources wants them to learn about it as well.

SNR is holding its annual Central Plains Severe Weather Symposium and Family Weatherfest at Hardin Hall at 33rd and Holdrege streets in Lincoln from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on March 29. The event, with free admission and free parking, is open to the public and is expected to draw about 4,000 people, said Ken Dewey, professor of applied climate sciences and symposium chairman. The theme of this year’s event is Perspectives on Severe Weather in the Plains.

“There is nothing on a local basis done like this in the United States,” Dewey said. “It’s done on a national level (by the American Meteorological Society) but it moves from city to city.”

The symposium began in Omaha in 1999 with about 200 attending, then moved to East Campus in 2000. Attendance has increased every year, Dewey said.

“This year we expect it to bust at the seams,” he said.

The event actually has three parts to it, Dewey said. The symposium is held in the Hardin auditorium and will feature national weather experts giving presentations. Weatherfest will offer a variety of booth exhibits, some interactive, designed to educate children and adults about weather. Weatherfest, organized by SNR

graduate students, will be held on Hardin’s second floor.

The third component is spotter training courses. Open to the public, the courses train people how to make weather observations and spot when potential severe weather is coming.

“We’re trying to make it a festival related to weather,” Dewey said. “We have demonstrations going all the time and we’re teaching people the basics of weather science.”

Dewey said he is amazed at the interest in weather science, which is especially evident on the faces of children attending Weatherfest, he said.

New at the event this year is the Young Persons’ Photo Contest. Photos depicting natural resources will be on display at Hardin Hall, Dewey said. Two categories are planned — one for photos taken by children through age 10 and another for those ages 11-17. The Lincoln Camera Club will award ribbons in each category. There also will be an exhibition of photos submitted by the public.

Organizers even view Weatherfest as a recruiting tool, Dewey said. It is hoped that learning about weather science in a fun way will spark an interest in the children to start thinking early about studying science at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Additional information can be obtained at [www.cpsws.unl.edu](http://www.cpsws.unl.edu).