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Scarlet

April 12, 2007

Universitywide teaching award presented April 30

AgLEC lands Honor

UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication will receive the University of Nebraska's highest departmental award for excellence in teaching.

Announced April 6, AgLEC (part of the College of Agricultural and Natural Resources) will collect the Universitywide Departmental Teaching Award during an April 30 ceremony in Lincoln. The UDTA recognizes a department within the university that has made a unique and significant contribution to teaching.

"AgLEC is a department where the faculty models the very best practices in college teaching and it shows in the results of their students," said John Owens, Vice Chancellor of IANR and NU vice president. "It sort of permeates the entire department that teaching and students are important to each and everyone of these faculty members."

AgLEC was initially established as the Department of Agricultural Education in 1918. It merged with the Department of Agricultural Communications in 1992.

The department offers UNL undergraduates the opportunity to major in agricultural education, agricultural journalism or hospitality, restaurant and tourism management. Graduate students can pursue degrees in areas of leadership education and leadership studies.

AgLEC faculty work to give students real-world experience to supplement classroom theory. They also integrate new technologies and teaching methods, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculua and set high standards for educating students in the undergraduate and graduate programs.

"We certainly have a lot of people who are not only teaching courses by distance and using various distance techniques, but we have a number of people who study technology in terms of teaching," said Dan Wheeler, professor and head of AgLEC. "That's a big part of what we do, integrate technology in ways that make our teaching more effective."

Jason Ellis, an assistant professor of ag journalism, said the department supplements classroom theory with real world experience.

"It's part of our culture that it's not just enough to talk about it in class," Ellis said. "We allow our students to get out and get their hands dirty. It provides them chances to test things out in a safe, supervised environment."

Kurt Harms, a senior ag journalism major with a broadcasting emphasis, garnered career experience through an internship with Market Journal.

"It's great to have the basis of classroom knowledge and bring it together in real life situations," said Harms. "Hands-on experience is key to being successful in any career. And I feel that, especially with my internship, I'm greatly prepared for my career path."

Harms said the AgLEC faculty and staff are key to the department's success.

"Faculty and staff in the department are really great," said Harms. "They are really concerned with the students. They contact students by e-mail, phone calls and talking one on one to make sure they are on track.

"They want us to graduate on time. They do everything they can to help us succeed."

The UDTA was the only universitywide award for UNL.

The recipient of the Outstanding Research and Creative Activity award is Alexander Kabanov, professor and Parke-Davis Chair in Pharmaceutics at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Recipients of the Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Award are: Valerie Cisler, professor of music and chair of the Department of Music at the University of Nebraska at Kearney; and Paul Larsen, professor of pediatrics and neurological sciences at UNMC.

The winner of the newly created Innovation, Development and Entrepreneurship Award is Steven Hinrichs, vice chair of research and development at UNMC and director of the University of Nebraska Center for Biosecurity.

The ORCA, OTICA and IDEA award winners will be honored at an April 23 luncheon in Omaha.