

2010

The Leaning Object: April 2010

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NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR

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Perspectives

This month we celebrate the 200th birthday of Justin Smith Morrill, who was born in Strafford, Vermont, in 1810.

We honored Morrill on his birthday April 14 by unveiling a bust of him that will sit in the Agricultural Hall conference room bearing his name. A story on that bust and celebration appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

Author of the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862, which created land-grant universities to teach both practical and liberal subjects, this man, his Congressional colleagues, and President Lincoln, who signed the bill into law, set this nation on a course that, 148 years later, we still admire. We applaud them for their wisdom, vision, and determination.

Before the Morrill Act, education was largely the purview of the wealthy. Establishing land-grant universities put higher education within reach of the working man and woman, shaping both the social and economic future of our country.

Morrill and Lincoln are heroes of mine (as you no doubt know!). Over the years I've often thought how amazing it is that these two leaders, in the midst of the horrific Civil War, were able to lift their vision above that dreadful, bloody conflict to establish something so unique, and so vital to this country's healing and future, that you and I enjoy its benefits today, as will our children's children tomorrow.

It would have been easy and understandable for Lincoln, Morrill, and the Congress to so focus on the horrific events around them that they could not think of the future because of their concerns for the present. Yet they chose instead to support and approve an act that changed our country.

Born slightly more than a year apart, Morrill and Lincoln hailed from different

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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
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would be instruction
in agriculture and related fields.*

April 2010

Costa Rican, IANR officials strengthen ties

Administrative representatives from the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources met with Costa Rican officials recently to further develop working relationships.

During the March 10-12 trip Susan Fritz, associate vice chancellor for IANR and interim dean for IANR's Agricultural Research Division, and Elbert Dickey, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension dean, also met with Amy Boren.

Boren is an IANR research assistant professor located at the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in Costa Rica and an Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication doctoral graduate of UNL. The purpose of the IICA is to encourage and support efforts of its member countries to achieve agricultural development and well-being for rural populations.

Dickey said he was particularly impressed with Costa Rica's advances in organic farming.

"They are making strides in organic small farming, particularly horticultural crops," Dickey said, adding, "Green seems to be in vogue."

Dickey said he hopes to encourage a small group of IANR faculty to visit Costa Rica to further enhance relationships and learning between the two countries.

Extension already has supported two Costa Rican EARTH University student interns who assisted with 4-H youth development in Hall County and helped translate Nebraska 4-H's ESI curriculum into Spanish for use in Nebraska and beyond.

During the trip Dickey and Fritz also met with Manuel Cerrato, dean of EARTH



Elbert Dickey

Dagoberto Elizondo, national director of extension in Costa Rica, shows a coffee tree to IANR officials during a recent visit.

University (School of Agriculture of the Humid Tropical Region), for which IANR provided technical assistance when the school was getting established in the mid-1980s; Pedro Bidegaray, coordinator of a consortium comprised of EARTH partner universities in the U.S.; Javier Flores, Costa Rica's minister of agriculture and brother of Rolando Flores, IANR Food Science and Technology department head; Dagoberto Elizondo, national director of extension; and several others.

Other discussions include three-month faculty exchanges, collaborative grants, and a possible sabbatical program for U.S. agricultural faculty to conduct projects in Latin America and the Caribbean on biotechnology, natural resources management, and food safety and security.



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parts of our nation. Not blessed with formal higher education themselves, both held learning in high esteem.

Morrill left school at 15 to become a merchant. He wanted very much to attend college, but his family could not afford to send him. Morrill did so well in his trade that he retired at an early age and became a gentleman farmer.

Lincoln had no more than a year of formal schooling. He worked as a farmhand, a clerk, a flatboat man, store owner, postmaster, lawyer — and president of the United States.

Self-educated men, they held firm beliefs in the power of education. Together they formed a legacy for our country that I believe has made the United States the world leader we are today. By

looking beyond themselves to the great needs of our country at their moment in history, they put in place a system of higher education for all time.

In the At Work for Nebraska report that grew from the independent study of the Institute released in 2007, those who conducted the study wrote:

“In the 21st 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 ...”

Every day land-grant universities, with their closely intertwined missions of teaching, research, and extension education, make a difference — through the people they graduate, through the research conducted in them, and through the extension education programs that flow from them.

Thanks to each of you who carries out the land-grant university mission daily. And thanks to Justin Smith Morrill, whose enduring legacy we still celebrate, 200 years after his birth.



Bust honors Morrill, author of land-grant legislation

Nebraskans now have a solid reminder of the man who revolutionized higher education in the U.S.

A new bust of Justin Smith Morrill was unveiled April 14 during his 200th birthday celebration in the 103 Ag Hall conference room bearing his name.

“Absolutely spectacular,” said John Owens, NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR. “This sculpture is a permanent reminder of the focus of the land-grant university as it was chartered.”

The son of a blacksmith, Morrill was self-educated and served 43 years in Congress. His Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 eventually established land-grant colleges and universities across the nation, including the University of Nebraska, and provided opportunities for working class and minority students to pursue higher education. More than 23 million students have since graduated from this nation’s land-grant institutions.

The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources honors the statesman in part through the Justin Smith Morrill Scholars program, which helps UNL students explore social, public, and political leadership and responsibility. Scholars annually visit Morrill’s Strafford, Vt. homestead to learn more about their namesake and do a service project.

“Morrill changed the face of education and the world,” said Ed Harvey, scholar director and School of Natural Resources professor.

The newly unveiled bust is modeled after Morrill’s marble figure in the art collections at the University of Vermont and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. All the land-grants, including Nebraska, at one time likely had plaster Morrill busts, Harvey said. After extensive searching he determined all that remains of Nebraska’s original bust is a receipt for its purchase and a picture of it in the study of Charles Bessey, an early

professor of botany, dean, and chancellor of the University.

Owens, long a Morrill admirer, encouraged Harvey’s search and suggested that UNL have a bust commis-

sioned. The result, funded by a private gift to the NU Foundation, is a new 120-lb. bronze figure created earlier this year by Polich Tallix, a fine art foundry in New York. The Morrill Homestead in Strafford loaned its bust to have the lost-wax casting made.

Harvey hopes drawing attention to Morrill and his accomplishments will
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**Need to meet with the
Vice President/Vice Chancellor?
Drop-ins each Friday from 3-5 p.m.***

John C. Owens

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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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Unintentional farm policy career is fulfilling

Jay Rempe got a taste of agricultural policymaking while working in an unrelated job.

Rempe, vice president of governmental relations for the Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation, worked his first job trading commodities after his 1985 graduation in agricultural business from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

His job at Eades Commodities in Omaha entailed trading commodities around the country that included feed ingredients for livestock and dairy cattle. At one point during his five years on the job, Rempe got involved in an unrelated statewide project that involved the future of Nebraska's agriculture.

"It sparked an interest in ag policy," he said.

Rempe left Eades to return to UNL in 1990 and earned a master's degree in 1993 in agricultural economics. His career interests changed.

"I wanted to work in the policy arena on issues involving agriculture and farmers," he said.

His interest was further heightened during this time through an internship in the Lincoln office of then-Sen. Bob Kerrey. This helped him make connections with representatives of Farm Bureau, and he became a research analyst there in October 1993.

The position had Rempe working on agricultural and environmental policy issues. He became involved in governmental lobbying at the state and national

levels, which required spending a large amount of time at the Capitol in Lincoln and in Washington, D.C.

About a year and a half ago Rempe was put in charge of Farm Bureau's governmental relations department. The department represents and advocates for farmers and ranchers in state and federal governmental issues, and helps increase farmer and rancher awareness of the issues affecting them.

The biggest issues Rempe worked on have been related to water and taxation of agricultural land. Rempe has served on the governor's water policy task force.

"They are both complex and perplexing issues with lots of nuances," he said. "But there can be some reward in that, too."

The favorite part of Rempe's job has been working with Nebraska farmers and others associated with agriculture, he said.

"Farmers are very down-to-earth and genuine, truly trying to make the world a better place," he said.

One of the biggest challenges is working through issues and problems that come up from a variety of different perspectives — something Rempe says his agricultural education trained him to do.

"I learned to look at a lot of different perspectives, and that is key in what I do," he said.

— Lori McGinnis



Jay Rempe

Tree planting for Arbor Day

Tree planting is a Nebraska tradition dating back to 1872 when J. Sterling Morton proposed a tree-planting holiday. Arbor Day this year is on April 30.

Since the 1970s Nebraska has lost nearly half its community forest resource.

ReTree Nebraska, however, is restoring Nebraska's tree-planting heritage and making strides toward reversing this trend. ReTree Nebraska is promoting the proper planting and maintenance of 1 million community trees statewide by 2017.

"Weather extremes, insects and diseases, such as pine wilt and the approaching emerald ash borer, have taken a toll on or will take a toll on our community forests," said Jessica Kelling, ReTree Nebraska coordinator. "The good news is that it's never too late to start planting trees for the future."

Kelling said the initiative goes beyond planting trees to raising awareness of the substantial value and benefits trees provide, as well as the importance of species diversity in a healthy community forest.

More than 84,000 tree plantings have been reported toward ReTree Nebraska's million-tree goal.

A network of more than 240 volunteer ambassadors in 89 communities lends ReTree Nebraska local energy by coordinating local tree-planting and care projects. To promote species diversity, ReTree Nebraska has introduced its "10 for 2010," a list of species that grow well in Nebraska but often are underplanted. These include concolor fir, Shantung maple, Kentucky coffeetree, northern catalpa, baldcypress, bur oak, chinkapin oak, elm hybrids, Miyabe maple, and Black Hills spruce.

ReTree Nebraska is a cooperative effort of the Nebraska Forest Service, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, Inc., University of Nebraska Rural Initiative, UNL Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, Nebraska Community Forestry Council, and the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

4-H collaborates with Omaha zoo

A recent University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension 4-H venture has Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo as one of its collaborators.

4-H curriculum specialist Patricia Fairchild said the new Wildlife Conservation curriculum meets Nebraska education standards, and also fits Henry Doorly's mission and philosophy. That makes the new wildlife curriculum suitable as an alternative or supplemental resource for after school, middle school and high school classrooms, as well as for the zoo's formal and informal programs.

Three manuals, developed within IANR, support the curriculum, beginning with reading wildlife tracks and signs before progressing to building a birdfeeder or a wildlife habitat plan. The third manual teaches sportsmanship and about endangered, threatened, and invasive species.

Other new 4-H conservation manuals include The Insectigator, Amphibians & You, and a series on landscaping.

Awards ... OEAs

Three IANR employees have received outstanding employee awards. **Jerome Masek**, a heavy equipment operator for the Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead, has received the OEA office/service staff for March.

An excerpt from a letter supporting Masek's nomination read: "He thinks ahead to plan what the team needs to do to get a project completed." Another read, "It is rare to find an individual who is master of so many diverse operations as a single person."

Debra Royal, microbiology manager at the Veterinary Diagnostic Center in the School of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, received the OEA for managerial/professional staff for March and April.

A letter in support of Royal's nomination read in part, "Deb sets an excellent example in professionalism and leadership not only for the bacteriology staff but for the Veterinary Diagnostic Center as a whole." Another read, "I find Deb to be very forward-thinking and constantly seeking ways to improve and enhance the bacteriology lab."

Brent Johnson, agricultural research technician with the Department of Animal Science, received the OEA for office/service staff for April.

A letter in support of his nomination read, "Brent is one of those individuals who is always behind the scenes but without him, our department could not run, our classes could not be taught, and our extension workshops could not be held." Another read, "He recognizes the importance of the job he does and is inquisitive about the task being done."

Each recipient receives a cash award of \$350 and a lapel pin.



Jerome Masek



Debra Royal



Brent Johnson

Other awards

Gary Hergert, soil and nutrient management specialist at the Panhandle Research and Extension Center in Scottsbluff, has received the Great Plains Soil Fertility Leadership Award.

The award, presented March 3 in Denver, is given every two years in recognition of timely and innovative soil fertility-related contributions leading to increased profitability for Great Plains agriculture. Hergert was recognized for soil, nutrient, and water management.

Much of Hergert's work in the Panhandle is focused on improving crop yields through better nutrient and manure management on high pH soils in western Nebraska. Adapting cropping systems to limited surface and subsurface irrigation supplies for the future also is one of Hergert's major areas of emphasis.

Drew Lyon, dryland cropping systems specialist at the Panhandle Research and Extension Center in Scottsbluff, has received the Outstanding Weed Scientist Award from the Western Society of Weed Science at its recent meeting in Hawaii.

In 2008 Lyon was named the first Fenster Professor of Dryland Agriculture, an endowed faculty position created to support dryland agriculture in the Panhandle.

Lyon's educational programs in western Nebraska include websites, educational sessions and conferences, field days, technical publications, research presentations, symposia, and papers.

Mohamed Khamouna, library specialist with the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, received the 2010 Outstanding Science Librarian Award from the UNL Chapter of Sigma Xi, the honor society of research scientists and engineers. The award was presented at the chapter's annual awards and initiation banquet April 15 in Lincoln.

Khamouna has initiated several programs and additions to the library, including a grant-funded project on agricultural terrorism for NCTA students as well as area farmers. An excerpt from a letter of support said his efforts to convert a small, one-room library into a "vibrant learning facility ... have been extraordinary."

Khamouna also has successfully sought grants for NCTA and was key in earning the library accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission and the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Holling awards

Eight University of Nebraska–Lincoln faculty and staff members have received the 2010 Holling Family Awards for Teaching Excellence in Agriculture and Natural Resources.

This year's recipients are:

Senior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award: Susan Cuppett, professor in the Department of Food Science & Technology; and Ron Hanson, Neal E. Harlan professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics.

Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award: David Carter, assistant professor in the Department of Entomology; Jason Ellis, assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communication (ALEC); Dennis Ferraro, extension educator based in Omaha; and Lisa Karr-Lilienthal, assistant professor in the Department of Animal Science.

Teaching Assistant Teaching Excellence Award: Heath Harding, graduate assistant in ALEC; and John Quinn, graduate assistant in the School of Natural Resources.

Awards were presented March 10.

Outstanding postdoc mentor

Don Becker, professor of biochemistry, received the 2010 Outstanding Postdoc Mentor Award from the Office of Postdoctoral Studies in recognition of his ongoing support of postdocs.

Becker was recognized at the Postdoc/PI Awards Luncheon April 7 during the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Research Fair.

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help inspire students and faculty to think even more seriously about education and to become better leaders.

"Morrill demonstrates how people from humble beginnings can go on to do great things," Harvey said.

Harvey added that Morrill Hall, home of the University of Nebraska State Museum, is named for a distant relative, Charles Henry Morrill, a former NU Regent interested in paleontology.

Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman signed a proclamation on April 7 declaring April 14 the anniversary for Justin Smith Morrill's 200th birthday, and District 25 State Sen. Kathy Campbell introduced Legislative Resolution 416, which also commemorated the occasion.