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It catches my attention each time someone unfamiliar with land-grant universities asks politely if things slow down here during the summer.

“Not really,” is always my answer.

I explain that the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources has a statewide campus, and summertime for us definitely is not the slowdown time people often associate with other universities. I talk about how, every day, we in IANR are at work for Nebraska.

While we see fewer students on East Campus during the summer, visiting groups bring new faces and interests to campus. From new or potential students and their parents to younger youths through adults, we’re always glad to welcome our visitors.

Some come to learn and to enjoy events offered here, staying several days. Others make much shorter visits, with ice cream in mind for hot days and humid nights. Little ones not yet knee-high, their parents, grandparents, even great-grandparents — ice cream has universal appeal.

In the evenings we often see visitors sitting on the benches outside the Dairy Store, strolling through the Jeanne Vierk Yette Garden or the Maxwell Arboretum, or even further afield. East Campus is a favorite place for many walkers, including many with dogs.

While our students may not be here, we know they’re learning through the summer in such venues as travel and study abroad, internships, and other summer jobs.

Our faculty, also, may be traveling, conducting research, or delivering extension programs.

One of the many interesting facts contained in the molecular life sciences report IANR prepared for a review team visit earlier this year is that 58 percent of IANR’s tenured and tenure-track research continued on page 2

France study trip shows students a different way of agriculture

For College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources students, studying agriculture in another country can provide great benefits.

Twelve CASNR students were on a two-week study abroad trip to France in May, said Rosalee Swartz, program and recruitment director for the Department of Agricultural Economics who led the trip for the fifth consecutive year.

“The goal is to learn about how other parts of the world practice and view agriculture,” Swartz said.

The differences in agriculture between France and the United States are very noticeable, she said. For example, agricultural businesses are small by design, and unlike in the U.S., 50 percent to 60 percent of the produce is sold on site, she said. Much of this relates to the importance the French place on food — not just in its preparation but how and where it is grown, she said. They prefer to buy local, as evidenced by vibrant farmer’s markets in the regions they visited, she said.

For Cassidy Robinson, an agricultural economics senior from Elm Creek, it was her first trip outside the United States and an eye-opener.

“It was just awesome. It was so different from here,” Robinson said.

The trip was coordinated by Pascal Durand, associate professor of agricultural economics at ENESAD (French National School for Higher Education in Agriculture) at the University of Burgundy campus in Dijon. The tour also included faculty and students from the University of Kentucky.

The students visited cheese and mustard factories and wineries, and toured farms producing cereal grains, dairy, poultry, beef, fruit, olive oil, and truffles.

Although the tours were focused in the Burgundy, Rhône-Alpes, Jura, and Provence regions, students also enjoyed two days of sightseeing in Paris, Swartz said.

Robinson said her favorite part of the trip was when the students talked to French agricultural producers about continued on page 2
France study trip shows students a different way of agriculture (continued from page 1)

agricultural differences between the United States and France. For example, French producers are more heavily subsidized by the government than are U.S. producers. While the fairs showcase youths’ talents and enthusiasm for what they’ve learned, we all know 4-H is about the learning.

They also gain life skills such as critical thinking, responsibility, and teamwork. They gain confidence, and, because many families spend time around 4-H projects, family ties are strengthened.

We don’t provide knowledge only to youth, of course. Well-attended field days and meetings all across Nebraska, from the High Plains Agricultural Laboratory to Gudmundsen, the Haskell Agricultural Laboratory, the Agricultural Research and Development Center, and other sites, as well, transfer research-based knowledge to our constituents, providing information they can put to immediate use in their lives.

Meanwhile, other research and education programs continue on a variety of topics year-round to help Nebraskans make solid, fact-based decisions, best manage their resources, and enhance their lives.

Summer always goes in a blink, and before we know it, we’re welcoming both new and returning students to campus, glad to see familiar faces and delighted to make the acquaintance of new.

Summer, winter, spring, fall — in all seasons I applaud IANR faculty and staff for setting a brisk pace to benefit our state in myriad ways. After all, all year long, we are at work for Nebraska.

The Leading Object is published monthly for all IANR staff members by Communications & Information Technology. Questions or story ideas may be directed to the editor at 103 ACB, 0918; via e-mail (calberts1@unl.edu) or via fax (402-472-0025).
Bulletin board posting leads Bidrowski to his career

Bob Bidrowski’s decision to work in the food technology for companion animals industry came by chance after he saw an ad posted on a bulletin board.

Bidrowski, a 1989 College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources food science and technology graduate, had thought he would work in a field pertaining to human food. But after a few months before he graduated he saw an ad seeking a quality assurance technician at Alpo in Crete.

“It was an answer to the question ‘what am I going to do now?’” the Omaha native said.

Alpo hired Bidrowski in October 1989, two months before graduation. He still is with the company, now called Nestle Purina Petcare, working in quality assurance.

Bidrowski took a non-traditional route for his college career. After graduating from high school, Bidrowski worked full-time for an Omaha agricultural laboratory, where he prepared soil and plant tissue samples.

During that time he got married and his wife, Nancy, a CASNR agronomy graduate, had to move to York for a position with a chemical company. They bought an acreage in York and Bidrowski worked for a local fertilizer company and did “other odd jobs.”

He concluded that he needed something more steady.

“I decided a college degree would be something valuable,” he said.

So at age 29 he enrolled at UNL and commuted daily from York. He had long been interested in becoming a veterinarian so he decided to study animal science and take courses he would need for vet school. As he and his wife started a family, Bidrowski thought it best to get a job after graduation rather than go on to vet school. He then switched his major to food science and technology.

This degree program still enabled him to take the science courses needed if he someday attended vet school, but the advertisement on the bulletin board settled that issue.

After Alpo was purchased in 1995 by Nestle — the world’s largest food company — Bidrowski started working on special projects that took him to places around the world for three to six months at a time. He was transferred to St. Joseph, Mo., where he worked at two factories between 2001–2003.

With his wife and two sons living in Lincoln during this time, Bidrowski returned to Lincoln on weekends as often as he could. Eventually he settled into working full time in Crete.

As quality assurance manager Bidrowski ensures all the dog and cat food leaving the plant meets quality standards. He said he enjoys his work and got hands-on training at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln that prepared him well for the industry.

“My time at the university was very important,” he said. “The technical background I received was very solid.”

– Lori McGinnis

NCTA raises necessary funds for new education center

If young Nebraskans are going to invest in Nebraska, then Nebraska has to invest in young Nebraskans.

The Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis is doing just that while celebrating the planned building of a $9.7 million education center. The new center will house classrooms and laboratories for its veterinary technician, agronomy, and horticulture programs, as well as a 144-seat auditorium that can be divided into four classrooms.

To obtain $8.7 million in state funding, the Nebraska Legislature stipulated more than a year ago NCTA had to raise $1 million for the project.

It did, and in six months.

Dean Weldon Sleight called the $1 million fund-raiser a miracle, and thanked Nebraska’s commodity groups, businesses, alumni, and friends for their support.

“They could see what we’re trying to do,” Sleight said. “The real story is to thank the people throughout Nebraska.”

Sleight’s goal is to prevent rural communities from further shrinking populations through such programs as 100-Acre, 100-Cow, and Business Builder ownership programs that link NCTA graduates with the means to build their own operations close to home.

“It’s important to show young people there are opportunities in rural communities, and to start at a young age,” Sleight said. He added NCTA’s instructors have taken the NebraskaEDGE entrepreneurship program so they can teach the principles of entrepreneurship important for business ownership.

The Curtis community, former resident and entrepreneur George Garlick, and NCTA are working toward community improvements, economic development, and increased NCTA enrollment. In 2008 the two-year college had 285 full- and part-time students enrolled in its eight associate degree programs.

The new education center is to be built on a former campus baseball field. With the architectural work and site preparation to begin this summer, it is expected to be complete in 2011 or 2012. It complements other upgraded and coverted facilities: a former retirement home that now is an NCTA residence hall; the former NCTA gymnasium that now is the college’s student union; and a new Curtis Community Center that hosts NCTA’s athletic events.
Steve Taylor, food toxicologist in the Department of Food Science and Technology, has received the 2009 Babcock-Hart Award from the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT).

ISOBUS is the common term for an international standard of communication interfaces on tractors and other agricultural equipment. At the May 19-20 event, agricultural equipment engineers, representing 19 separate business entities, cross-tested their company devices to ensure all work together properly before products reach consumers.

Plugfest was held for the second time on UNL’s East Campus, home of the internationally known Nebraska Tractor Test Laboratory, a part of the Department of Biological Systems Engineering. The lab is the officially designated tractor testing station for the United States, with some manufacturers having worked with the lab for nearly 90 years.

The ability to grow and maintain strong long-term relations and develop new ones, as the Nebraska Tractor Test Laboratory has done, will be key to the proposed redevelopment of State Fair Park into Innovation Campus, said Susan Fritz, IANR associate vice chancellor.

“Public/private partnerships of similar scope exist in numerous places throughout IANR. These partnerships will be key in generating projects that will populate Innovation Campus,” Fritz added.

UNL is to acquire the 251-acre State Fair Park Jan. 1, 2010, to begin its conversion into a high-tech research and development campus. Innovation Campus is to create opportunities for economic development, while core facilities and instrumentation are shared in mutual research projects.

Three IANR faculty receive NACTA teaching award

Three IANR faculty members have received the 2009 Teacher Fellow Award from the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture.

The three are Bryan Reiling, associate professor of animal science, Darrell Mark, associate professor of agricultural economics, and Cheryl Bailey, assistant professor of biochemistry.

The award was presented during NACTA’s joint conference with the Science and Education Resource Development unit of the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service June 17-20 at Oklahoma State University.

The award is based on the instructor’s teaching philosophy; evaluations submitted by students, alumni, administration, and peers; a self-evaluation; and factors such as the availability to students, teaching innovations, and departmental and institutional activity.

Taylor receives award for food allergen research

Steve Taylor, food toxicologist in the Department of Food Science and Technology, has received the 2009 Babcock-Hart Award from the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT).

The award is given annually to an IFT member whose contributions to food technology resulted in improved public health through nutrition or more nutritious food. The award was presented at IFT’s annual meeting and food expo in Anaheim, Calif., June 6. It includes a $3,000 honorarium from the International Life Sciences Institute North America and an IFT plaque.

According to IFT, a nonprofit international society with 20,000 members, Taylor has acted as a liaison between the food industry and consumers with food allergies to help minimize the risk of allergic reactions.

“I am very pleased to receive this honor from IFT as recognition for my research and outreach activities related to food allergies,” Taylor said. “The Food Allergy Research and Resource Program at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and all of my talented, hard-working graduate students and staff members have indeed made a real difference in the lives of consumers with food allergies. I am proud that we have made the marketplace safer for these consumers.”

In addition, the Food Allergy Research and Resource Program, which Taylor directs, received the Association for Dressings & Sauces 2009 Technical Achievement Award in April.