

2009

## The Leading Object: May 2009

John C. Owens

*NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR*

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## Perspectives

We do tremendous work in agriculture and natural resources at UNL.

IANR's five spires of excellence address all functions of the land-grant university mission — research, teaching, and extension education. The spires — beef systems; water, climate and environment; crops of the future; food, nutrition and health; child and youth development — involve multiple units and disciplines, and have value for our state as well as national and international scopes.

The report by the molecular life sciences review team that visited our campus in late March confirms these spires of excellence as they relate to our molecular life sciences work, and adds several others. The report of the review requested by Chancellor Perlman is available at [www.unl.edu/ucomm/chancellor/pdfs/ReviewofMolecularLifeSciences.pdf](http://www.unl.edu/ucomm/chancellor/pdfs/ReviewofMolecularLifeSciences.pdf).

Areas in which the review team said they think (as we also do) that we can achieve excellence and eminence at UNL are:

- bovine genomics/beef systems,
- nutrigenomics,
- food safety (*E. coli* 0157),
- stress biology/climate change/water,
- biomaterials/biosystems engineering,
- the Nebraska Center for Energy Sciences Research,
- microbiology/virology, and
- the Gut Function Initiative.

Noting that in today's complex world, no one institution can be known for all things, the review team affirmed the importance of universities identifying niches they can best fill, and building excellence there.

It is wonderful to have the review team's affirmation, as well as its challenges. Constructive challenges help strong universities grow. This report provides a tool we must use well to help build strengths and work with others to keep Nebraska agriculture strong and competitive.

We've taken swift action after receiving the report. The review team noted several continued on page 2



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.*



May 2009

## Agreement results in cooperation between UNL and Indian university

Graduate student Yuli Meneses of Ecuador plans to learn more about dairy farming and processing on an international scale when she travels to India this summer.

Meneses will be one of two University of Nebraska–Lincoln food science students to travel to India. She and Alex Nelson, a food science and technology senior from Omaha, will go to Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS) in Chennai for one month.

As part of the program, they will visit Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University (SVVU) in Tirupati, learning the manufacturing processes for indigenous Indian dairy products. They also will visit commercial dairy processing companies in India.

In return, SVVU plans to send faculty and students to UNL to conduct research and learn more about American dairy processing and products.

The exchanges were agreed to in an agreement signed May 1 by D.V.G. Krishna Mohan, the vice chancellor of SVVU. The agreement pledges cooperation between SVVU and UNL, said Harshvardhan Thippareddi, associate professor of food science and technology at UNL.

"They are very excited about the opportunity and want to establish student exchanges very soon," Thippareddi said. "They see an ideal partner in us."

After Meneses and Nelson return to



Brett Hampton

**An agreement of cooperation between UNL and Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University in Tirupati, India, is signed by UNL Chancellor Harvey Perlman and SVVU Vice Chancellor D.V.G. Krishna Mohan.**

UNL, they will make ethnic Indian dairy products at The Food Processing Center dairy plant to evaluate their potential in the U.S. market, Thippareddi said.

Mohan said the exchanges will benefit all because the dairy industry in the two countries is so different. Indian farms have relatively few dairy cattle, and milk is kept for home drinking and shared through a cooperative agency. The tropical climate in southern India lends itself to further differences, he said.

Mohan hopes the exchanges will result in collaborative research and help Indian students broaden their knowledge.

"We want to expose them to a U.S. learning environment," Mohan said. Students who attend SVVU take classes for five years. Two to three students a year likely would come to UNL during their tenth semester and stay for a month or two, Mohan said.

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## Perspectives *(continued from page 1)*

core life sciences models they thought it beneficial to us to explore, and we've done so. April 24 IANR's Alan Moeller, Gary Cunningham, Deb Hamernik, Mark Lagrimini and John Markwell, and Mike Zeleny, assistant vice chancellor for research, and Alan Kamil, director of the School of Biological Sciences, visited the Bond Life Sciences Center at Columbia, Mo.

May 6-7 IANR's Gary Cunningham, Deb Hamernik, Mark Lagrimini, Paul Black and Barry Schull, and Gregory Snow, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Mike Zeleny, assistant vice chancellor for research, visited the Bio5 institute at the University of Arizona.

May 21 from 2:30-4 p.m. an open forum was scheduled in the East Campus Union for UNL life sciences faculty, with Polycom connections to the Northeast, Panhandle, and West Central Research and Extension Centers.

Even before the life sciences review team visit, IANR faculty working in spires of excellence areas were inviting national experts to visit our campus, learn about our

programs, and make recommendations to help us build these spires. Several key hires they've recommended have been added to IANR's priority hire list, which will be funded as soon as possible.

Chancellor Perlman, in arranging the review team visit, said he sought places to make key molecular life sciences investment in the Institute to grow university expertise and best support Nebraska's current and future agricultural needs. We look forward to these investments to further grow science and its benefits for Nebraska.

The review team recommended a new undergraduate program in microbiology between CASNR and the College of Arts and Sciences. Co-chairs are in place for a faculty committee to draft a proposal due in spring 2010. We'll be looking at core life sciences curriculum, as well, with a committee to convene in early fall.

We are pleased the review team recognized the dedication and importance of university supporters in Agriculture Builders of Nebraska, Inc. We highly value and

greatly appreciate the work of ABN.

The review team confirmed what we all know — multidisciplinary collaboration is essential in moving science forward today. Collaboration opportunities always exist for faculty who take advantage of them, and we expect even more will occur. We certainly support funding for faculty-driven collaborations.

We remain committed to fulfilling our land-grant university mission of being the best we can be at meeting the needs of Nebraskans — through research, teaching, and extension education. Given the dedication of our faculty and the quality and value of their work, we think the national preeminence of which the review team spoke will follow.

It's one of the ways we're at work for Nebraska.



**University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension landscape horticulture specialist Kim Todd, left, gives a tour of East Campus gardens to members of the Unicameral Club. The club consists of spouses of Nebraska state senators.**

## Nebraska vet students win first-place honors

Three Nebraska students in the Professional Program in Veterinary Medicine offered by Iowa State University and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln won first-place honors during the 2009 Intercollegiate Veterinary Dairy Challenge at ISU.

Jennafer Glaesemann of Fairbury, Melissa Herberer of Haskins, and Melissa Thompson of Page took first place during the April event. Participating students spent three hours observing at a dairy and recording their perceptions, then developed a plan of action for the dairy.

Established in 2007, the competition encourages hands-on practice for future dairy veterinarians.

Editorial - Cheryl Alberts and Lori McGinnis • Layout - Anne Moore

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## Agreement results...

*(continued from page 1)*

The visits by UNL students and faculty to the Indian university will provide them with valuable educational experiences outside the United States, Thippareddi said.

In April, four members of SVVU's Board of Management visited UNL to look at opportunities for collaboration between the two schools, Thippareddi said. They visited the departments of animal science, veterinary and biomedical sciences, and food science and technology as well as the Food Processing Center.

In February, IANR and UNL administrators and faculty visited India to seek expanded opportunities in the food processing industry in Nebraska and India.

– Lori McGinnis

**Need to meet with the**

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**Drop-ins each Friday from 3-5 p.m.\***  
**John C. Owens**

NU Vice President for  
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\*Occasionally Dr. Owens will be called away on University business.

## Erdman transforms ag education into career in public service

Working in public service wasn't what Philip Erdman had planned on while growing up on a farm near Bayard or when he first started studying in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

By the time Erdman reached his senior year, however, he was campaigning to run for the Nebraska Legislature and when he graduated, he was just months away from being elected.

"My family has placed a high value on service," Erdman said. "I thought it was the right calling at the time."

Erdman, a 2000 graduate in agricultural education, unseated an incumbent and served eight years in the Legislature before he had to leave due to term limits. He now is state agricultural director for former Nebraska governor and now U.S. Sen. Mike Johanns, and works in Johanns' Lincoln office.

Erdman grew up on a farm that produced corn, dry edible beans, alfalfa, and sugar beets, and raised some livestock. He was state FFA president while a senior at Bayard High School into his freshman year at UNL.

While at UNL he spent two summers working for regional cooperatives. He hadn't planned on going back to the family farm but hadn't ruled it out either.

"Going to the university I was open to opportunities in agriculture, possibly something in ag business," he said.

His time at UNL kept him busy. Besides his class load, he was president of Burr Hall, involved in FFA alumni activities, served on the CASNR Advisory Board and Curriculum Committee, and was in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

During his junior year he extended his activities beyond UNL and began campaigning for the Legislature by knocking on doors in his western Nebraska district. Just months after his graduation at age 23, he won the election and became one of the youngest state senators in the history of the Unicameral.

He believes he won because "I ran an energetic and active campaign and was willing to stand up for the values and issues of the district."

After graduation the new state senator returned to the family farm and rented his own farmland until 2005. He then appraised real estate for Valley Bank & Trust in Gering until Johanns' transition team called him in December to ask if he would be interested in working on the senator's staff. Three interviews later he was hired.

Erdman moved his wife and two children to Lincoln. He travels the state to represent Johanns at events where agricultural policy issues are to be discussed. Erdman, who began the new post in January, also anticipates some travel to Washington, D.C.

Erdman believes the faculty and students at CASNR helped prepare him for public service.

"The faculty was very accessible and I personally feel that the way they approach their jobs prepared me well for whatever I wanted to do," he said.

— Lori McGinnis



Philip Erdman

## Graduating CASNR seniors saluted during 'Salute to Graduates'

The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and its alumni association set records in May for its Salute to Graduates.

The May 8 event at the Nebraska East Union had 130 students participating, the most ever, said Paul Horton, CASNR alumni development officer. Because students' families attend the event, it also had a record number of family members.

"This was the eighth and by far the largest Salute to Graduates ceremony since the program began in December of 2005," Horton said. "Nearly 750 people, including participants, were in the East Union to attend."

The event, held twice a year before UNL graduation, is a very personalized ceremony, Horton said.

"We get comments from graduates and their families that they appreciate that type of ceremony," he said.

During the ceremony, each graduate was called individually to a stage with John Owens, NU vice president and IANR Harlan vice chancellor, CASNR Dean Steve Waller, the student's department head and the CASNR Alumni Association president.

Brief comments previously written by the graduates were read, stating their greatest achievement in college, and what they plan to do after graduation. Photographs taken were posted to the CASNR Web site and made available to the graduates' hometown newspaper. Each graduate received gifts from the college.

CASNR graduates are not required to participate, but most do, Horton said. The May turnout had more than 60 percent of graduates participating.

This year's graduating class was larger than most — 190 seniors, Horton said. Also invited were the first 24 students who have completed the UNL portion of the Professional Program in Veterinary Medi-

cine offered by Iowa State University and UNL, Horton said. The ceremony was open to August graduates as well.

Prior to the Salute to Graduates, CASNR departments had their own receptions for the graduates where their parents could meet faculty and staff. Before the actual graduation ceremony on May 9, CASNR sponsored the Senior Sendoff reception for its graduates at the Devaney Sports Center.

Salute to Graduates has been held every May and December graduation since December 2005, Horton said. The program was conceived by Owens and developed by Waller.

"They felt it was very appropriate to provide this kind of recognition," Horton said.

## Quilt museum gets award for green design

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) has presented a silver rating to the International Quilt Study Center and Museum.

The building underwent a study by the USGBC's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program. The program awards points based on green features in building design and construction.

The silver rating was announced during the center's first anniversary celebration in April.

## Baenziger named to International Rice Research Institute board

An international agricultural center that conducts research into one of the world's most important food crops has selected an Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources faculty member to serve on its board of trustees.

P. Stephen Baenziger, Eugene W. Price Distinguished Professor in the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Department of Agronomy and Horticulture and small grains and genetics researcher, will begin a three-year term on the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) board beginning in 2010. Currently, only one person from the United States sits on the 15-member board.

"It's a huge opportunity," Baenziger said. "This appointment is a dream come true for me."

IRRI, established in 1960 and headquartered in the Philippines, is the largest nonprofit agricultural research center in Asia. Its mission is to reduce world hunger, improve the health of rice farmers and consumers, and work for environmentally sustainable rice production.

IRRI is one of two international agricultural centers focused on researching the world's three most important food crops. IRRI focuses solely on rice while the International Maize and

Wheat Improvement Center focuses on wheat and corn.

"These centers have had an impact on billions of people who are alive today because of the research the centers have done," Baenziger said.

Research in rice is important because it is the predominant food for much of the world, particularly in south Asia, Baenziger said. While Baenziger's research at UNL focuses on wheat, barley and triticale, he believes IRRI contacted him for his expertise in plant breeding and genetics, which he honed at IANR.

"I got into agriculture because I was interested in feeding people, and I have an interest in international agriculture," he said, adding his hope as a board member is to help people who survive on a rice-based diet.

Not only is the appointment an honor for Baenziger, it is a feather in UNL's cap, he said.

"If someone asks about the quality of faculty that the University of Nebraska has, you could say that when the board of trustees of the largest international rice research group in the world was looking for another member, it came to Nebraska."



P. Stephen Baenziger

## Erickson receives animal science honors

The Midwestern section of the American Society of Animal Science and the Midwest branch of the American Dairy Science Association have given Galen Erickson their Young Outstanding Research Award.

Erickson, IANR ruminant nutritionist, received the award during the organizations' annual meeting in March in Des

Moines, Iowa.

The organizations honored Erickson for being a young animal science leader. Erickson has been in the Department of Animal Science since 2001.



Galen Erickson

## Calkins named educator of the year

Chris Calkins has been named educator of the year by the North American Meat Processors (NAMP) Association.

Calkins, Nebraska Beef Industry Professor of Animal Science, was honored for accomplishments that included developing new cutting procedures for veal and beef chuck. His muscle profiling research benefits the beef industry and consumers with cuts that previously were undervalued.

The award was presented in March at the NAMP conference in Chicago. Calkins, an IANR faculty member since 1981, conducts research on muscle characterization, objective grading technology, meat quality, and the effects of feeding wet distillers grains on beef quality.



Chris Calkins

## Lou receives two major honors

Marjorie Lou, professor in the Department of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences, has received two prestigious honors.

Lou has been invited to be a member of the organizing committee of the Abraham Spector Lecture, sponsored by the Columbia University Department of Ophthalmology and held biennially.

Lou will help select the award recipient and schedule events. The next lecture is anticipated for spring 2010.

In addition, Lou, a lens biochemistry researcher, was named to the inaugural class of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology Fellows. The title of ARVO Fellow is a new honor recognizing current ARVO members for their individual accomplishments, leadership, and contributions to the association.



Marjorie Lou

## Barcenas wins national EFNEP award

Omega Barcenas, nutrition adviser with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Hall County, has received a national award.

Barcenas was one of two to receive the paraprofessional award in the North Central Region, given in conjunction with EFNEP's 40th anniversary in Washington, D.C. Two recipients were selected from each region in the United States.

EFNEP annually teaches 2,000 limited-resource Nebraska families to make food choices that improve meal nutritional quality.



Omega Barcenas