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The Leading Object: September 2008

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NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR

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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.

IANR

September 2008

Perspectives

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

We live in a global village.

We hear that so often it seems a cliché. Ever noticed how clichés become clichés by being true?

Our extremely interdependent world grows more so all the time. I think a person cannot fully understand the morning news without at least a basic understanding of how globalization affects everything from the price of fuel to global warming, domestic policies, and international relations and decisions occurring around the world.

We in IANR share the land-grant university mission of taking the resources of our great university to Nebraskans. It's our responsibility to provide our students and constituents the knowledge they need to develop as leaders who understand and can help guide the economic, political, and social forces affecting the global community.

While fuel prices have helped many people realize how fully international events affect the economy, we know global interdependence isn't just economic. Scientific, economic, political, technological, and social changes all affect the internationalization of our world.

To live comfortably, competently, and confidently in an interdependent world, we, our students, and the citizens of our state and our country, must be able to understand and intelligently deal with how the world interrelates.

In 2000 the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges released a report titled, "*Expanding the International Scope of Universities: A Strategic Vision Statement for Learning, Scholarship and Engagement in the New Century.*"

Noting that globalization is here to stay, the report says, "… we must re-conceptualize the meaning of learning, scholarship, and engagement as it applies to the basic philosophical roots of the land-grant and public service idea."

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New strategic plan results in IANR road map for next eight years

This photo montage depicts areas addressed in the IANR strategic plan for 2008 to 2016. See story for details.

The Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources has a road map for the next eight years, the result of a series of listening sessions and a lot of analysis.

IANR's strategic plan for 2008 to 2016 was released in August. Susan Fritz, IANR associate vice chancellor who led development of the plan, said it will drive program planning, evaluation, and budgeting.

"The process leading up to the announcement of the 2008-2016 IANR strategic plan illustrates IANR's commitment to involving a broad perspective in the planning process," Fritz said.

The plan identifies four priorities upon which the Institute will focus to achieve world-class excellence, Fritz said. The priorities include: life sciences ranging from molecular to global systems; sustainable food, fiber, and natural resource systems that support a bio-based economy; economics and environments for a sustainable future; and human capital development of children, youth, and families.

The priorities were identified following a series of listening sessions across Nebraska. IANR administration conducted 16 sessions across the state from 2005 to 2007, collecting feedback from stakeholders, UNL faculty, staff, and administrators, and Battelle Memorial Institute of Columbus, Ohio.

In 2006, IANR contracted with Battelle to examine IANR accomplishments and potential. The study showed that tax dollars invested with IANR provided a 15-to-1 return to the state.

IANR faculty and unit administrators prepare annual reports of accomplishments through an online reporting and planning system called eARFA (electronic Annual Report of Faculty Accomplishments). Goals and accomplishments set by faculty and administrators are linked to the goals of the strategic plan, Fritz said.

"This approach to planning and reporting allows for efficiency in aggregating data within and across units for federal, state, campus, and Institute reports," Fritz said. "Online planning and reporting also provides an efficient means of determining the level of interest, effort, and output associated with each of the strategic priority goals."

Numerous examples of work exist within the Institute that meet plan priorities, Fritz said.

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"Expanding the International Scope of Universities: A Strategic Vision Statement for Learning, Scholarship and Engagement in the New Century," is available at *http://www.nasulgc.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=67* on the NASULGC Web site.

It notes: "As colleges and universities work to move international studies and programs from the periphery to the center of their teaching, research, and outreach activities, so too must they refocus their overarching mission to incorporate an international dimension."

Certainly we in IANR have focused on that in our vision to serve Nebraska by providing internationally recognized science and education to assure the state's competitiveness in a changing world.

The report notes the three C's I used earlier — competence, confidence, comfort — are vital in this global world, saying, "Whether we are examining contemporary challenges of population growth, political conflict, or changing economics, we need to be comfortable in dealing with cultural differences, competent in bringing our disciplinary backgrounds to bear in an international setting, and confident in our ability to make a difference in such a context."

You've seen stories on international work and relationship building in the *Leading Object* in the last several months, and you'll see more as time progresses. This work is important to us and to our powerhouse agricultural state, whose products compete in the global market.

I thank Associate Vice Chancellor Susan Fritz for providing the overall leadership and coordination for IANR international programs. The intelligence and enthusiasm Dr. Fritz brings to this task is a plus for us all.

The NASULGC report contains a quote by Herman Melville, author of *Moby Dick*, that I'd like to end with today.

"*We cannot live only for ourselves,*" Melville wrote. *"A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men; and among those fibers … our actions run as causes and they come back to us as effects.*"

Building international bridges, providing education that helps our students and our constituents be competent, confident, and comfortable in the global community, is in keeping with both our IANR strategic plan and the University of Nebraska's strategic planning framework.

It's one more way we're at work for Nebraska.

Photo by Brett Hampton

University of Nebraska President J.B. Milliken, left, and University of Nebraska–Lincoln Chancellor Harvey Perlman, second left, attend a hamburger cookout outside the UNL Dairy Store on Sept. 5. Bryan Scherbarth, right, retail manager of the store, does the grilling.

New strategic plan results in IANR road map

(continued from page 1)

"This strategic plan doesn't ask individuals to abandon what they're doing, but it looks to how we can build on our investment in technical and social sciences to address future problems," Fritz said.

Because listening sessions have proven to be an effective way to obtain input, they will continue and information gathered from them will be used to periodically update the strategic plan, Fritz said.

– Lori McGinnis

Birnstihl represents IANR on alumni committee

Elizabeth Birnstihl, associate dean and associate director of University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension, has been named IANR's representative on the Nebraska Alumni Association committee.

The purpose of the group is to "assure continued communication and coordination of alumni affairs across the university and its affiliated organizations."

Birnstihl is serving on the committee at the request of John Owens, IANR Harlan vice chancellor and NU vice president.

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

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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

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.

Successful swine business highlights Pillen's career

Jim Pillen gained statewide fame as a member of championship football teams in the 1970s while studying animal science at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Today he is known for his successful swine operation, Progressive Swine Technologies (PST).

Because he was a standout safety on teams between 1974 and 1979, Pillen had a chance for a professional football career in the NFL but opted instead for veterinarian school.

"I was accepted to vet school and could not take the chance of not receiving the seat later," he said.

Pillen graduated in 1979 from UNL with a degree in animal science and in 1983 with a DVM from Kansas State University.

A Columbus area native, Pillen returned home after graduating — something he had not planned on doing. A veterinary internship in Los Angeles convinced him he was destined for the big city.

The unexpected death of his mother changed his plans and he returned home to join a local practice and then started working with his dad on the family farm.

Pillen worked for a year and a half as an equine and small animal veterinarian before starting his own small animal practice, Columbus Animal Center. Large animals were still a passion of his, however, so he used his farm and animal science background to start a swine consulting business as well.

He spent a couple days every week working with pork producers on various issues such as swine health, nutrition, and management. He realized that if he could use his advice to help other pork producers become more successful, he could operate his own successful swine operation.

"An entrepreneurial spirit from my father stimulated me to do that," he said.

Pillen started PST in 1993 with a partner, a handful of employees and 2,500 sows on his home farm. It grew to the point where he was prompted to sell his small animal practice in 1996. PST now employs about 550 people and has 50,000 sows on 28 farms in Nebraska, South Dakota, and Minnesota.

Jim Pillen

In May Pillen gave a tour of PST to faculty, staff, and administrators during the first IANR Road Scholars Tour.

Pillen calls PST a high-tech food business.

"Our timing was really good," he said. "There was a lot of changes taking place that allowed us to implement new technologies."

Pillen didn't expect to have his own successful swine business while he was a student at UNL, but credits what he learned with helping make him successful. His College of Agriculture professors helped steer him in the right direction and gave him confidence to accomplish his goals, he said.

"Every time frame of our lives has a great impact of who we are and who we become," he said. "Certainly my university experience had a great impact."

– Lori McGinnis

Black named chair of Department of Biochemistry

Paul N. Black is the new chair of the Department of Biochemistry effective Sept. 1.

Concetta C. DiRusso, Black's wife, is UNL professor of nutrition and health sciences and biochemistry.

Black came to UNL from Albany, N.Y., where he served in a variety of academic positions. He was chair of the Committee of Principal Investigators and was senior scientist and co-director of the Center for Metabolic Disease at the Ordway Research Institute.

Black also was professor of biochemistry in the Center for Cardiovascular Sciences at Albany Medical College and an adjunct member of the Wadsworth Center at the New York State Department of Health.

Black received his undergraduate degree from Colorado State University, his doctorate from the University of Vermont, and completed post-doctoral work in biochemistry at the University of California, Irvine.

He will continue his research program at UNL directed at defining the molecular basis of fatty acid transport across biological membranes. Support of his research since 1988 has been from the National Science Foundation, the American Heart Association, and the National Institutes of Health.

He succeeds Robert Spreitzer, who served one year as interim chair.

Both Black and DiRusso serve on the editorial board of The Journal of Biological Chemistry.

Before her arrival at UNL, DiRusso was senior scientist and professor and the director for the Center for Metabolic Disease at the Ordway Research Institute and Albany Medical College.

DiRusso received her bachelor's degree from Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass., her doctorate from the University of Vermont, and completed post-doctoral training in biochemistry and microbiology at the University of California, Irvine.

Paul Black

Her research at UNL will continue to focus on how different classes of dietary fatty acids impact gene expression in health and disease and studies directed to identify small molecule inhibitors that disrupt fatty acid transport and trafficking. Her research has been continually supported since 1988 by the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the American Heart Association, and private philanthropy.

Concetta DiRusso

The couple have three children, Katya, a marketing specialist with Gensler Architectural and World Wild Design in San Francisco; Mark, an electrical engineer with National Instruments in Austin, Texas; and Alexandra, a senior at Lincoln East High School.

Food Processing Center offers certification course in Spanish

The Food Processing Center at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln is working to increase its presence among international food companies by offering an important certification course in Spanish.

The Better Process Control School was offered for 3 ½ days in August for 21 participants from Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, and the United States, said Rolando Flores, center director.

The course, which is certified by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, offers required certification to food industry workers involved in the thermal processing of food, Flores said. Food companies may distribute food processed with high temperatures, such as canned or jarred products, only if at least one employee is certified in thermal processing.

Certification courses are offered at universities nationwide and the FPC has one once or twice a year, Flores said. The August course, however, was the first time the FPC offered it at UNL in Spanish.

Among the companies sending employees to the training was Hershey Co.'s division in Mexico, which sent 10 people.

Topics addressed during the training included proper food temperatures, food pH balance, and food safety. An FDA representative attended to ensure the course could be certified by the agency.

Offering the course in Spanish was one more way the FPC is making itself better known to Spanish-speaking countries, Flores said.

"The objective is to provide to the food industry alternatives to training their personnel and increase the presence of The Food Processing Center overseas," Flores said.

In May the FPC hosted a workshop on food safety and risk analysis for the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture. Forty-six people attended the event, taught in English and Spanish.

Flores hopes efforts to reach out to Spanish-speaking food workers will not only help the industry attract and retain effective employees but also attract potential graduate students to UNL and make UNL and Nebraska products more accessible in the global market.

UNL has a cooperative agreement with the University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez, which sent an instructor to UNL to teach the August course. The instructor, Fernando Perez, is a former doctoral student at UNL. The other instructors were Flores and Marcos Rojas of Texas A&M University, a graduate of UNL.

Flores hopes to offer the course in Spanish once a year.

– Lori McGinnis

Three receive OEA Awards

Gregory Dorn, Diann Young, and Susan Kohles have received Outstanding Employee Awards this fall.

Gregory Dorn

Dorn, research technologist with the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, received the OEA for managerial/professional staff for September and October.

Nominators wrote that Dorn is easy to work with and "is always on top of what needs to be done" and that he is an "ambassador" and "huge asset" to projects.

Diann Young

Young, clerical associate with the Department of Biological Systems Engineering, received the OEA for office/service staff for September.

Susan Kohles

Nominators wrote her "innate sense of duty and her work ethic allow her to sustain high-quality work and performance."

Kohles, therapeutic horticulture specialist with the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, will receive the OEA for managerial/professional staff for November and December.

A nominator wrote that Kohles "has worked diligently to promote and guide hundreds of products through their successful completion in making Nebraska a better place to live."

Dorn, Young, and Kohles each will receive $350, a certificate, and lapel pin.

Husker Harvest Days emphasizes water

Water was the major theme in the Husker Red building during the Husker Harvest Days show near Grand Island this month, with IANR highlighting the latest in water research, education, and programming.

Photo by Brett Hampton

Tom Franti, surface water management specialist, applies water to the home roof on the homeowner rain garden model and explains the urban water quality benefits of a landscape rain garden at Husker Harvest Days.

The emphasis comes as a new University of Nebraska–Lincoln water Web site rolls out that will feature a wide variety of water-related disciplines.

"Water is our most important natural resource," said Elbert Dickey, dean and director of UNL Extension. "It's critical that Nebraskans have unbiased, research-based information to help them make the best decisions possible about how to manage water for its many uses."

IANR exhibits at Husker Harvest Days addressed understanding and mitigating the effects of drought; understanding groundwater, drinking water, and wastewater treatment; and irrigation and water use monitoring.

Other IANR displays focused on ongoing research of benefits of conservation buffer strips, subsurface drip irrigation, and UNL water-related research and extension education programming.

The *water.unl.edu* Web site focuses on water quality and quantity, said Sharon Skipton, extension water quality educator.

"It encompasses the day-in-day-out use of this all-important resource and also the development and maintenance of both agricultural and urban systems that assure safe, plentiful water will be available to future generations," Skipton said.

Water.unl.edu offers interactive tools, publications, and information for other key university sites, including the Water Center, the National Drought Mitigation Center, and the High Plains Regional Climate Center at UNL.