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# CASNR Fall Faculty Meeting

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CASNR Fall Faculty Meeting
August 21, 2003
East Campus Union
John C. Owens
NU Vice President and IANR HarlanVice Chancellor

I am so pleased to have this opportunity to speak with you today. There is something about the beginning of a semester that always strikes me as hopeful and exciting, and it is a treat to share in hopeful times just as we have shared in the very difficult economic times the Institute, the university, and our state have experienced in the past two years.

We have dealt with budget crises and made some tremendously difficult decisions that are felt personally, as well as professionally. We know it often seems that "bad news" grabs the headlines, yet a tremendous number of good things have happened in the past year, as well, thanks to the talent, enthusiasm, and the professionalism of our faculty, staff, and students.

It's the good news I would like to focus on today, a reminder that we all are part of some tremendously important work to Nebraska and its future. I look at all of you and I think of the awesome opportunities each of you has to influence the future of our state. As we look forward to seeing the familiar faces of returning students and to learning the names of the new students who will come to us with

their own talents and challenges and dreams, the anticipation of what can be certainly is great. You are the people who make all that happen. How can anyone not be enthusiastic about that?

In the next few minutes I'm going to list some of the good news that has occurred in the Institute since the last CASNR fall faculty meeting. It is not an inclusive list by any means – there is not time for that – but I think the breadth and the variety of it speaks so well of your work, the work of your colleagues throughout IANR, and of our students. It's that work that garners the Institute and this College such a stellar reputation for excellence and for caring.

For instance, Chris Gustafson, a recent CASNR agribusiness economics and public policy graduate who minored in international agriculture, natural resources, and Italian, earned a Fulbright Scholarship and is off to Italy for a year's study. While with us, Chris compiled and edited the book *Rural Voices – Literature from Rural Nebraska*, featuring more than 200 stories and poems about rural life.

The only youth speaker at the Chancellor's 2003 Martin Luther King Day observance here at UNL was a CASNR freshman – Shawn-tall Aw-foo, and Jill Kruger, an ag journalism senior and Mortar Board member at the time, was 2002 homecoming queen.

Our student-chapter of the National Agri-Marketing Association placed in the top 10 for the annual report and outstanding chapter competition last spring. Rachel Yan-o-check, the group's president this year, received a $1,000 national scholarship.

*Meat and Poultry* magazine ranked UNL fourth in its annual rankings, citing the work by animal and food scientists and the Institute's Food Processing Center.

We know our students learn from top teachers here in CASNR, and recent awards honored some of those teachers. Just this summer, the Institute of Food Technologists gave food science professor John Rupnow its award for teaching excellence. Steve Taylor received the 2003 IFT Bernard L. Oh-ser Ingredient Safety Award honoring contributions to the scientific knowledge of food ingredient safety and leadership in establishing principles of food ingredient safety evaluation and regulation.

In June, Ron Hanson finished his term as president of the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture; in 2002 Professor Hanson was the first Nebraskan ever to earn teaching-excellence-honors from that group. Also in June, Animal Scientist Terry Klopfenstein earned top-honors from the American Society of Animal Science in the teaching category.

This past year Chuck Francis received the International Service in Agronomy award from the American Society of Agronomy, and Roger Elmore was named a fellow of the society.

Terry Riordan was named the first recipient of the Cyril Bish Professorship in Horticulture, and Rodger Johnson the first recipient of the Omtvedt Professorship in Animal Science.

Six of our faculty members, as well as two teaching assistants, received Holling Family Awards for Teaching Excellence in Agriculture and Natural Resources. Steve Jones, Don Lee, Jack Schinstock, and Delmar VanDerWerff all received senior faculty excellence awards. Junior faculty teaching awards went to Tiffany Heng-Moss and Jess Miner. Kevin Delaney and Douglas Golick received teaching assistant awards.

Nineteen of our graduate students have earned 2003-2004 graduate fellowships and scholarships from the Widaman Trust, the Shear-Miles Award, the Hardin Fellowship, the Skala Fellowship and the Moseman Award.

The merger of the School of Natural Resource Sciences, Conservation and Survey Division, and Water Center into the School of Natural Resources offers opportunities for synergy of value both to the individuals participating, IANR, the university, and the state.

In the past year here at UNL we received a $10 million award from the National Institutes of Health to establish the Nebraska Center for Redox Biology, a collaborative research enterprise of UNL and the university's Medical Center's Eppley Cancer Center. Ruma Banerjee, Willa Cather professor of biochemistry, directs the center, and she was awarded the grant through a national, peer-reviewed competition to establish Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence.

James Van Etten, the William Allington distinguished professor of plant pathology, was elected to membership in the National Academy of Sciences, one of the highest honors accorded a U.S. scientist. How proud we can be that only three UNL professors have ever been elected to the National Academy, and all three of them have been Institute faculty members.

Two gifts to the University of Nebraska Foundation totaling $500,000 will allow us to break ground next week for a new education center and laboratory at the Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory near Whitman. The new education center will accommodate up to 300 people for agricultural events and courses throughout the year, and create research, teaching, and extension education space for faculty and graduate students and clientele.

The lead gift for the new center comes from Elaine Wolf of Albion and her husband, James Wolf, who died in 2002. A recent bequest from the estate of Ray

Bohy of Davey enables the project to move forward. Ray Bohy was the Institute's ranch and livestock manager for more than 30 years and started our Rodeo Club. He was a tremendous contributor to IANR.

I don't doubt that every person in this room could add one or more "good news" items to the list I've just mentioned. We hear a great deal about the disturbing news that is reported in large headlines, but there is a great deal of good news to celebrate and add to in the academic year ahead of us.

This is a tremendous thing you do – to teach. You are to be commended for it. It is a grand thing to walk into a classroom each fall and look up from the lectern and to see the future, knowing you are the bridge of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Knowing you are planting ideas and sharing knowledge on which others will build and grow. The rewards – and the challenges – are great. Thank you for your dedication to this cause.

I wish you all a tremendous academic year, and look forward to applauding the many successes I know will occur before the next academic year begins. Thank you.