University of Nebraska - Lincoln
DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

John Owens: Speeches & Appearances

Agriculture and Natural Resources, Institute of (IANR)

1-1-2005

Agriculture Builders of Nebraska, Inc. Annual Meeting

John Owens
University of Nebraska - Lincoln, jowens2@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/owenspeech

Part of the Agriculture Commons

Owens, John, "Agriculture Builders of Nebraska, Inc. Annual Meeting" (2005). *John Owens: Speeches & Appearances.* Paper 160.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/owenspeech/160

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Agriculture and Natural Resources, Institute of (IANR) at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in John Owens: Speeches & Appearances by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Agriculture Builders of Nebraska, Inc.
Annual Meeting
Morning Presentation
January 12, 2005
Cornhusker Hotel and Conference Center
John C. Owens
NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor

Let me start today by saying thank you.

Thank you, each of you, for your strong support of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the University of Nebraska.

Agriculture Builders of Nebraska is a vital force in our state. Your interest in Nebraska agriculture and natural resources and the Institute's work benefitting Nebraska encourages and sustains all of us at the university. As Nebraskans, we've weathered some especially tough economic times in the past few years. Your belief in the importance of what we do has been absolutely vital. We all hope for better economic times ahead, even as we know our state still faces some significant budgetary challenges.

Thank you again. Please know how much we appreciate all you do. ANN BRUNTZ - IANR DEVELOPMENT Office
- UCTA ALUMNA

This morning I'm delighted to share with you a video we've prepared for this session. It focuses on ways the faculty and staff of the Institute contribute to Nebraska's economy and its quality of life through programs that meet needs identified by Nebraskans.

In 2003, IANR began a continuous process to update our strategic plan through the leadership of Associate Vice Chancellor Alan Baquet. In more than 30 listening sessions throughout our state we heard two consistent concerns. The first one is economic development and community vitality. The second is water, both water quantity and water quality. Those two themes were echoed in December 2004 in four recent listening sessions Alan held in various parts of Nebraska.

Economic development and community vitality and water are special focus areas within our current strategic plan. As we research and educate in both areas, we build on a body of

knowledge Institute faculty and staff have developed through the years. Our video presentation today highlights these two focus areas.

Certainly one of the ways we contribute to the economy of rural areas and, indeed, of all of Nebraska is through work that adds value to Nebraska products. Internationally-recognized Institute work in beef muscle profiling is one example of tremendously good work adding value to Nebraska beef. We'll hear a little bit about that from Animal Scientist Chris Calkins and Sallie Atkins of the Nebraska Beef Council.

Video of Chris Calkins and Sallie Atkins

As I noted earlier, IANR researchers, teachers, and extension-educators have worked in rural economic development and community vitality areas for years. Our research-based education is vital to Nebraskans.

Under President-Emeritus Dennis Smith, the university system launched the Rural Initiative about three years ago to help meet the needs of rural areas. Headed by Sandy Scofield, who will join our panel this morning to answer questions about her team's work, the Rural Initiative is administered through the Institute. It works across all four campuses to provide Nebraska with needed expertise. It also works closely with Cooperative Extension. Currently, the Rural Initiative and Cooperative Extension work collaboratively on a project called "Communities of the Future". Seven extension educators and a community development specialist work full-time, statewide as a team. A team whose purpose is to assist communities and regions in building capacity. They document "lessons learned" in order to inform future programs conducted by the university and its partners.

Here's a bit about the Rural Initiative's and Cooperative Extension's ongoing contributions to Nebraska:

video combination from RI piece done for Regents, Connie Francis talking about EDGE and young physical therapy entrepreneur from North Platte

Nancy Miller, an Associate Professor in Textiles, Clothing and Design, whose area of specialization is the business of merchandising, is at the end of a three-year grant from the USDA Fund for Rural America. She has worked collaboratively with Iowa State University, the University of Minnesota, and Ohio State University on the project.

In the first phase of their research, scientists examined small-businesses located in small communities to determine how they network and collaborate to have more power in the marketplace. They studied 29 existing networks across the four states. They looked at how the networks started, what ties bind them together, what resources they share, what enables them to trust each other to go forward in developing a formal organization.

Using information gained from studying existing networks, Professor Miller and Dr. Diane Vigna in Textiles, Clothing and Designed started a new network among independent apparel-store-owners in small Nebraska communities. Growing out of this work are projects that provide invaluable experience for textiles, clothing, and design students. Students work with the store owners to offer ideas on more effectively displaying merchandise for customers. They address case studies based on real-world challenges faced by small business owners.

Dr. Miller hopes to see future grants fund studies on how small businesses develop network relationships that strengthen their market position and create competitive advantages. She says there is a lot of theory but not a lot of study on business networking, and we'd like to rectify that. The University of Nebraska and Iowa State University researchers will continue to lend support to the apparel-store network, as well as three other new networks created: an entrepreneurship club, a Hispanic

business owners' network, and a "grow your own-market farm – network."

One thing we do know for sure: It can be lonely being the only person in your business in a town, and it's helpful to have someone with similar interests with whom to talk. These networks are set up so those participating aren't in competition with each other. They allow people to talk about business plans, merchandising strategy, and purchasing together to gain price breaks.

Response from 377 small business owners who were members of the original 29 networks studied suggested networking participants were greatly impacted by the networks and perceived several advantages. Business-wise, they gained access to technology and influenced favorable legislation. As owners, they had more self-assurance about their business capabilities, as Dr. Miller tells us.

Video of Nancy Miller, Diane Knobbe, student in merchandising study

We talk a great deal about community vitality throughout Nebraska. Within the Institute we also know the importance of community-development and community-support, as well. We'd like to share with you a little-bit today about two programs that help build community for our students on east campus and at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis. These programs provide students with support and a sense of belonging, enhancing their chances of success in college and beyond.

Video of ACE and NCTA

Earlier I noted water is a focus-area in our current Institute strategic plan. Water, of course, is absolutely vital to Nebraska. Our state has aquifers below it that make it possible to irrigate 8.2 million acres of cropland. If poured over the surface of Nebraska, the water in those aquifers would have a depth of 37.9 feet. Nearly 24,000 miles of rivers and streams add to Nebraska's bountiful natural-resources. We use water for life – we cannot survive without it. We use water for business. We use water for

recreation. Nebraskans identified water as a top concern in listening sessions held in "both" 2003 and 2004, and we expect that concern to continue.

The Institute long has been involved in research, "teaching," and extension-education programs related to water. Here are two of our current projects.

Video of Steve Melvin and Suat Irmak

Ron Yoder - Tuma irrigation agreem.

glen hollerum -

I mentioned earlier that we "always" are exploring those factors that influence water. Certainly "drought" is one of them; the National Drought Mitigation Center based in IANR looks at drought from a "number-of-aspects", including climate and its affect on environment and agriculture. Our carbon sequestration project also looks at environmental-effects of current practices, and how we might most effectively and efficiently use those resources available to us for enhancing agriculture and preserving our environment. Don Wilhite, director of the National Drought Mitigation Center, and Agronomist Ken Cassman tell us more

about that.

Video of Don Wilhite and Ken Cassman

There are, of course, many more wonderful examples of how the Institute is contributing to the success and well-being of Nebraskans. Time does not permit us to highlight more than a few examples – but we'd really like to do so!

You'll also find more information about ongoing work in the Institute in the reports you received this morning. Let me highlight just a few items.

First off, our Agricultural Research Division faculty obtained over $42 million in grant and contract funds in fiscal year 2004, the largest amount of grant and contract funding ever achieved by ARD faculty in one fiscal year. That's 46.2 percent of UNL's total grants and contracts. We thank Dean Darrell Nelson for his tremendous leadership in ARD not just this year, but through all the years he has served as Dean. Darrell has informed us he will retire as Dean of the Agricultural Research Division the end of

June. We will miss him a great deal.

I'm pleased to report that Professor Ron Hanson, who in 2003 earned the USDA's National Award for Excellence in University and College Teaching in Agricultural and Food Sciences, in 2004 was named the Nebraska Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation. This illustrates the outstanding, effective teaching available in the college. Unfortunately, today, not enough students are enrolled at UNL to take advantage of all that fine teaching from such a talented and dedicated faculty.

Our report from the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources notes a decrease in CASNR undergraduate enrollment, the eighth year we've seen such a decline. This is a great concern to us, and we *must* turn these enrollment figures around. We offer a tremendous education in agriculture ranging from the farm-gate to the restaurant-plate. Our enrollments need to reflect the importance of agriculture in Nebraska, America's powerhouse agricultural state. We welcome your ideas and your help as we work to do so. DEAN WALLER NAME CHANGE??

At the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis

we're happy to say student freshmen enrollment is up 53 percent. We're also pleased to note the wonderful $3.5 million endowment NCTA received from the Jean Rawson Estate for scholarships for NCTA students from Nebraska.

Among the several highlights you'll find in the Rural Initiative report is a bullet noting a full-time Federal Procurement Officer has been hired to assist rural businesses in successfully competing for government contracts. Since April 2004 our representative has completed 333 sessions with 122 clients in 25 counties. Three companies report receiving a federal contract so far.

Research and extension education efforts of the Institute will help Nebraskans make decisions necessary to respond to Nebraska's current water situation and to help plan for the future. The goal of Cooperative Extension education programs targeting agricultural producers is to provide information needed to meet new requirements for water use and maintain profitability of farms and ranches.

The new College of Education and Human Sciences celebrated its first birthday this fall, and remains a one-of-a-kind college in Nebraska. No other higher education institution IN NEBRASKA combines the fields contained here into a single college aimed at improving people's lives.

The University of Nebraska hopes stronger-than-expected state financial projections will help it emerge from budgetary stagnation. Although state revenue has been strong the past five months, "competition" for limited resources grows and uncertainty continues. Medicaid, as well as aid to public schools and other programs, promise to weigh in heavily on the state-budget—"spending-priorities." The question is what choices will the Legislature make in spending Nebraska's resources as state revenues improve? We look forward to better financial times because during five rounds of state budget adjustments, the University state-funded budget was reduced by over $54 million. For IANR, this meant reductions of almost $6.7 million resulting in program eliminations and reduction of programs "important" to Nebraskans. This year's loss in revenue from enrollment—

shortfalls has added to budget uncertainties. No final decisions have been made on how to balance the budget in light of this tuition revenue loss.

The reports contain some excellent information. I hope you'll take the time to peruse them. I'm sure during our panel discussion those responsible for each report will be happy to answer any questions you might have of them.

Now, just as we did last year, we've asked Institute representatives you've seen in our video today to join us for a panel discussion, so that you might ask them more about their work. A few of our people are unable to attend because of other commitments; at this time I'll ask those who are here to come forward and take your places up here in front. Sandy Scofield is joining the panel to answer Rural Initiative and Communities of the Future questions; Jerry Sundquist, Interim Dean of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, also joins our panel to answer questions about NCTA.

Once everyone is settled, we'll begin. And I'm betting Sallie Atkins (MAKE SURE SHE'S THERE) will be willing to answer any

questions you might have on the Beef Council's perspective on our beef muscle research, as well.

Please feel free to ask any and all questions that occur to you, and we will do our best to answer them. Thank you.