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2010

## The Leading Object: February 2010

John C. Owens

*NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR*

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## Perspectives

Both President J.B. Milliken and Governor Dave Heineman spoke at the Agriculture Builders of Nebraska, Inc. winter meeting in January.

As I listened, I thought of how fortunate Nebraska is to have two

such leaders who believe so strongly in higher education. We are grateful for their support and belief in higher education in Nebraska.

We are delighted, of course, when students join us at the university to prepare for their careers. We also are pleased to see students continue their education at Nebraska's state and community colleges. One size clearly does not fit all in education, and different opportunities provide different paths to helping fill Nebraska's needs for an educated workforce with the knowledge and abilities to grow and sustain our state.

We in the Institute are so fortunate to be involved in education for students from grade school age through college graduates attaining their Ph.D. degrees and working as post-docs.

Through extension's 4-H program, 135,000 Nebraska young people yearly gain knowledge and life skills through 4-H programming. That's one in three age-eligible Nebraska youth.

To put that into perspective, and to illustrate the magnitude of that involvement and its impact, I like to compare enrollments in various educational institutions in our state with those 4-H numbers. For instance, during the 2007-2008 school year, Nebraska's two metro public school systems, Lincoln and Omaha combined, had 81,116 students enrolled.

Nebraska 4-H, which operates on a January through December calendar year, in 2008 had nearly 54,000 more.

The combined full-time enrollments of the University of Nebraska, Nebraska's community colleges, and Nebraska's state colleges in the 2007-2008 school year was 72,890.

(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.*

February 2010

## IANR signs five-year agreement with Brazil for Fulbright program

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln is the only land-grant university in the United States to place an agricultural scientist from Brazil under a Fulbright program.

UNL in February signed a five-year agreement with Luiz Loureiro of Brazil to approve the placement of the scientist, said Susan Fritz, interim dean of the Agricultural Research Division.

Loureiro visited Nebraska in October, spending time at University of Nebraska's campuses in Lincoln, Kearney, and Omaha, including the medical center, said Tom Farrell, associate vice president for NU International Affairs.

Loureiro is director of programs for Capes/MEC — a Brazilian foundation designed to improve the quality of higher educational institutions.

Part of Loureiro's visit focused on IANR, as he expressed an interest in developing an agricultural-based relationship between the Institute and Brazilian universities, Fritz said.

"Each year we could have a Brazilian scientist on our campus for four months," Fritz said. "The scientists will collaborate with our faculty, most likely on research grants."

"The agreement may result in new and strengthened research collaborations and increased flow of graduate students between UNL and the institutions of the participating Brazilian faculty."

Loureiro was a guest of NU President J.B. Milliken, said Farrell, who had met Loureiro previously.



Luiz Loureiro of Brazil, right, visits UNL to discuss plans to place a Brazilian agricultural scientist under a Fulbright program. At left is Tom Farrell, associate vice president for NU International Affairs.

Brett Hampton

"I told him he should get a better understanding of the resources in Nebraska," Farrell said. "He was really impressed."

Loureiro wants to set up a Fulbright professorship program between Brazilian institutions and universities in the United States, including Nebraska, Farrell said. Loureiro also visited Notre Dame, Columbia, and the University of Texas to establish Fulbright programs there as well. UNL, however, is to have the only Fulbright scholar in the field of agriculture, Fritz said.

"We obviously are pleased that the Fulbright Commission has singled out UNL as the host for Brazilian agriculturalists," Fritz said. "This move acknowledges IANR's international prominence in agriculture and builds upon past and current IANR faculty ties to the Brazilian agricultural community."

Connections developed between IANR and Brazil through the agreement have significant potential, Farrell said.

"This will raise Nebraska's profile with leading agriculturalists in Brazil," he said.

— Lori McGinnis



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## Perspectives (continued from page 1)

Nebraska 4-H had over 62,000 more.

Statewide and nationally, 4-H is pushing to increase students' knowledge of and interest in science, technology, and engineering — a push, I'm pleased to say, in which Nebraska 4-H plays a key part as it develops robotics programming for national use.

The national 4-H initiative called, "One million new scientists. One million new ideas" is aimed at seeing that our youth — and our country — do not fall behind in these vital knowledge areas so necessary to keep the United States globally competitive.

We all can be proud that both national and local surveys show a high percentage of 4-H youth who are seniors in high school pursue post-secondary education.

In the most recent Nebraska survey, the percentage is over 90 percent. Yes, over 90 percent!

These are articulate young people, skilled at working with others, and eager to explore career opportunities, all fostered in 4-H.

Which naturally leads me to the tremendous students who study in our College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, historically 70 percent of whom take their first job in Nebraska after graduation. That's a brain gain for our state.

Our students bring Nebraska both scientific savvy and an appreciation of the importance of leadership and community service. A number of them go on to higher degrees, becoming part of that cadre of scientific leaders and teachers our nation needs.

Many of our alumni join other Nebraska residents in continuing their education with us through lifelong learning, whether they are working on a graduate degree, freshening their knowledge, or eager to gain new knowledge through our extension education programs.

They know the value this university brings to their lives. They know the value we bring to our state.

From 4-H as the first class many Nebraskans take at the University of Nebraska to on-campus classrooms and laboratories to extension education programs across the state, IANR is at work for Nebraska.



## Kimmel seeks to promote entrepreneurship, innovation

IANR's Kimmel Education and Research Center near Nebraska City has some high ambitions.

The center has been hosting successful programming in entrepreneurship and specialty crops such as grape growing. Now it is adding innovation.

The center this year has introduced

innovation workshops and webinars that aim to help people expand the use of innovation in their businesses, said Connie Reimers-Hild, extension educator. Along with that, Reimers-Hild plans to offer entrepreneurial leadership coaching.

"People really are looking for ways to support themselves and make additional income," she said. "We want to help create opportunities for them to find those niche markets."

The center is a part of a regional effort to promote entrepreneurship through the Inventors, Investors and Entrepreneurs (I2E) Club — an organization that helps steer people toward developing their own successful businesses.

Other programming

offered at the state-of-the-art center focuses on UNL Extension's efforts to promote crops of the future, Reimers-Hild said. Extension technologist Vaughn Hammond teaches programs in viticulture and gardening. Last year the center held a conference on environmental sustainability.

The center, located on Kimmel Orchard, has a 9,200-square-foot conference facility for UNL faculty as well as two laboratories and an outdoor classroom. The center is part of Nebraska City's annual AppleJack Festival, which attracts up to 45,000 people.

One of Kimmel's goals is to grow its current offerings through partnerships. Reimers-Hild noted that Kimmel is always looking for opportunities to partner with more faculty and students as well as organizations in both the public and private sectors.

Ernie Weyeneth, president and chief executive officer of the Kimmel

(continued on next page)



Kimmel Education and Research Center near Nebraska City

Michael Riese

**Need to meet with the  
Vice President/Vice Chancellor?  
Drop-ins each Friday from 3-5 p.m.\***

**John C. Owens**

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Agriculture and Natural Resources  
and Harlan Vice Chancellor of IANR  
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\*Occasionally Dr. Owens will be called away on University business.

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Read *The Leading Object* at <http://ianrhome.unl.edu/leadingobject>.

## Mulliken turns his love for research into a successful consulting business

Jerry Mulliken hadn't planned on a career in consulting, but undergraduate research at the University of Nebraska convinced him it was something he would enjoy.

Mulliken, a 1965 College of Agriculture graduate from Nickerson, used his student research experience to form a successful business, JM Crop Consulting.

Mulliken started at the university thinking he would go into agricultural engineering. Counsel from an adviser persuaded him to change his field of study to agronomy, and Mulliken was invited into an honors program that allowed him to set up his own curriculum.

In addition to agronomy courses, he took math and science courses and attended honors seminars. Research was a big part of his studies.

"I was all gung-ho about research," he said.

Mulliken continued his research while earning his doctorate at the University of Wisconsin and for more than a year undertook post-doctoral work at Texas A&M University, where he studied wheat physiology.

Mulliken later returned to the family farm near Nickerson, where he has been ever since. He ran the dairy and crop farm until selling the dairy operation in 1986.

With some extra time without the dairy work, he decided to form his crop consulting business because it would enable him to use his research skills.

"It kind of clicked with me as it was something I could do," he said. "I was still interested in research."

As a consultant, Mulliken worked with area farmers, helping them understand how they could have better results with their crops. His work included field research such as soil fertility, sampling tests, and aerial imagery — a task aided

by his decision to learn to pilot aircraft a few years earlier.

After a friend took flying lessons and invited Mulliken along one day, "I was totally hooked when the wheels left the ground."

As a pilot he took aerial photographs of farms, which allowed him to provide important information to his customers.

"You can see things from a whole different perspective in the air than you could get on the ground," he said.

Mulliken has worked with UNL Extension and several growers on the Nebraska Soybean and Feed Grains Profitability Project, and was a founding member and the second president of the Nebraska Agriculture Technology Association.

He recently contacted extension specialists about demonstrating a system for using precision agriculture methods to map weed infestations in corn and soybean fields. The work was summarized in an extension circular that was selected as a blue ribbon education aid by the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers in 2009.

Mulliken operated his consulting business for 20 years until slowing down to spend more time traveling with his wife, Betsy, throughout the United States, seven times to Italy, and to London.

Mulliken still conducts aerial imaging on occasion to help farmers make decisions such as how much nitrogen they should give their crops. He credits his Nebraska university experiences as the start of his career.

"I could not even have thought of a research career without it," he said.

— Lori McGinnis



Jerry Mulliken

## Lincoln has ties to Copenhagen climate summit

Climate experts from around the world meeting in Lincoln reached an agreement on the use of a universal meteorological drought index that will lead to more effective drought monitoring and climate risk management.

The agreement, called the "Lincoln Declaration on Drought Indices," was reached by 54 experts and was presented by a World Meteorological Organization official Dec. 15 at a climate change summit in Copenhagen.

Participants in the Inter-Regional Workshop on Indices and Early Warning Systems for Drought, held in Lincoln Dec. 8-11, agreed that all national meteorological and hydrological services around the world should use the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) to characterize meteorological droughts.

The SPI is an index that calculates the probability of precipitation for any selected time period based on the long-term precipitation record.

Don Wilhite, director of UNL's School of Natural Resources, said the experts at the Lincoln meeting considered the three main types of drought — meteorological, agricultural, and hydrological. Standard indices will lead to more effective monitoring and early warning systems for these types of drought, Wilhite said.

"Given the complexity in defining drought historically, the selection of a primary index or measure of meteorological drought, is an important step forward, he said. "This is a step toward developing early warning systems to improve drought preparedness worldwide."

The workshop was sponsored by SNR, IANR's National Drought Mitigation Center, the World Meteorological Organization, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, USDA, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

### **Kimmel** (continued from page 2)

Foundation, said the center was developed to serve a worthwhile educational purpose for the university. In 1925, extension helped Richard Kimmel set up his orchards where the center is now located.

Weyeneth hopes the center will have a long-term relationship with UNL.

"The center seeks to partner with the university for the betterment of agriculture," Weyeneth said, adding it is "very much so" fulfilling those expectations.

## Sleight to be part of national policy conference at Drake University

Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture Dean Weldon Sleight is scheduled to be part of a two-day national policy conference identifying policy innovations and opportunities to support the next generation of U.S. farmers.

The Drake University Law School Forum on America's New Farmers: Policy Innovations and Opportunities, is March 3-5 in Washington, D.C. Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa is invited to be the keynote speaker.

Sleight is scheduled to be a panelist on the topic of Land Link Programs: Lessons from Farmers and Landowners. Under Sleight's leadership, NCTA has developed several programs to enhance opportunities for graduates to own their own business enterprises, especially in rural communities.

NCTA provides graduates with the technical, entrepreneurial, and business skills to own and operate their enterprises such as beef, farming, or horticultural businesses; partner with an existing operator; and qualify for low-interest loans.

Other forum topics include land purchases, finance and credit, leases, urban agriculture, sustainability, rural revitalization, and more, presented by an estimated four dozen speakers and panelists.



Weldon Sleight

## Cotton receives national eXtension award

Dan Cotton, eXtension director, has received a champion award at the organization's first national conference.

Cotton, based at UNL, was instrumental in creating eXtension and became director in 2004. eXtension — found at <http://extension.org> — is an online source of research-based information from more than 70 land-grant universities and partners nationwide. It is an integral part of and complements the community-based Cooperative Extension System.

Under Cotton's leadership, eXtension has grown from eight pioneer communities of practice, or subject areas, to nearly 50 groups of specialty experts.

The organization announced its first national awards last fall in St. Louis, recognizing outstanding partners as well as individual and team achievement.

## Weeks honored as AAAS Fellow

Donald Weeks, Maxcy professor of agriculture and natural resources, has been elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the world's largest federation of scientists.

AAAS members are honored by their peers for work advancing science or applications considered scientifically or socially distinguished.

Weeks was honored for distinguished contributions in the field of plant biotechnology for developing an innovative approach to engineering herbicide-resistant plant crops.

## Former dean dies

Robert Kleis, former executive dean of international programs and associate director of the Agricultural Experiment Station, died Dec. 17 at age 84.

Kleis was chairman of the-then Agricultural Engineering Department at UNL from 1966 to 1968. He served as associate director for the UNL Agricultural Experiment Station from 1967 to 1983. When he retired in 1990, he was executive dean for international programs at UNL.

Following his retirement Kleis worked as an international consultant in agriculture. He was instrumental in founding the Lester F. Larsen Tractor Test and Power Museum.

## ISU vet med leader retiring as dean

The dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University, whose leadership helped launch a new Professional Program in Veterinary Medicine with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is retiring as dean.

John Thomson's retirement is effective Jan. 1, 2011, after which he intends to serve on the ISU faculty. A national search for his replacement begins in March.

David Hardin, director of the School of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at UNL and associate dean of the professional program, worked closely with Thomson to develop the collaborative program, the only one of its kind in the nation. Hardin and Thomson continue serving together on their respective governing boards.

"Dr. Thomson has a great ability to see what could be," Hardin said, adding he will miss Thomson's visionary leadership. "The courage to implement the Professional Program in Veterinary Medicine is an example. He moved ideas forward with a great deal of integrity."

"Nebraska and Iowa owe so very much to the vision of Dean Thomson," said John Owens, NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR. "It was his inspiration that sparked the unique concept of teaching veterinary medicine at UNL and the rest is history!"

Nebraska's inaugural class of 25 students in the professional program completed their first two years of study at UNL in spring 2009 and moved to the ISU campus that fall for their final two years of study. They are expected to earn their DVM degrees from ISU in 2011.

## Swanson serves in interim 4-H post

Doug Swanson, UNL Extension educator in 4-H Youth Development, is serving as an interim national 4-H program leader at National 4-H Headquarters with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) in Washington, D.C.

Swanson is responsible for providing leadership for the national 4-H volunteer framework, 4-H professional development priority teams, and the Citizenship National 4-H Mission Mandate. He began the four- to six-month position on Jan. 4.

## Leading Object online edition

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