

2009

## The Leading Object: January 2009

John C. Owens

*NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/leadingobject>



Part of the [Agriculture Commons](#)

---

Owens, John C., "The Leading Object: January 2009" (2009). *The Leading Object*. 37.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/leadingobject/37>

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 The Leading Object by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

## Perspectives

As we look ahead to all we will do in 2009, I want to take this time to review just a few examples of IANR's many 2008 accomplishments. For instance:



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

Our College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources led all UNL colleges in enrollment growth, with 12.9 percent more students in fall 2008 than in fall 2007. The College of Education and Human Sciences showed the second largest growth at UNL, at 5.1 percent.

Nebraska 4-H received a nearly \$2.5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to take its robotics and GPS/GIS curriculum nationwide.

We released our strategic plan for 2008 to 2016, which drives IANR program planning, evaluation, and budgeting. Its four priorities are: the 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.

Results from a five-year study on switchgrass as a biomass fuel source drew interest internationally. Researchers found switchgrass grown for biofuel production produced 540 percent more energy than needed to grow, harvest, and process it into cellulosic ethanol.

Awards were pleasingly plentiful. A few of many possible examples include: Elbert Dickey was inducted into USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service Hall of Fame. Anne Vidaver received the American Society for Microbiology Founders Distinguished Service Award. Fred Baxendale received the Distinguished Achievement Award in Extension and Tiffany Heng-Moss the Distinguished Achievement Award in

continued on page 2

# 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.*



January 2009

## IANR helping Chinese university expand its programs

With the groundwork now laid, the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources is helping a Chinese university expand its agricultural research and extension education programs.

Susan Fritz, associate IANR vice chancellor, and Ron Yoder, head of the Department of Biological Systems Engineering (BSE), traveled to Hangzhou, China, in November as part of a partnership with Zhejiang University (ZJU).

The purpose of the trip was two-fold, Fritz said. First, it was to plan and design a center pivot irrigation system at a new research and extension center. IANR last summer partnered with ZJU to develop the joint China-U.S. center for advanced agricultural and natural resources technology.

Secondly, Fritz met with about 70 ZJU students to describe a recently approved program for them to attend graduate school at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. IANR and ZJU representatives last summer signed what is called a three-plus-one plan, in which ZJU undergraduates will transfer to UNL after three years, complete their bachelor's degrees, then earn a master's degree in a CASNR program.

Yoder made recommendations on the location for installing the center pivot



**Ron Yoder, head of the Department of Biological Systems Engineering, and two administrators from Zhejiang University's Joint Extension and Research Center review possible locations for a center pivot.**

system, which ZJU wants primarily for demonstration and educational purposes. ZJU is located in eastern China, where frequent rain means irrigation systems are not widely used.

Among the factors Yoder said he considered when making his recommendations were the center's soil, topography, and cropping systems.

"They were very interested in including center pivots as part of the center because of Nebraska's expertise in that area," Fritz said. "It makes sense to seek the recommendation from IANR."

Irrigation also was the focus of a May trip to China Yoder made with BSE's C. Dean Yonts, irrigation engineer at the Panhandle Research and Extension Center, and Bill Krantz, irrigation specialist at the Northeast Research and Extension Center, to teach farmers about water

continued on page 2

## Perspectives *(continued from page 1)*

Teaching from the Entomological Society of America. Drew Lyon became the Fenster Professor of Dryland Agriculture, the first established professorship for an IANR faculty member at an off-campus center. Biochemist Don Weeks received the Maxcy Professorship in Agriculture and Natural Resources. Marjorie Lou received an honorary professorship from China's Xi'an Jiaotong University.

Our Student Chapter of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners won first place in competition at the American Association of Bovine Practitioners' annual meeting, all sophomores in our new Professional Program in Veterinary Medicine, competing nationally with third- and fourth-year students from other veterinary medicine programs.

IANR's first Roads Scholars Tour

took new faculty and staff to Northeast Nebraska to learn more about our state and what IANR does. It went so well, another trip is planned this year.

Faculty and administrators traveled internationally to develop and strengthen ties with universities, colleagues, and students in other countries. IANR, looking to establish and enhance relationships with universities in China, Mexico, Central, and South America, partnered with Zhejiang University to develop a joint China-U.S. extension and research center for advanced agricultural and natural resources technology, a partnership we believe the first of its kind.

We launched our new water Web site, [water.unl.edu](http://water.unl.edu), which provides access to a wide variety of UNL expertise on water issues. Water was the topic of our new

look and delivery at Husker Harvest Days, which drew tremendous response from visitors.

It's never hard to compile a list of IANR accomplishments; it is extremely difficult to pare that list down to fit the space available. For this tip-of-the-accomplishments-iceberg list, and the so many, many more accomplishments you can name, even if I cannot do so here, thank you.

I look forward at the end of 2009 to savoring another great list of accomplishments our IANR community has compiled by being at work for Nebraska.



## Rasby receives extension award

Rick Rasby, beef specialist with University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, has received the North Central Region Extension Award for Excellence from USDA and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.



Rick Rasby

Rasby was cited for his work with *eXtension.org* as well as *beef.unl.edu*, a database-driven Web site. Conceived in 1995, the site had less than 25 visitors daily. Today *beef.unl.edu* is one of the most popular beef Web sites in the United States, with 700 to 1,200 visitors a day, Rasby said.

Rasby leads the Community of Practice for eXtension's production-based Beef Cattle Clearing House and is part of the national eXtension educational effort.

The regional awards have been in existence for three years and UNL extension faculty have been named recipients each year. Previous winners were Rick Koelsch, now UNL extension assistant dean, and Fred Baxendale, entomology specialist.

UNL extension has a reputation of being one of the lead extension systems in the country, Dean Elbert Dickey said.

"Having UNL faculty recognized for extension excellence in the North Central Region for three consecutive years by NASLUGC and USDA adds credibility to the idea that we are in fact one of the leaders," Dickey said.

The 2008 award was presented at NASLUGC's recent meeting in Chicago, where University of Nebraska president J.B. Milliken moderated a session on eXtension.

## IANR helping Chinese university expand its programs *(continued from page 1)*

management using center pivot irrigation.

During the November trip, Fritz met with administrators of the ZJU agricultural and life sciences colleges as well as student groups. She described the three-plus-one program and answered questions.

"We have 14 students who have already expressed a desire to come to UNL," Fritz said. In fact two students have already enrolled and one more was to enroll in January.

ZJU students are highly interested in knowing academic rankings of colleges and departments, and while UNL has no formal ranking system, Fritz described to them several successes within the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

— Lori McGinnis

**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.

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

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln does not discriminate based on gender, age, disability, race, color, religion, marital status, veteran's status, national or ethnic origin or sexual orientation.

The Leading Object is published monthly for all IANR staff members by Communications & Information Technology. Questions or story ideas may be directed to the editor at

103 ACB, 0918; via e-mail ([lmcginnis2@unl.edu](mailto:lmcginnis2@unl.edu)) or via fax (402-472-0025).

## Federal judge finds agricultural education helps him on bench

As a lawyer, Arlen Beam got business, thanks to his agricultural studies at the University of Nebraska. Now as a federal appeals court judge, his knowledge of agriculture still helps him serve on the bench.

Beam, a 1951 College of Agriculture graduate, has used the knowledge he gained as an undergraduate student throughout his life.

“As it has turned out, it has benefited me immensely,” Beam said.

Beam has served as federal appeals court judge for the last 21 years. He never thought as a UNL student in agronomy and agricultural journalism he would be where he is today.

Beam grew up in Stapleton, where his father was a rural mail carrier and his mother a teacher. The family had a small cow-calf operation and some dairy cows.

After high school graduation, Beam decided to attend the university. He had a Regents scholarship that enabled him to attend any NU college, but also had two other scholarships good only for the College of Agriculture, so that is what he selected.

As a senior he worked as a farm feature writer for *Nebraska Farmer* magazine, but after graduation he served two years of active military duty, spending 20 months in Korea.

Beam returned to Nebraska and entered law school. The field of law hadn't occurred to him until his time in Korea, where he worked on court-martial cases. That, he said, whetted his appetite for law.

However, law school and a full-time job caused him to spend too much time away from his wife and child, so after his first year he took a job with Steckley Hybrid Corn Co. Though the company was headquartered in Lincoln, he

worked as district sales manager in Mount Sterling, Ill.

In 1958 he moved back to Lincoln as the company's regional sales manager and director of advertising. When Steckley later merged with another company, Beam quit to stay in Lincoln. He decided to return to law school to earn more money to support his wife and five children.

Beam started work as a lawyer in 1965 and quickly found his agricultural education came in handy. He worked on product liability cases, and companies that had agricultural-related products that were being challenged often called on him to defend them.

In 1982 Beam was appointed by President Reagan and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as federal district judge. Five years later Reagan appointed him to his current post.

As a federal appeals court judge in the seven-state Eighth Circuit, Beam hears arguments one week a month either in St. Louis or St. Paul, Minn. In the job, he reviews decisions by federal district judges and federal agencies that have adjudicatory duties. He finds his knowledge of agriculture still comes in handy when he reviews ag-related cases, he said.

Beam remembers his university days fondly and still considers the people he met in college his friends.

“It was like going to a small college with all the activities of a big university,” he said.

—Lori McGinnis



Arlen Beam

## New coolers give Dairy Store an ‘upscale grocery store’ look

Visitors of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Dairy Store can now have more of a niche shopping experience.

Nearly all of the store's offerings now are in public view in large coolers recently installed in the store's lobby, said Bryan Scherbarth, retail manager. Expanded selections of ice cream in half-gallon and 3-gallon containers are available in the coolers, as are wider varieties of cheeses and gift boxes.

Previously, customers had to ask for certain items kept behind the counter, Scherbarth said. The new coolers permit customers to help themselves.

“It looks like an upscale grocery store,” he said.

The seven-door cooling unit contains refrigerators and freezers for the store's products, which have been expanded under Scherbarth's management.

Scherbarth came to the store last year after spending 17 years at the now-closed

P.O. Pears bar and restaurant in Lincoln. Scherbarth increased the number of ice cream flavors and the way cheese is sold.

Customers previously were able only to buy cheese in one-fourth and one-half pound blocks. Now it is available pre-sliced and shredded.

Scherbarth has plans to increase the number of ice cream flavors available in half-gallon containers. The store's nine flavors are expected to expand to 20.

Two new flavors already have been created. Centennial Apple Spice marks the creation 100 years ago of the UNL Teachers College. Morrill Orchard Medley is the official flavor of the Justin Smith Morrill Scholars student leadership program.

Scherbarth hopes to continue developing ice cream flavors that reflect aspects of IANR and UNL.

“There are a lot of entities here. I'd like

to contact and make special flavors to represent them,” he said.

Some of the store's flavors are sold in single-serve containers, which are selling well in both the Nebraska and Nebraska East unions. Sales of single-serving containers of ice cream were “fantastic” during home football games, he said.

Gift baskets with cheese and meats were on display in the new coolers for the holidays.

The coolers will promote the store's products in a cleaner and much more organized fashion, Scherbarth said.

“Even the customers who come in just for ice cream can't help but notice the wide selection while they are standing in line next to the coolers and freezers,” he said.

—Lori McGinnis



## Niemann to serve one-year appointment in Washington

Keith Niemann, human resources director for University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension, has been named a National Association of Counties Ralph Tabor Extension Fellow.

The appointment means Niemann will serve a one-year assignment in Washington, D.C., beginning July 1, headquartered in the NACo office.

NACo sponsors the fellowship to enhance its partnership with the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) and the National

Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC).

The fellowship is named after Ralph Tabor, who worked on behalf of county government for 33 years, including nearly 20 years with NACo, before his death in 2003. Tabor initiated the fellowship in the late 1980s to enhance the partnership between county officials and extension.

The fellowship will help provide educational and technical assistance to counties on various topics. Niemann's emphasis will be in leadership development.

"I'm excited about the opportunity and honored to have been selected. It's a unique position — one that can have long-term impact at both the national and local level," he said.



Keith Niemann

## Three employees receive Outstanding Employee Awards

Rob Higgins, Bobby Skates, and Lisa Moravec have received Outstanding Employee Awards from IANR.

Higgins, an agricultural research tech at the High Plains Ag Lab in Sidney, received the OEA for office/service staff for December. A supporter wrote that Higgins "is a great ambassador for UNL in the southern Panhandle."

Skates, facilities supervisor at the West Central Research and Extension Center in North Platte, received the OEA for managerial/professional staff for January and February. A supporter wrote that he "exemplifies many fine qualities, including integrity, creativity, the ability to communicate effectively and a friendly, helpful demeanor."

Moravec, office associate with Husker Genetics in Ithaca, received the OEA for office/service staff for January. A supporter



Rob Higgins



Bobby Skates



Lisa Moravec

writes she is the "go-to person for our questions on seed orders, production and policy issues."

The three each received a cash award of \$350 and a lapel pin.

## Sorghum industry honors two faculty members

Two IANR faculty members have been honored by the sorghum industry.

Dan Duncan, assistant dean in the Agricultural Research Division, and Randy Pryor, extension educator based in Wilber, were honored at the Nebraska Ag Classic conference Dec. 16-17 in Kearney.

The Grain Sorghum Board presented its annual Service to Sorghum Award to Duncan for his service as the vice chancellor's representative to the sorghum board.

The Nebraska Grain Sorghum Producers Association cited Pryor for his contributions to association programs and projects.

## Farm Bureau names new administrator

Rob Robertson is the new chief administrator of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation, the state's largest general farm organization and an IANR supporter.

Robertson succeeds Doug Gibson, who will retire in April. Robertson is Farm Bureau vice president for governmental relations and secretary of the organization's political action committee.

Robertson grew up on his family farm near Roca and joined Farm Bureau in 1990. He was named head of the Governmental Relations Department in 1993. He previously was an aide to former Nebraska Rep. Doug Bereuter in Washington, D.C.



Photo by Brett Hampton

Calla Jarboe, left, an agricultural education sophomore from Holton, Kan., and Jenny Freed, a horticulture freshman from Loomis, prepare poinsettias to be sold at the Horticulture Club's sale in December at the Nebraska East Union.