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Panhandle Research and Extension Center Field Day

John Owens

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, jowens2@unl.edu

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College of Education & Human Sciences —

Panhandle Research and Extension Center Field Day
August 5, 2004
John C. Owens
NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor

Commodity trader. Financial analyst. Human resources—
director. Marketing analyst. Lending officer. Stockbroker.
Public relations specialist. Zookeeper. Nutritionist.

These are only "a few" of the varied careers recent College of
Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources graduates are
pursuing these days. Exciting, fulfilling careers for which the
College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources — we call
the college CASNR for short — provides a "tremendous" educational-
base that students can build on for their lives.

It's such a terrific list, I'd like to name a few more careers
on it:

Quality assurance chemist. Food technologist. Grain
merchandiser.

Crop production specialist. Environmental consultant. Beef
specialist. Farmer. Rancher. Assistant golf course
superintendent.

Draftsman/landscape designer. Veterinary Technologist.

Soil conservationist.

Field biologist. Water management specialist.

Cartographer.

Rangeland-management specialist. Engineer. Hydrologist.

I can't begin to tell you how proud I am of our CASNR graduates when I look at that list. It shows how our students make a difference in this world. It also shows that the misinformed people who think the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is solely about production agriculture make a very big mistake!

Production agriculture is ^{big} part of what we're about, and we're very proud of that part. It's in our roots and our traditions. And we're also about much more. Having been asked to speak with you today about the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, I am absolutely ["]delighted["] to have the opportunity to talk about the "more."

I am a firm-believer that CASNR's importance in our powerhouse agricultural state cannot be overestimated. Nearly one in four Nebraskans works in farm or farm-related jobs. Ours is the only four-year college in the state focused on the aspects and possibilities of agriculture and natural resources for Nebraska.

I am happy to be asked to speak about CASNR because – and I am sure this does not surprise you, since I spent my life in this area! – education is a passion of mine. I am *particularly* "passionate" about the tremendous educational base CASNR provides its graduates for launching wonderfully successful, rewarding careers. That is a message I want to share. And, I ask you to share it, as well.

For students interested in food – in growing it, in developing new food products, in food's nutrition and its packaging, in keeping our country's food supply abundant-and-safe, in protecting those with food allergies, in the intriguing new fields of farmaceuticals and nutraceuticals, perhaps even in starting their

own food company – CASNR has a place.

For students whose “passion” is science – discovery – finding “why” things are the way they are, and how they yet may be, CASNR has a place.

For students interested in the environment, in air, soil, and water, in fish and fowl, in animals, wild and domestic, CASNR has a place. Certainly for those with interests in people – working with people, enhancing people’s lives – CASNR has a place.

If business is a student’s interest, or economics, or marketing, or finance; if a student is heading on to medical school, law school, or veterinary school, CASNR offers so many, many opportunities to learn and grow.

For those students who are among the gifted people who make farming and ranching a career, CASNR provides world-class, science-based knowledge upon which they can build all their lives.

We are especially proud that approximately 70 percent of

CASNR graduates take a job in Nebraska upon graduation. Seven out of 10. Each one of these graduates is a brain **gain** for Nebraska.

For years the Institute's strengths in agriculture and natural resources have benefitted Nebraska through research, teaching, and Cooperative Extension, the three pillars of our land-grant university mission that are so closely intertwined in IANR. Those strengths provide the broad base upon which CASNR builds to do so many things so well to prepare students for the vital, challenging careers awaiting them.

Take, for instance, our new Professional Golf Management program. At first glance some people have wondered how Professional Golf Management fits in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. Truth is, it's a natural for us and for Nebraska.

It builds on the Institute's very strong tradition of and national recognition in turf science. This rigorous academic PGM program integrates science with business management courses

from the College of Business Administration, and hospitality, food, and nutrition courses from the College of Education and Human Sciences.

We are only the 15th school in the country to offer a PGM program accredited by the Professional Golfers' Association of America. This is not an accreditation they hand out lightly, and we are really excited about it.

It is a land-grant university's responsibility to take the resources of the university to the citizens of the state. One of the ways we do that as the needs of society change is by adjusting to meet those needs. While I have been asked to speak specifically about the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources today, let me assure you that your land-grant university, with its proud history of teaching, research, and service to ~~the~~ ^{our} state, offers a terrific education to the Nebraska youth who study with us in Lincoln in all our colleges and all our majors to prepare for their careers and their lives.

As I said, it is a land-grant university's responsibility to

take the resources of the university to the citizens of the state. We do that "proudly" in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, where our college and our cooperative extension division distribute new knowledge "discovered" through research. This new knowledge is "delivered" in our campus classrooms and laboratories by our faculty and it's delivered all across our state by UNL extension educators. It is "knowledge" that helps keep Nebraska "competitive" in the world market, and improves the "quality" of life at home.

"One" of the things that is so absolutely exciting about the work we do in the Institute, and the courses taught in CASNR, is that we are "about the very basics of life.

Food. Water. The environment – clean soil and air. People.

No one can live without air, without water, without food, and few of us would care to live without people. What could be more important – and more exciting – than "working" to preserve and strengthen the very basics of life itself? What could be more rewarding than "contributing" to better health for individuals,

countries, even the world? To providing food for the hungry? To preserving air, soil, and water quality and quantity, to making the world better by a life and work contributing to that betterment?

This is the work we do in the Institute to benefit Nebraskans and our world. This is the work for which CASNR educates our students. This is work that matters.

Research into alternative crops for Nebraska – crops such as chickpeas, chicory, birdseed, and grass seed here in the Panhandle area – add millions of dollars to the regional economy. They boost grower income and, in some instances, create processing and related jobs.

Two of our meat scientists are part of a team that received an international award for beef muscle profiling research. They found several muscles usually used for ground beef or roast had potential as higher value products, and we've seen the wholesale value of beef chuck increase by more than 5 percent at a time the value of other cuts didn't change. That's significant. Beef is

big business in Nebraska. From their research came the new flatiron steak, which I hope you've had the opportunity to eat. It's delicious!

The research and cooperative extension work conducted in the College of Education and Human Services – another fine UNL college – is ["]part["] of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. One of our researchers there is turning cornhusks into textiles. He hopes to create a new, higher-value market for Nebraska's leading crop. While there's much more work to be done ["]before["] cornhusk fabric becomes available, the economic potential is impressive. Our country produces about 20 million tons of cornhusks each year, which could produce at least 2 million tons of fibers worth about \$2 billion annually.

These things all happened because somebody wondered, "what else could there be?" and ["]set-out["] to find the answer to that question.

To be a scientist is to be an explorer, a discoverer, to look at something ["]differently["] than those around you see it, to wonder.

Some people think of scientific discoveries as eureka moments, but more often they begin with someone looking at something and thinking, "Hmmm, that's funny..." or "I wonder what would happen if..."

CASNR is a good place for those who wonder.

To be an educator, whether a college professor or an extension educator located throughout Nebraska, is to be the person [']able['] to take the new knowledge gained through research and make it available in college classrooms and laboratories and in out-of-classroom experiences, as well.

For instance, our Cooperative Extension Division is heading a biosecurity training effort to safeguard our state's \$6 billion livestock industry. This program, which includes Kansas and Iowa, is teaching people how to prevent or contain disease outbreaks spread accidentally or through bioterrorism.

That's important to Nebraska.

One of the many wonderful things about being a student in CASNR is the opportunity students have to work side-by-side

with our scientists in their laboratories. Not only do they share in discovery, they gain real-world, solid experience so important to employers. Internships offer "other" opportunities to gain job and life skills. There are opportunities to study abroad, to be part of campus activities, to excel both academically, and as a person.

Because this is my chance to talk about the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources today, I want to tell you a few more of the things I think make it such a terrific place to study and grow. I hear people "worry" sometimes that the university may be too big for them to find "or" "make-a-place" for themselves. Its size "intimidates."

CASNR offers a comfortable-sized, caring community within the greater university community. Some days when I walk across campus or am in the Union, and watch students and faculty greet each other, I think of the theme song of the old TV program "Cheers," which contained the line, "where everybody knows your name..." It's a friendly place.

The 55 students studying in CASNR from Alliance and

Bayard High Schools, from Chadron, Chappell, Cody-Kilgore, Crawford, Garden County, and Gering High Schools, from Gordon and Hay Springs, from Hemingford, Hyannis, Kimball County, Leyton, Lodgepole, Mitchell, Morrill, Mullen, Prairie Baptist Academy, Rushville, Scottsbluff, Sidney, Sioux County, Thedford, and Valentine High Schools, for example, know the interest CASNR professors take in their students. CASNR cares – so much that we have a program *called* CASNR CARES, with CARES standing for Caring Attitudes and Respect for Every Student. It's aimed at helping our students get comfortable on campus. It's dedicated to seeing our students have opportunities to succeed.

It helps with the transition from home and high school to college, to be part of a caring community.

Another community that helps make the transition easier within CASNR is our ACE learning community. Ace stands for Achievement, Commitment, and Excellence. It provides freshmen a chance to get acquainted with classmates with similar interests even before school starts. ACE freshmen live in Burr

Residence Hall, take two leadership and development classes together, participate in community service activities, have regularly scheduled meetings, dine monthly with faculty, and take field trips to places such as the Chicago Board of Trade.

A large university doesn't seem nearly as intimidating when you're surrounded by friends.

We see "developing" leadership-skills and contributing to the larger community as very important in CASNR. Opportunities to "grow those skills and take part in activities that contribute to society and make life worthwhile" are stressed.

Last year the head of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska, or ASUN, was a CASNR student, Kyle Arganbright, from Valentine. This fall his younger brother, Kurt, also a CASNR student, is the only UNL student selected to attend the Republican National Convention as a delegate.

Amy Rasmussen, who studies agricultural education in CASNR, took a "sabbatical" earlier this year to serve as the National FFA Central Region vice president. She has toured

Japan and visited numerous states as part of her duties. Jill Kruger, a CASNR agricultural journalism graduate, was 2002 Homecoming Queen. Our students are engaged in the university community and in the world.

David Schroeder, a CASNR student from West Point, is one of two UNL students to receive U.S. Department of Homeland Security scholarships, awarded to only 100 students nationally. We've had two Fulbright scholars who are CASNR grads in the past few years. We're very proud of them – winning a Fulbright to allow you to study in another country for a year or more is a very big deal. It also speaks well of the quality of a CASNR education.

The quality of that education – and the quality of our graduates – is affirmed, too, at the career fair CASNR holds each year. Company representatives who come to interview our students for both summer internships and full-time jobs speaks very highly of the quality of CASNR students. That's what keeps them coming back each year.

A report last fall showed nearly 39 percent of CASNR students receive scholarships; there were 658 scholarships awarded to CASNR students totaling \$597,212. Students always should "check" to see what scholarship opportunities are available. They can be a "real help" with college costs.

~~Before I end today I'd like to take a couple of minutes to recognize any students here with us. First I'll ask all UNL students to please raise your hands? Do we have any CASNR students with us? We welcome all of you. How about CASNR grads? Other graduates of UNL? It's wonderful to see you.~~

Any time you're in Lincoln I hope you'll come visit us in CASNR, where tremendous opportunities await, and there is always room to grow.

EVERY NEBRASKAN IS A
STUDENT OF
THE UNIVERSITY.