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Advice to Students from Our Alumni: Internships and Extracurricular Activities

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CORNHUSKER ECONOMICS

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University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension

Advice to Students from Our Alumni: Internships and Extracurricular Activities

Market Report	Yr Ago	4 Wks Ago	6/21/13
<u>Livestock and Products,</u>			
<u>Weekly Average</u>			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight.	\$115.67	\$125.32	\$121.50
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb.	167.54	162.57	168.90
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb.	+	142.00	140.35
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass.	197.45	210.47	199.83
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated.	101.68	90.00	100.40
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass, 51-52% Lean.	97.61	93.39	105.85
Slaughter Lambs, Ch. & Pr., Heavy, Wooled, South Dakota, Direct.	137.50	104.75	118.00
National Carcass Lamb Cutout, FOB.	342.71	285.60	285.17
<u>Crops,</u>			
<u>Daily Spot Prices</u>			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu.	6.36	7.03	7.12
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Nebraska City, bu.	6.25	7.02	7.12
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Nebraska City, bu.	14.14	14.61	15.39
Grain Sorghum, No. 2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt.	9.84	12.27	12.09
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, MN, bu.	3.52	3.85	4.20
<u>Feed</u>			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.	207.50	+	+
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.	140.00	225.00	210.00
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Nebraska, ton.	97.50	+	85.00
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture, Nebraska Average.	225.00	220.50	225.00
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture, Nebraska Average.	81.50	90.50	85.00
+ No Market			

During the Spring of 2012, a survey was sent to the alumni of the Department of Agricultural Economics, for the main purpose of collecting information to assist students and aid in student recruitment. We surveyed 2,899 potential alumni and had 789 responses.

At the end of the survey we asked, “What advice would you give our students that wanted to follow your career choice?” Responses were varied, but centered on the following six themes:

- Work Internships
- Develop Leadership Skills by Engaging in Extracurricular Activities
- Develop Communication Skills
- Challenge Yourself in Your Schooling
- Employment Advice

This article will focus on internships and extracurricular activities.

Work Internships

By far, the most common advice offered by our alumni was to “work internships.” The advice from many of the respondents was for students to aggressively pursue internships, to serve as many as possible, in as many fields with as many different types of companies as they can. Alumni expressed internships are an excellent way to gain educational perspective, understand an industry (nomenclature, procedures, skills and techniques), gain a “feel” for the work a graduate would be doing and to assist students in determining where their passions lie. Many respondents felt internships were essential in today’s world and set job applicants apart. In fact, many expressed internships were beneficial enough that students should work for free, if necessary, to get experience in their career of interest; that internships are “cheap tuition” for the benefits gained.

An interesting benefit of internships, as expressed by several respondents, was networking. Most respondents felt networking was so important that they followed the word networking with an exclamation mark! Relationships developed during internships



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were not only valuable in landing the first job for many alumni, but formed associations that remained just as strong and important many years later.

Other internship advice offered was:

- 1) Be flexible on location. Don't be afraid to experience an internship outside the borders of Nebraska.
- 2) Take opportunities for study abroad - an internship with international experience is a bonus.
- 3) Several alumni that returned to the family farm advised students to experience working somewhere before returning to the family operation.
- 4) Interns should take pride in their internship performance.
- 5) You will get out of the internship what you put into it.

Of the respondents that graduated after 2000, 44 percent did not serve an internship, 26 percent served one internship and 29 percent served at least two internships (Figure 1). Internships are becoming increasingly popular; a significantly greater number of internships are utilized by students graduating after 2000, as any time period before. The majority of internships served by respondents graduating after 2000 were located in Nebraska (Figure 1), with only one percent of students serving an internship outside of the United States.

Develop Leadership Skills by Engaging in Extracurricular Activities

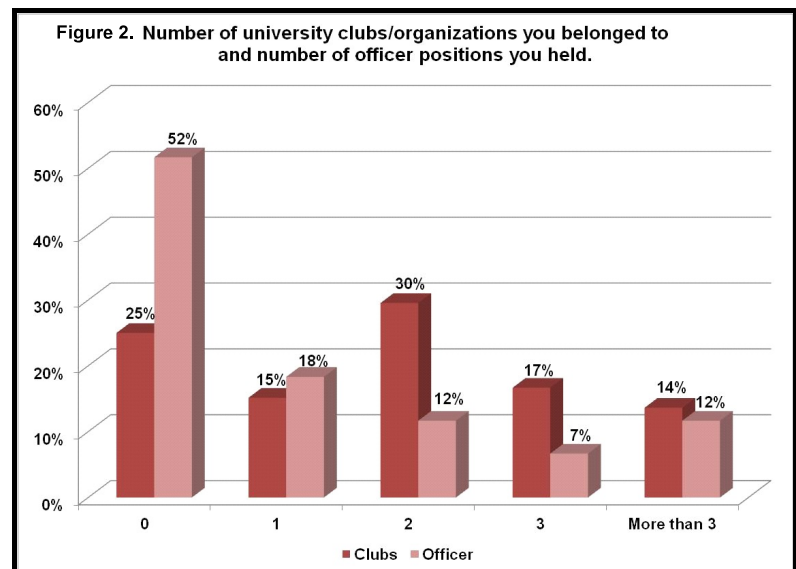
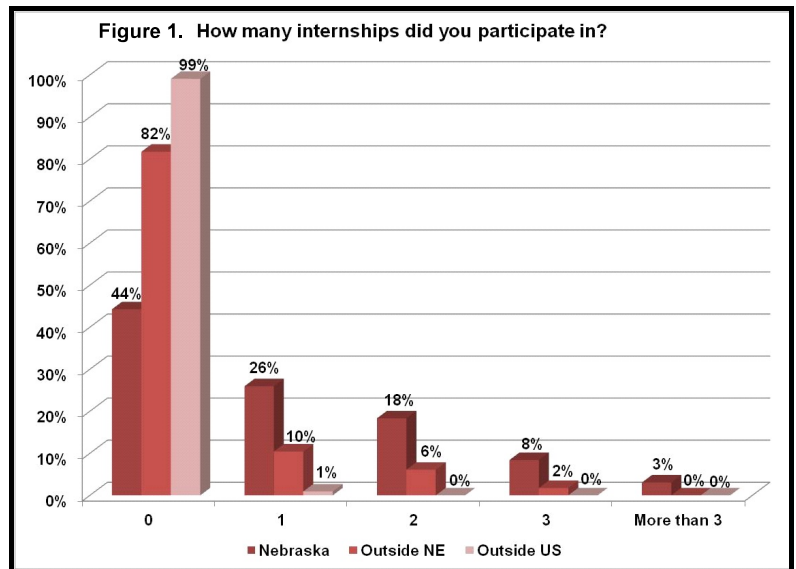
Involvement in clubs and student activities offer students opportunities to socialize, develop leadership abilities, network and establish a lifestyle of service. While caution of over-involvement was expressed by some alumni, most felt students should participate in one or two organizations most relevant to their major and interests. They recommended that students assume leadership roles to develop those qualities and skills, and to demonstrate leadership capacity on resumes. They expressed that the social interaction aided students in being able to relate to and work with different types of people. Many respondents recommended that students network with as many students, professors and industry participants as possible, as those connections will prove valuable for many years in the future. They stated that the involvement was the key, and that you will get out of it what you put into it.

A number of respondents lamented they did not take advantage of campus activities and clubs, but instead chose to spend their time working on their family operations they intended to return to. They felt they forfeited opportunities to network and develop relationships that they could have drawn on throughout their careers. Some were concerned additional professional possibilities may have been overlooked by not participating in student organizations. One individual stated "you can always work more later; enjoy your time at UNL, that time is something special."

Of those graduating since 2000, 75 percent of alumni participated in at least one club or organization, with 14 percent participating in more than three (Figure 2). Fewer than 50 percent of alumni served in a leadership capacity. Nearly all of the respondents that participated in more than three clubs or organizations held leadership positions in three or more of those organizations.

In conclusion, alumni of the Department of Agricultural Economics indicated that pursuing internships and engaging in extracurricular activities can assist students in preparing for future employment by introducing them to career opportunities and helping them develop the talents necessary to succeed in the workplace. One of the greatest benefits, though, comes from the networking that occurs with industry participants, students and faculty through these activities. Those relationships remained strong and proved beneficial throughout their careers.

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