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The Leading Object: July 2008

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Perspectives

In June I had the opportunity to talk with the University of Nebraska Board of Regents about IANR's four research and extension centers.

"The future of the State of Nebraska is closely tied to that of its

only public university..." states the NU strategic planning framework, and I see that reflected so powerfully at our centers. Certainly they and their associated extension districts are tremendous examples of how research and extension are, hand-in-hand, at work for Nebraska.

Center researchers discover new, practical knowledge of benefit to their region and Nebraska. Extension teaches that new knowledge throughout the region and state so Nebraskans can put it to immediate use in their lives.

Extension delivers much valuable education throughout Nebraska, of course — nutrition education, programs for families and childcare providers, 4-H curriculum, leadership education, community development, and so very much more.

For June's presentation I was asked to focus specifically on our research and extension centers. These centers contribute to their region's and our state's economy and quality of life.

Faculty and staff at the centers and in their respective districts are leaders in providing quality education throughout Nebraska, not only in agriculture and natural resources, but also for youth, families, and communities.

Our four research and extension centers and their 83 associated county extension offices serve all 93 Nebraska counties, extending the university campus throughout Nebraska.

Ours is a state of great agricultural, 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.



July 2008

IANR partnership with Chinese university to bring students to Lincoln

Top-notch graduate students from China will be studying at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln as the result of a partnership between the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at UNL and Zhejiang University (ZJU) in China, said Susan Fritz, associate IANR vice chancellor.

Fritz, along with John Owens, NU vice president and Harlan vice chancellor of IANR, Steve Waller, dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, and others spent several days in May in Hangzhou, China, to finalize the partnership.

The partnership came about after David Lou, director of UNL's Office for China Initiatives and Confucius Institute and Ludwickson professor of mechanical engineering, collaborated with UNL and various Chinese educational institutions, Fritz said. Lou and his wife Marjorie, Willa Cather professor in the Department of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences, have courtesy appointments at ZJU.

Lou said he and his wife are ZJU Guangbiew Chair visiting professors, the highest honor it can bestow to any foreign faculty member. The couple has a long and close relationship with ZJU admin-



A recent UNL delegation to China was, from left, David Lou, Marjorie Lou, Susan Fritz, Zhang Mingfang of Zhejiang University, John Owens, Steve Waller, and Yiqi Yang. See related story page 3.

istrators and faculty, he said. More than 20 graduate students from the institution currently are studying at UNL.

ZJU has 39,300 full-time students, including more than 15,000 graduate students, and is one of the largest Ph.D.-granting educational institutions in China.

The agreement signed by Owens and Zhejiang representatives approved a three-plus-one plan, Fritz said. ZJU undergraduates will transfer to UNL after three years and complete their bachelor's work, earning their bachelor's degrees from ZJU. While at UNL they also will be completing a master's degree in a CASNR program.

ZJU is interested in UNL because of its strong programs in agriculture and natural resources, David Lou said.

"ZJU is one of the very top universities in China and has one of the best continued on page 2

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topographical, and environmental diversity. Differences in climate between Lincoln and Scottsbluff are as great as from Lincoln to the East Coast. Our centers are strategically located to meet Nebraska needs.

West Central, the oldest, has served Nebraska for more than 100 years.

Established in 1903 in North Platte to "... determine the adaptability of the arid and semiarid portions of Nebraska to agriculture, horticulture and forest tree growing, such as the production of grain, grasses, root crops and fruits of the kinds commonly grown in such latitudes of other states, also the most economical methods of growing such crops without irrigation."

The center's mission soon expanded to include growing crops with irrigation, and livestock. Today West Central Research and Extension Center is known for its work in beef production systems; cropping systems with limited irrigation; and horticulture focusing on native ornamentals. There are 20 counties in the West Central district.

Our Panhandle Research and Extension Center will celebrate 100 years of service to Nebraska in 2010. It's known for its work with Panhandle crops — dry edible beans and sugarbeets being notable examples; alternative energy crops; and high elevation systems work in crops and livestock. There are 17 counties in the Panhandle district.

How many of you know this center is home to the Knorr-Holden Continuous Corn Plot, the nation's oldest irrigated corn research plot and on the National Register of Historic Places? Or that the 800-acre Experimental Range in Sioux County was deeded to the university in 1918 by President Woodrow Wilson?

Last year a 50th anniversary celebration at Northeast Research and Extension Center's Haskell Agricultural Laboratory near Concord drew more than 500 people, including NU President J.B. Milliken, for a wonderful day.

The Northeast Research and Extension Center, with offices at the Lifelong Learning Center in Norfolk, has 28 counties in its district. This center is known for its work in integrated pest management; environmental impact of livestock production; and organic and sustainable agriculture.

Our Southeast Research and Extension Center, located on UNL's East Campus, has 28 counties in its district. It's the newest of our centers, established in 1967. The rural/urban interface, including acreages and small farms, is one of the unique areas with which this center works. Value-added agriculture, entrepreneurship, crop diagnostics, and irrigation are other strengths.

A handout for the Regents provided further information on some of the great ways our centers and their districts are at work throughout the state, from heat stress management tools to Control Diabetes for Life programs; from the value of the birdseed crop in the Panhandle to the BIT (Business Information Technology) Mobile, helping provide Nebraskans a competitive edge in the information age; from Crop Management and Diagnostic Clinics to Operation Military Kids; from saving water in the Republican River Basin to Nebraska-developed penstemons, and including EDGE (Enhancing, Developing and Growing Entrepreneurs) and the 135,000 youth who took part last year in 4-H programming.

Space and time allowed us to represent only the tip of the iceberg of the work done, but one thing came through loud and clear: Our research and extension centers and their respective extension districts are *grand examples* of how IANR is at work for Nebraska.



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

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Ratcliffe's beetle discovery honored

A new species of rhinoceros beetle discovered by Brett Ratcliffe, entomology professor, has been selected by the International Institute for Species Exploration at Arizona State University as one of the top 10 species named in 2007.

Rhinoceros beetles are named for the horn-like structures on their heads, Ratcliffe said. This particular beetle, named the *Megaceras briansaltini*, is unique because it closely resembles that of Dim, the blue rhinoceros beetle in the Disney/Pixar film "A Bug's Life," he said.

An international committee made the selection of the top 10 from thousands of species discovered in 2007.

IANR partnership with Chinese university to bring students to Lincoln

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agriculture programs," Lou said. "It is therefore just natural for us to seek out to expand our relationship with ZJU in agriculture and natural resources."

Top ZJU students will be referred to UNL, although the decision to admit them rests with the graduate committees, Fritz said.

The visit to China follows a visit to CASNR this spring by ZJU Vice President Jun Zhu and his assistant, Weijun Zhou.

IANR's goal is for some of these students to decide to stay at UNL to pursue a doctoral program, Fritz said. In addition, the partnership opens opportunities for UNL to work on joint research projects with ZJU faculty.

— 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.

Knobel credits education with enhancing his career

Ralph Knobel didn't plan to graduate when he enrolled in the College of Agriculture at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. He just wanted to take a few classes to use up a \$100 scholarship.

More than half a century later, Knobel says he doesn't know where he would be today had he not graduated with a degree in general agriculture.

"It was such a terrific experience," he said.

Knobel, who started Knobel Farms Inc. in Fairbury, says his university experience not only gave him a career but also some of his best friends — and his wife.

Knobel, 74, was raised on a farm near Fairbury, where he attended a one-room schoolhouse and had the same teacher for five years. He was active in FFA, becoming state president while in high school.

"No one in my family had ever gone to college," he said. "I had a \$100 Union Pacific scholarship and I wasn't going to give up that \$100."

He figured he would take a few classes to use up the scholarship money then return to the family farm. That changed when he got to college.

"One of the most impressive things was the interest the individual instructors gave you," he said. "I had tremendous instructors who were interested in what you planned to do and how you planned to get there."

While in college, Knobel joined Farm-House Fraternity where Clayton Yeutter was

the president. The future U.S. secretary of agriculture became one of Knobel's closest friends and remains so to this day, he said.

He also met Martha Heuermann, a home economics major whom he married the day before they graduated on June 13, 1955.

In addition, two hours before his graduation ceremony Knobel was commissioned into the Army.

Knobel served two years in the Army, working in the Chicago area. He and Martha then moved back to Nebraska and lived on a 160-acre farm 10 miles north of Fairbury.

The Knobels have three children, Mark, Gwen, and Todd, all of whom are UNL graduates. Like their father, all were selected for the Innocents Society — a rare achievement for one family.

Mark Knobel worked with his father in 1980 to start Knobel Seeds, a division of the corporation. Ralph Knobel is quick to play down his own role in starting the company, saying, "Knobel Seeds is what it is today not because of me but because of my son."

Mark Knobel currently is chief executive officer of Knobel Farms Inc. and Knobel Seeds, which produces soybean and wheat seed for farmers and co-ops. They also merchandise most all other seeds for crops grown in Nebraska. Ralph Knobel continues to serve as chairman of the board in addition to his many outside activities.

He has served as chair of the Nebraska Republican Party and has been a delegate to

six national conventions. He was on the Republican primary ticket for governor in 1994 and after that was a public speaker for many years.

Knobel was president of the foundation that saved the 1923 high school building in Fairbury from destruction and converted it to senior apartments. It was a \$3.5 million project that raised an additional \$315,000 to support an annual scholarship program for four Fairbury High School students, renewable for up to four years.

He chaired the National Energy Extension Service Advisory Board for 10 years in the 1970s and 1980s, a position that frequently took him to Washington, D.C. He recently completed two three-year terms on the Agriculture Builders of Nebraska board of directors.

"Going to the ag college opened my eyes to the opportunities and the realization of what a great institution the university is," Knobel said. "My educational experience at the University of Nebraska is certainly among the greatest blessings I've had."

— Lori McGinnis



Ralph Knobel

Lou receives honorary professorship from Chinese university

Marjorie Lou, IANR veterinary and biomedical sciences professor, has received an honorary professorship from Xi'an Jiaotong University in Xi'an, China.

Lou's research focuses on the biochemical mechanism of human cataract formation. She has been at UNL since 1994 and holds a Willa Cather professorship honoring distinguished scholarship and creative activity. Her degrees are in agricultural chemistry from National Taiwan University, and in biochemistry from Virginia Tech and Boston University.

Lou's husband, David Lou, a mechanical engineering professor and director of UNL's Confucius Institute, has been involved with many Chinese educational institutions, including Xi'an Jiaotong University. Marjorie Lou said Xi'an officials decided to honor her after they invited her

to give a seminar a year ago and saw her credentials.

Lou received the award May 27 and was lecturing to students, faculty, surgeons, and others when she noticed people talking in the back of the room. She later found they were receiving text messages that an aftershock of the May 12 earthquake at Sichuan Province was occurring at the time in Xi'an. She noted her audience was too polite to run for cover, but that no one was hurt in Xi'an from the aftershock. Lou later volunteered to care for hospitalized Sichuan earthquake victims at another city, as she can speak the Sichuan dialect.

Lou said she is honored by Xi'an's honorary professorship, as several Nobel Prize Laureates also received the same professorship.

Xi'an is famous for its ancient silk-road trade and was the capital for 13 emperors,



Veterinary and biomedical sciences professor Marjorie Lou receives an honorary professorship from Xi'an Jiaotong University this spring. Her husband David Lou received the same professorship last year.

Lou said. The flagship Xi'an Jiaotong University is a partner for UNL's Confucius Institute, along with many other educational programs.

— Cheryl Alberts

Biochemistry professor receives Maxcy Professorship

Donald Weeks, professor of biochemistry, has received the Maxcy Professorship of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The professorship is made possible through the amendment of an agreement associated with a gift from R. Burt and Dorothy W. Maxcy to the University of Nebraska Foundation which opened it to all IANR faculty. Stephen Taylor, former head of the Department of Food Science and Technology, was the first recipient in 1991.

Burt Maxcy, a former food science and technology faculty member and active campus citizen, was a faculty senator who received the Academic Freedom Award from UNL in 1984.

The professorship is awarded for teaching and research ability, accomplishments, and academic promise.



Donald Weeks

Several faculty receive national recognitions

Several IANR faculty recently received national recognition:

- Joan Krush, biochemistry advisor, National Academic Advising Association Outstanding New Advisor Award winner in the primary role category.
- Martha Mamo, associate professor in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, 2008 North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Teacher Fellow Award.
- Larkin Powell, associate professor in the School of Natural Resources, approved for a Fulbright award for an 11-month sabbatical in Namibia during 2009.
- John Rupnow, professor in the Department of Food Science and Technology, selected as a Fellow of the Institute of Food Technologists.
- Walt Stroup, professor in the Department of Statistics, selected a Fellow of the American Statistical Association.
- Richard Waldren, professor in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, 2008 North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Central Regional Outstanding Teaching Award.
- Anne Vidaver, professor of plant pathology, American Society of Microbiology Founders Distinguished Service Award, and the first plant science recipient.

Corn, wheat boards partner with IANR to benefit agriculture

Ongoing partnerships by the Nebraska Wheat Board and Nebraska Corn Board with the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources has benefited Nebraska agriculture for decades and continues to do so.

Funded through check-off dollars, the commodity boards over the decades have given hundreds of thousands of dollars to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln to support corn and wheat research.

Two recent examples are increased use of distillers grains in cattle feed and increasing acceptance of hard white wheat by growers, millers, bakers, and consumers.

Distillers grains now represent up to 30 percent to 40 percent of the Nebraska cattle diet, compared to only 5 percent to 10 percent four to five years ago, said Kelly Brunkhorst, the corn board's ag program manager.

The board recently approved \$125,000 for continued IANR distillers grains research, with an additional \$300,000 provided for other IANR corn research.

Animal scientist Terry Klopfenstein said corn board dollars have contributed to his distillers grains research since the 1980s.

"It would be very difficult to do it without (corn board funding)," Klopfenstein said. "It has been a very important factor. The corn board has been very instrumental in moving this research along."

Brunkhorst said the corn board sees high value in its work with UNL.

"It's an opportunity for us to partner with researchers and get a good foundation of information out," he said.

IANR research is estimated to have half a billion dollar cumulative benefit to the state by feeding distillers grains by-products wet instead of dry.

The Nebraska Wheat Board recently approved funding UNL research by nearly \$375,000, said executive director Royce Schaneman.

"The university is so important to wheat board research," Schaneman said.

One wheat board priority is white wheat development, which is slowly gaining acceptance among Nebraska's wheat producers. The board has been working with the UNL Department of Food Science and Technology to research white wheat use. Schaneman said food manufacturers now can make a whole wheat bread that tastes sweeter and maintains the white color many people prefer, which means a white bread can have all the nutritional value of whole wheat.

Currently about 2 percent of Nebraska's wheat acres grow white wheat, but "it's being used more all the time," he said, adding biotechnology is another area supported by the wheat board.

"The wheat industry in this state owes a lot to the university," Schaneman said. "The researchers have been so valuable. I don't think you could put a price tag on the value of the research."

IANR research for improved wheat varieties is estimated to add roughly \$80 million annually for Nebraska producers, based on increased yield on the same number of acres as in the 1960s, and strong 2007-08 prices.

— Lori McGinnis