

2006

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Fall Conference

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Owens, John, "University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Fall Conference" (2006). *John Owens: Speeches & Appearances*. 129.
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**University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Fall Conference
Kearney, Nebraska
October 17, 2006
John C. Owens
NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor**

First off, thank you.

Thank you for the work you do each day on behalf of the University and for Nebraska. Thank you for the expertise and ~~THE~~ passion you bring to your work, for the "belief" you have in it, and for the "dedication" you show.

You may have heard me say this before – if you have, you're going to hear me say it again: I think extension is the best system ever yet devised outside the formal classroom for providing people practical education they immediately can put to use in their lives. We provide knowledge based on university research that seeks answers to people's very real concerns.

To me, those of us in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources have some of the most exciting jobs around because this is the work we do. We are Nebraska's land-grant university

food, and water, and sustainable-environment people. We're the youth and family folks. We're 4-H, reaching 118,000 Nebraska youth yearly. We deal with the very basics of life – the basics none of us can live without. Food. Water. People. What could be more exhilarating than that?

Thank you for the commitment you show each day to making extension work for Nebraska.

Thank you, also, for the work you do in student recruitment, in apprising students of the wonderful opportunities that await them at Nebraska's land-grant university. I've been asked to talk "a bit today" about extension's role in recruiting, and I can cover it in three words: You are vital.

Now – let me add quickly that while I *can* cover extension's role in recruiting in three words, I'm going to say much more than that!

I'm going to say "student recruitment" is in the enlightened self-interest of everyone in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, including extension. Why?

Because the tide that raises one boat raises all boats. When we have strong enrollments, we have tuition dollars that help cover university budget costs. When we do not have strong enrollments, people may look elsewhere ^{To allocate already SCARCE} ~~to allocate~~ dollars.

Research, teaching, and extension education are "intertwined" in the Institute, and we rise and fall together. Student recruitment is important to you, and it's important to me.

For that and many other reasons, I'm truly delighted to tell you today that "recruiting-efforts" are paying off in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and the College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and in the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis.

That's good news for all of us, and for the students studying with us, as well. We provide a tremendous-education for students, an education that leads to lucrative, fulfilling careers. We send out into the world "graduates" who work hard and make great contributions in a wide variety of fields, graduates whose

college classes and professors showed them the importance of being contributing members of society. The world needs that, and we all are a part of it.

It is a very real pleasure to tell you that this fall, for the second year in a row, our College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources' undergraduate enrollment increased. It's up 3.1 percent, to 1,303 students. University of Nebraska-Lincoln undergraduate enrollment increased 2 percent.

Graduate student enrollment in CASNR also is up, to 494 enrolled graduate students.

When Dean Steve Waller talks about the progress CASNR is making in recruitment, he notes that without the diversification of the CASNR portfolio – new courses and new majors to attract diverse students – CASNR's enrollment would not be increasing. The Professional Golf Management program has made a significant difference in positioning CASNR as a growing college; Professional Golf Management now is one of CASNR's top five degree programs, with 97 students.

This year CASNR's incoming class was smaller than last year's, and Dean Waller notes the increased total enrollment is a reflection of the importance of the college's student-retention-programs. CASNR had more continuing students this fall than they had last year, which made the difference for them in increased enrollments. Recruitment and retention both are key.

Dean Waller also cites the success of increased collaborations with stakeholders as paying recruitment-dividends. While he says it's happening across many academic programs, it clearly is noticed in Animal Science, where the Nebraska Cattlemen and the Agriculture Builders of Nebraska have provided assistance.

College of Education and Human Sciences undergraduate enrollment also gained for a second year, rising to 2,476 students, a 4 percent increase. CEHS graduate and professional enrollment also saw a 4 percent increase, to 956 students.

Dean Marjorie Kostelnik in CEHS notes that college is moving forward at both graduate-and-undergraduate levels.

They're studying their capacity in each department to give themselves a guide as to how to target their recruitment efforts more effectively. I'm sure we'll all hear more on that as that work progresses, and I'm looking forward to it.

We've seen increases in Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture enrollment for the past several years, with enrollment this year rising to 272 students. I think the maximum capacity on the NCTA campus is around 350 students, but because NCTA has a statewide mission, it could reach hundreds more students across Nebraska and beyond through both on-site instruction at Nebraska locations and through distance education.

NCTA is looking at several new initiatives for the future, including infusion of entrepreneurship principles throughout the NCTA curriculum, development of an Entrepreneurship Center, development of new certificate programs for traditional and non-traditional students, and new capital facilities.

To all in this room who have committed to seeing student numbers in these colleges grow and who have contributed to

these increases – thank you. Keep up the good work. There is still much more to do.

I certainly hear good things about the work you're doing in this area. About the pizza and cookies party at the 4-H Horse Show this summer that several of you participated in, along with Dean Waller and members of the Animal Science Department. I understand more than 50 youth and their parents attended the event, and more than half of the youth returned cards asking for more information.

I know you're making referrals for interested students, and that some of you have taken advantage of your CASNR-facilitated-ability to award scholarships to incoming freshmen and transfer students. For freshmen, the student must have a 26 ACT or above, and be enrolling in a CASNR major. For transfer students, the student must have a 3.5 GPA and complete their associate's degree, and be enrolled in a CASNR major.

I hear about the students some of you bring to campus to visit, about your work at State Fair helping staff recruitment

booths, about a district recruitment newsletter, and the way you incorporate recruitment into events you host, such as at youth field days when you invite our college staff to speak, or hand out recruitment materials, or set up displays.

You're doing good and creative things to bring the students in your communities and the university together, and that helps us all. I applaud your efforts. And I look forward with great anticipation to hearing and seeing the innovative ideas - and results - you come up with in the next year!

We often say Nebraska Extension is the front door to the university. I appreciate the way you open that door and invite people in. You already may know that I am a person absolutely convinced that land-grant universities out of touch with their constituents are land-grant universities headed toward a meaningless existence. Land-grant universities that have lost connections with their constituents, who do not work in partnership with those constituents and listen to what they say, are land-grant universities that have lost their way.

"Happily that is not the case here in our state, where we think of ourselves as partners with Nebraska, and act accordingly. It is a land-grant university's mission to take the resources of the university to the citizens of the state, and you are on the "front lines" of that work. We rely on you to be in touch with and listen to your constituents' and your communities' needs and concerns. We rely on you to relay those needs and concerns "to us" throughout the Institute and the University so we can listen" and respond accordingly.

We look to UNL Extension as it works throughout Nebraska, both on campus and off, to be constantly scanning the horizon for Nebraska's and Nebraskans' future needs, so that research can begin "today" to answer the questions of tomorrow. We rely on you to help us identify those new audiences we must work with if we truly are to carry out our land-grant university mission.

I've had people ask me if I think land-grant universities are as needed today as they were when they were first began. I've had people ask me the same question about UNL Extension.

Here's my answer:

I think land-grant universities are even more needed today. I think extension education is more needed than ever. The world grows increasingly complex. The need for research and education grows, and it grows at ever-increasing speed. There is a huge-need to be able to accept change and to deal with ambiguity. We must be able to do so, and we must help our constituents do so, as well. I'm sure the fact that each of us likely can provide numerous examples of extension educators and specialists serving as successful change catalysts is no surprise to anyone in this room! Certainly we must be adept at helping people deal with change, for the importance of that life skill is continually emphasized in today's world, where the pace of change continually-escalates.

We always must be engaged with the public, maintaining our credibility and validity. We always must build and continually maintain our local connections - with county commissioners and supervisors, with state leaders, with commodity groups, with businesses, and each of you can add other groups to this list.

This is our job: To provide Nebraskans Extension education they can put to use in their lives. Extension education that makes a difference.

Thank you for the zeal – and the grace – with which you do that every day.

Thank you.