Recognizing Nebraska Ag Leaders
By Ron Rosati, NCTA Dean

We have been fortunate in Nebraska to have outstanding individuals represent us in state, national and international leadership capacities over the decades and most recently to recognize a trio of leaders for their service to Nebraska agriculture.

It is fitting here at year-end to applaud Dr. Clayton Yeutter, U.S. Senator Mike Johanns and Governor Dave Heineman for their dedicated public service.

Each has contributed to the University of Nebraska – Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture with their vision and guidance in education and public policy issues.

Many of your know well Dawson County native Dr. Clayton Yeutter, as a youth leader in 4-H and then as a student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. When he stepped into roles as U.S. Trade Representative and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture in the 1980s-1990s, we were proud to have a Nebraskan at the helm as the future of American trade and our agricultural exports were being negotiated in crucial trade agreements.

Now, in his 85th year, Dr. Yeutter continues as an articulate, affable and experienced statesman and consular. He and Sen. Johanns were recognized this fall as statues were unveiled on UNL’s East Campus of four Nebraskans who served in the role of U.S. Agriculture Secretary.

And, last month, many enjoyed hearing his commentary at the Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting when he was awarded the group’s highest honor, the Silver Eagle. For decades, he has taken his Nebraska education and values around the globe. That night in Kearney, he was “home” among many, many friends and agricultural leaders.

That was a treat to witness this truly great Nebraskan, a farm kid from the country, remain true to his roots. As he continues another year in international law and consulting from his Washington, D.C. office, we salute his tenacity and vision for helping students in 4-H clubs and small colleges like NCTA to aim high, to attain all they can for purposes of rural economic development and global food production.

Another great role model we salute is Mike Johanns, who like Clayton Yeutter, grew up in the country milking cows and working on his family farm. Albeit a start in Iowa, the rural roots for Mike Johanns laid the foundation for his life in public service, in law, as county commissioner in Lancaster County, City of Lincoln mayor, Nebraska governor before being named U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and most recently completing six years as Nebraska’s senator.

We have been honored to have Sen. Johanns on our campus several times, meeting with our students and faculty. He has paid attention to our growth, the commitment by faculty and staff to NCTA students, and
shared in our vision for expanding technical opportunities. As he ends his career as one of our U.S. senators, we appreciate his leadership and ability to navigate Nebraskans through federal obstacles and global agricultural policy challenges.

Our tribute includes thanks to those who have served with Sen. Johanns in public service as staff and policy advisors in his state and federal roles. We have worked closely with these key individuals over the years and look forward to continued opportunities with them in the future, or to wish them well for retirement.

Perhaps Mr. Johanns and Stephanie will have a chance to travel the state and stop by again sometime in 2015. Our door is always open and we’d love to see them on campus again.

That invitation always stands as well, certainly, for Governor Dave Heineman and First Lady Sally Ganem. NCTA has appreciated the enthusiasm they have shared for education across the state and students everywhere.

When Governor Heineman was on campus in September for the dedication of the NCTA-Reinke Irrigation Technician program, he noted the importance of job preparedness and how technical training equips the student for immediate employment.

The Governor has long been a leader for rural development, international trade and agricultural education opportunities. I thank him for including NCTA in that dialog of how technical training programs are key to Nebraska’s agricultural industries.

As Governor Heineman concludes his term of leading Nebraskans in our state government, we extend a sincere thank you for his service. We know his leadership will continue with Nebraska education and agricultural progress at the forefront.

From NCTA to these great agricultural leaders, we say thank you! To our readers, Happy New Year for a prosperous 2015!

*     *     *     *     *

NCTA Mission:
The Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is devoted to a statewide mission of preparing students for successful careers in agriculture, veterinary technology, food and related industries. The college provides open access to innovative technical education resulting in associate degrees, certificates, diplomas and other credentials.

*              *              *