

September 6, 2016  
Dean's Column by Ron Rosati, PhD

### **True at NCTA: Learning by Doing**

A hallmark of our teaching methods at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is student involvement in experiential learning.

Aggies students are fully engaged in classroom activities, laboratory activities and a unique and extensive array of supportive activities we call "academic enrichment activities". These activities are designed to help us maximize student learning by keeping our students motivated and focused on the skills and knowledge needed for them to be successful.

For example, to develop their equitation skills and leadership skills, rodeo athletes from our Aggie Rodeo team participated in a Collegiate Rodeo Showcase on Monday at the Nebraska State Fair. Interaction with high schools students was a highlight during the event competitions.

Agricultural Education majors from NCTA worked with livestock exhibitors in the 4-H and FFA shows at State Fair in Grand Island, as well.

Their team coaches and instructors created the experience as a fun, interactive learning opportunity in community service and leadership enrichment.

Learning by doing is not new to NCTA. We've been applying a pragmatic approach long before NCTA became a college in 1965.

Back to the early 1900s when NCTA was a residential high school, the institution helped students learn the most modern techniques for producing crops and livestock. Much of the meat, milk and vegetables produced on the campus farm found a market in the campus dining hall. The high school also helped young women from Western Nebraska receive training in leadership, teaching and home economics.

Each student gained expertise to take back home to the farm or ranch, and to their home community with the goal of improving their life in Nebraska's rural settings.

In the late 1800s, an educator and philosopher named John Dewey became the foremost thought leader in experiential learning – coining the phrase "learning by doing". A pragmatist, Dewey touted the importance of academic engagement and an enriched, quality experience for education through hands on learning.

Today, our students at NCTA are extremely engaged in a "learning by doing" atmosphere.

Veterinary technology students gain expertise with hands-on work in x-rays, drawing blood, surgery assistance, feeding animals, providing animal exercise and facilities management. Not a day goes by that a veterinary technician student is not engaged in broadening their experience and skill.

Likewise, across the campus in agronomy, agricultural mechanics, animal science, equine science, agribusiness management, horticulture, irrigation technology, and many student groups, the students are learning by doing.

Woven into the classroom and field laboratory curriculum, students become involved in additional learning opportunities on campus such as livestock judging, agribusiness management activities, ranch horse and rodeo teams, shooting sports and stock dog club, and crops judging.

Student clubs range from Business Club, and Collegiate Cattlemen, to Student Senate and Collegiate Farm Bureau. Many opportunities engage students so that they are personally invested in the successful outcome of their learning and campus experience.

I am proud of these students who have become deeply invested early on during these first few weeks of their college career. Their careers will flourish as each student plays a key role in this important aspect of their educational process and the greater good of their campus community.

For more information about NCTA's student opportunities, see [ncta.unl.edu](http://ncta.unl.edu) or phone 1-800-3-CURTIS for details.

**Upcoming Events:**

Sept. 10 – Stock Dog Club working dog trials, LTC arena  
Sept. 8 – Intramural Flag Football  
Sept. 9-11 – NCTA Aggie Rodeo at River Falls, Wisconsin  
Sept. 9-11 – NCTA Ranch Horse Team, Briggsdale, Colorado  
Sept. 10-11 – NCTA Livestock Judging Team, Missouri State Fair  
Sept. 13-15 – NCTA Outreach, Husker Harvest Days, Grand Island  
Sept. 15 – Intramural Flag Football

***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.*

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Dean's Column.09.06.16