



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

Jan. 9, 2023

Innovation and Tradition

by Brad Ramsdale, Associate Professor of Agronomy

The Agricultural Production Systems major at NCTA prepares students for their future careers as farmers, ranchers, and employees in the wide variety of supporting industries. Our mission statement is the following: "Agricultural Productions Systems is dedicated to embracing innovation and respecting tradition in development of individuals for the agronomy, ag equipment, equine, and livestock industries. Graduates of this major gain technical knowledge and skills for lifelong learning that are critical for successful careers in agriculture."

Embracing innovation is a key component for any successful agricultural operation in today's rapidly changing world. I've had the privilege of teaching our curriculum in agronomy, and since arriving in 2007 that curriculum has constantly evolved. Precision agriculture has transitioned from a new idea to now being the norm for many farmers. We have some amazing tools for precise seed, chemical, and water placement. Tools that have greatly increased our understanding of our fields and crops, achieving great productivity and sustainability of our resources.

I'm very grateful for all the industry support provided to facilitate these learning experiences for our agronomy students. Many crop input providers, too many to name, have donated seed, fertilizers, herbicides, etc. in support of student led crop projects on the college farm. Alumni and industry have played a key role making sure that our agronomy program at NCTA includes the latest technology available. Support also continues with a growing number of learning experiences in partnership with the West Central Research and Extension Center, such as student participation in the TAPS irrigated corn competitions and wheat projects at the Stumpf International Wheat Center.

Innovation also includes decision making. Over the last 15 years a very strong movement of "regenerative agriculture" has occurred. Increased efforts to regenerate our soils to a quality or health that was present before crop production by adapting no-till, diverse crop rotations, and the integration of cover crops and more crop grazing. The college's farm has been converted to 100% no-till since 2014 when our last replacement of furrow irrigation with a center-pivot occurred. Moving forward, we have targeted several fields on the college farm that will aggressively integrate cover crops and grazing. This will be an exciting new educational piece for both myself and our students at NCTA as we evaluate the economic sustainability of these regenerative efforts.

"Respecting tradition" is the other part of our mission in Ag Production Systems. Tradition represents the heart and soul of agriculture and rural America. Within farming and ranching and rural communities lies a strong camaraderie and a strong support system of family, friends, and neighbors. During the droughts of 2012 and 2022, the floods of 2019, and the wildfires the last 2 years this tradition was there; neighbor helping neighbor and community helping community. One of our General Education Outcomes at NCTA is Civic Engagement. Our college places great value on preparing our students to be active and supportive members of their community.

NCTA Events:

Jan. 9: Classes Begin Spring 2023 Term

Jan. 18: Host District 11 FFA LDE

Jan. 19: Connect-the-Dots at Kearney

Jan. 24-26: Recruit @ Colorado Farm Show Greeley

Jan. 26: Host Sorghum Symposium Event

Part of the University of Nebraska system, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is a two-year institution with a statewide mission of preparing students for successful careers in agriculture, veterinary technology and related industries. NCTA is known for its affordable tuition, high job-placement rate for its graduates, and for the success of student teams in competitive activities including crops judging, ranch horse events, livestock judging, shotgun sports, stock dog trials, and intercollegiate rodeo. The college is consistently ranked as one of the best two-year schools in the nation.

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