



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

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Ag Teachers in High Demand

By Dean Larry Gossen, Ph.D.

It's hard to believe we are already in the last week of July! I'm not sure where the summer has gone. As we near the end of the summer here at NCTA, I take a moment to reflect on some of the events we have hosted on campus.

June was a very busy month for hosting various camps, field days, 4-H events, and meetings. One event that holds a special place in my heart was our third annual Agricultural Education Bootcamp. With my early career as a high school ag teacher/FFA advisor, I understand the importance of continuing education and professional development for ag teachers.

The week of June 26-29, NCTA hosted ten teachers from three states (one teacher flew all the way from North Carolina!), taking courses from NCTA instructors in a variety of subjects from Advanced Welding and Agronomy to Equine Management and Vet Tech. Thanks to our instructors, Dr. Doug Smith, Mary Rittenhouse, Dan Stehlik, Joanna Hergenreder, Dr. Brad Ramsdale, Judy Cole, and Chad Schimmels (Eustis-Farnam Agriculture instructor/NCTA Temporary Lecturer).

When asked what aspects of the bootcamp were most valuable to them, one teacher responded. "EVERY ASPECT!!! Enjoyed the hands-on labs and experiences, teaching, and the availability of resources. Experienced classroom techniques that I was unaware of and learned better options for classroom management. Learned how to better support and represent my FFA chapter to show the value of teaching Ag. Made connections with Ag teachers across the country to help view different areas of Ag and share resources."

This single comment sums up what we try to accomplish with this bootcamp. Our goal is to support teachers in the classroom to help make them more effective educators. We also want to make sure these instructors know what opportunities are available for their students to further their education in the field of agriculture or veterinary technology.

A second opportunity to bring teachers to campus was with the Tri-State Delta conference held July 10-14. NCTA hosted 34 instructors from Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska, five of whom were NCTA alums now teaching Ag Ed. Six facilitators and two trainers were also on campus. One of the trainers was NCTA alumnus Randy Vlasin from Hayes Center.

Having the opportunity to engage with these 42 instructors gave additional exposure of NCTA and our programs to even more teachers.

Agricultural education is even more critical today than it ever has been. As our population continues to be increasingly removed from agriculture, they are less informed about where their food comes from. We need to be training more agriculturally literate consumers and advocates. Agriculture is the backbone of the Nebraska economy.

Agricultural Education programs are currently in 80 percent of all Nebraska high schools, and more are added yearly. This growth has resulted in a huge demand for agriculture teachers. NCTA is committed to doing our part to train and prepare the next crop of teachers.

Future teachers can start their Ag Ed career here at NCTA and then complete their degree and teaching certificate at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln through an articulation agreement that is seamless. Our students receive the technical agriculture knowledge and skills necessary to make them effective classroom teachers.

With open enrollment, there is still time for students to enroll in courses for the fall semester. Check out what we have to offer at www.ncta.unl.edu or call 1-800-3 CURTIS.

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 student teams' success 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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