



# NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

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## **Building Stairs to Success**

By Associate Professor Mary Rittenhouse

Ag Hall, which houses the NCTA Agribusiness program is known for an ambitious set of stairs to climb, symbolic of the challenge presented to the students to succeed in today's dynamic and challenging economy. The Ag Business courses offered on the top of these stairs help students be successful economic and business decision makers in their chosen careers. And the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is excited to announce that a new tool has been added to help with our students succeed in their educational and career choices. This new option combines two years of study at NCTA with two years of studies at UNK for a bachelor's degree in Business.

Called a 2 + 2 Transfer Pathway, it was designed by Bree Dority, Associate Dean and Professor of UNK Business and Technology and Mary Rittenhouse, Head of the NCTA Agribusiness Management Systems. The pathway agreement developed from discussions by NCTA and UNK faculty and administration over the past few years to further strengthen the partnership between the two campuses. Similar to 2 + 2 agreements with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, students can maximize their enrollment at NCTA and reduce their time to obtain a bachelor's degree at UNK by utilizing this additional step to increase their success.

The uniqueness of this pathway agreement is that it is not just for students who entered NCTA planning on transferring to a four-year institution. A degree of flexibility was incorporated into this program. As a "seasoned" faculty with the University of Nebraska system, having taught for more than 20 years, at UNK and at NCTA, both Dority and Rittenhouse has found that it is not unusual for a student to begin their college experience planning only for a two-year degree. But the thought of four more years of "schooling" is overwhelming. However, once experiencing the small campus and available interaction with the faculty students begin to realize that they can reach outside their comfort zone and reach for more. This is where the partnership with UNK provides an opportunity for students to change their plans and transfer without a loss of completed classes.

And it adds flexibility because it is not just agribusiness. Students can use the two years at NCTA to explore other areas of interest such as marketing, management, finance, accounting, and supply chain management. All these options address labor demand in a dynamic and ever-increasing workforce.

Students can transfer to seven areas of business administration. On campus and online options are available.

For many students, NCTA was chosen because it is a small campus and students work *with* faculty to help them through applied educational activities. Students attend NCTA because they like the small campus and the rural atmosphere of Curtis. The close interaction and hands-on environment allow students to, not only develop skills needed in today's agricultural industry, but life skills cultivating their communication, decision making, and critical thinking skills.

Students who had entered NCTA with no thought of continuing their education find a new level confidence in their abilities. But transferring to a large urban college remains intimidating. Having this option to continue their educational path at UNK is more appealing to our students from rural backgrounds. UNK also offers a smaller campus with quality academics that is combined with hands-on learning experiences. NCTA Aggie students who began college with a two-year degree plan can move into a four-year degree program seamlessly. This removes barriers of transferability once experienced with classes.

The 2+2 Pathway agreement between NCTA and UNK gives students an opportunity to explore, choose, plan, and complete their career goals efficiently and affordably. This program, in addition to helping students with smaller campuses and hands-on experiences, streamlines the path to step outside of comfort zone and expand their opportunities.

Another step has been provided to help students succeed.

**NCTA Events:**

Dec. 16-Jan. 8: Holiday Break for students

Dec. 23-Jan. 2: Holiday Offices closed

*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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