



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

Jan. 12, 2021

Starting anew in 2021

NCTA Dean's Message by Larry Gossen, Ph.D.

Welcome to NCTA's Spring Semester, and an active college campus again.

It certainly was quiet around town and desolate on campus while Aggie students were home for holiday break.

We welcomed them back to Curtis and the Nebraska College Technical Agriculture with a continued emphasis on health and safety. Over the holidays, I had notified students that their very first test of the new semester would be one taken outside of their academic coursework.

Instead, a simple test was to be a health screening for COVID-19 so that we could ensure the campus would be COVID-free at the start of the semester and new year.

On Sunday afternoon (Jan. 10) and Monday, we asked each individual of our NCTA campus community to get screened. It took more time and effort for a person to park their vehicle or walk into the Student Union on campus than it did to provide the saliva-based test.

Basically, all one had to do was spit a small sample of saliva into a straw. Hopefully, they found this screening much more "user friendly" and less invasive than a nasal swab.

I appreciate everyone's cooperation. The staff, instructors and teaching faculty, students and the two administrators all took the test. (Individuals who had tested positive for COVID-19 within a 90-day timeframe prior were not required to be screened).

Samples drawn Jan. 10-11 went to Lincoln to the Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Laboratory at the East Campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Results were then sent electronically to the individual.

Logistics of this screening were coordinated by the Dean's Office, primarily by Jennifer McConville and Josi Arnold, with guidance by colleagues at UNL. Our counterparts at the much-larger NU campus in Lincoln will administer the same procedures this week for employees, and then beginning next week for students before the UNL semester resumes on Jan. 25.

The screening will be conducted again a second time this week, on Thursday or Friday. Individuals register online through a web site or application on their cell phone or other device. Pre-registration speeds up the process and later provides a digital confirmation whether the test result is negative or positive.

Screening and COVID status

A huge THANK YOU to everyone for working with us so diligently the last few days to get everyone on campus tested. The Dean's Office conducts all follow-up tests of our students who have traveled off campus for contests (such as the Livestock Judging Team which tests before and after travel).

Special thanks to Jennifer and Josi, but also to everyone else who has helped with testing and registration – Jeremy Sievers, Mary Rittenhouse, Rulon Taylor, Andela Taylor, Macy Zentner and Cindy Fritsche.

NCTA is also communicating and coordinating with the Southwest Public Health Department based in McCook as they oversee reports and contact tracing in Frontier County and elsewhere.

On campus, we are currently in a low orange status which has enabled us to open the Aggie Dining with self-service at the buffet in the cafeteria. Diners will still be required to wear masks upon entry to the cafeteria and the campus deli. We have re-opened the deli, Chandie’s Castle, located in the Student Union.

As we gain test results and low numbers of positive tests, we will evaluate the possibility of moving the status dial into a high yellow, or even a low yellow, hopefully yet in January.

It is important that we all continue to be safe and help “protect our bubble” at NCTA. Be careful anytime we travel out of the area, or even interact with large groups here in town. Remember to:

- Wear a mask,
- Wash your hands,
- Watch your distance.

And continue to avoid:

- Closed spaces,
- Crowded places,
- Close contact.

The greatest risk for contracting the virus is when these “three C” conditions overlap.

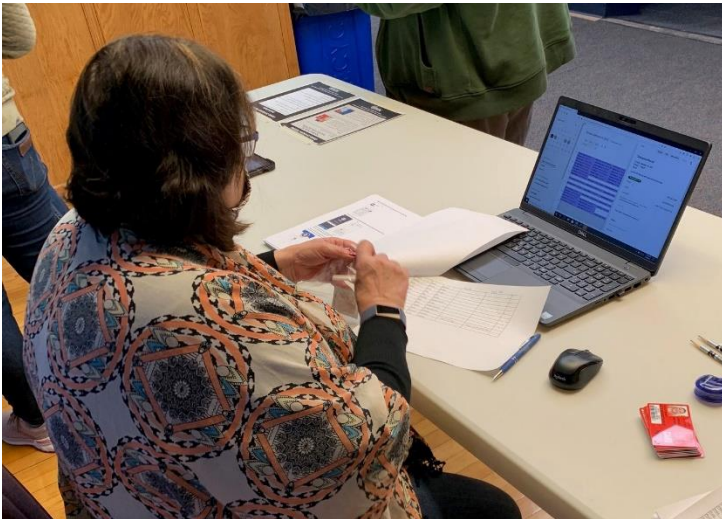
Let’s all stay safe and start this new semester with good health, a warm welcome to our newest Aggie students starting their NCTA career on campus, and enthusiasm for the new year!

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 numerous 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.

PHOTOS ON NEXT PAGE



COVID saliva tests were administered by NCTA staff on Jan. 10 and Jan. 11. Student provides a saliva test.



Professor Mary Rittenhouse volunteers at COVID screening. (Gossen photos / NCTA News)