



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

Jan. 19, 2021

NCTA in 2020 – Part 1

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

We are fortunate to be back on campus again this semester with in-person classes and full programming at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture.

Most everyone is healthy and back to work in classrooms and offices, and for that we are thankful.

Due to our unique programs and small size of campus population, our NCTA academic calendar is slightly different than some of our University of Nebraska counterparts.

Students were on holiday break for a month and they returned for the start of second semester on Jan. 11. We screened everyone for COVID-19 twice last week using a saliva-based test which provides results within a day once the samples are delivered and lab testing is completed at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln East Campus.

With the ability to screen everyone simply and efficiently, NCTA will continue testing our competition teams which travel off campus both before and after contests. I appreciate everyone's cooperation in following the protocol and helping to keep our campus as safe and healthy as possible.

Unique year for Aggies

With the exception of about eight weeks for remote courses in late March to early May 2020, NCTA was able to operate "somewhat" normally last year.

In reflecting upon 2020 with its many challenges and changes due to the global coronavirus pandemic, I've observed that everyone at NCTA - individually and collectively - made great strides in coping and adjusting.

It was, indeed, a very unique year for us all.

NCTA transitioned from 2019 into 2020 under the leadership of University Vice President Mike Boehm, NCTA Interim Dean Kelly Bruns, and Associate Dean Jennifer McConville while the NCTA Dean Search was underway. In March, the Selection Committee and Dr. Boehm named me (Larry Gossen) as the new dean.

2020 Year in Review

During the first three months of 2020, from January into March, then again last Fall, Aggie teams were able to travel, applying their skills in competitive learning events.



Vet Tech Students bring horses in from pasture for an outdoor class in June 2020. (Photo by Chrissy Barnhart for NCTA News)

Although the traditional North American Teachers and Colleges of Agriculture student contests were not held in 2020, the NCTA Ranch Horse, Shotgun Sports, Stock Dog, Livestock Judging and Rodeo teams did make it to several contests in Nebraska and out of state.

As was the norm, industry partnerships flourished early on at NCTA as the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Symposium held its conference and seminars at campus on Jan. 30.

In early February, NCTA was reauthorized with regional accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission. Site reviewers from around the U.S. were in Curtis for the three-day evaluation. The postsecondary institution accreditation will occur again 2025.

Fine arts and rural development made a top-notch combination for Aggie students when our friend, Chuck Schroeder, was an artist in residence for three days in February. Not only did Chuck display his art works and create more while at NCTA, but he spoke to an agribusiness entrepreneurship class and led an evening panel of Aggie graduates in discussing rural careers and economic development.

Also, in February, NCTA hosted FFA events on campus which drew nearly 400 students and ag advisors to NCTA.

Remote learning

Mid-March brought delivery of all NCTA classes by remote learning. HUGE kudos to the NCTA faculty for shifting teaching methods to unique and customized formats for more than 200 Aggies to continue their college courses from their homes or locations off campus. Students came to Curtis on two weekends in early June to complete skills testing for classes in veterinary technology, welding and equine colt starting.

New Dean

My wife, Fay, and I received a hearty welcome to Curtis and the campus in early summer as my duties as the NCTA Dean officially began on June 15. I came from the ranks of Agricultural Education in Kansas classrooms, state duties in education in both Kansas and Nebraska, and leadership with the National FFA Organization.

Summer Classes

Carefully designed logistics and scheduling enabled an atypical yet in-person Summer Session for Veterinary Technology from June 15 to Aug. 7. The NCTA faculty guided 25 Vet Tech students through their sessions, both indoors in lab settings and outside for classes such as Large Animal Care. Students lived in campus residence halls or off campus.

We will take a look at the second half of NCTA 2020 Year in Review next week with highlights for the graduating Class of 2020, accomplishments, recruiting and recognitions.

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.