Learning beyond the classroom

NCTA Dean’s Message
By Interim Dean Kelly Bruns, Ph.D.

Our agricultural and veterinary technology students are richly blessed with an abundance of educational opportunities through the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture!

Some of those applied learning experiences are beyond the campus classrooms or laboratories of this University of Nebraska institution.

For example, in the past week we’ve had three groups traveling to regional or national agricultural activities which are sponsored by their NCTA team or club.

In our world of experiential education, these study tours, livestock contests or industry interactions are valuable and popular academic enhancement experiences.

Ag Business Club
The chance to join a professor on a study tour of businesses exhibiting and marketing wares at the National Western Stock Show in Denver was certainly a trip of a lifetime for three of our students.

None of the three in the Agribusiness Management Systems classes and NCTA Business Club had been to a national level event such as the stock show. Graduates still communicate with their Professor Mary Rittenhouse on how they’ve enjoyed and remembered this learning experience.

Exposure to something beyond the scope of their routine or local experience engenders a perspective that a student may not have had before. We understand the value this lends to leadership, engagement and worldview.

Aggie Stock Dog Team
That same weekend in Denver, five of our Aggies in the NCTA Stock Dog Team traveled over for a two-day experience as spectators, then competitors in the working cattle dog trials on Sunday. They’ve reported an exciting opportunity.

This was a collegiate experience none had seen. These are 18- and 19-year-olds competing in a national arena – with dog handlers from throughout the United States. Talk about excitement, some nervous energies on the part of both students and their canines, and chances to meet outstanding friends and mentors in the ranching business.

Thanks to the regional Outback Stock Dog Association for their training and support. The setting on Sunday was the outdoor arena “down the hill” in the NWSS stockyards. Filled with a backdrop of mountains in the west and sunshine overhead, our Aggies made us proud of their many hours of dog training and as ambassadors of our college.

NCTA Livestock Judging Team
On the same weekend, 10 members of our freshmen and sophomore livestock judging teams traveled to Sioux Falls for a collegiate contest. This was the first official competition for our freshman team of the new semester. They, too, no doubt had some jitters in this large indoor arena filled with 2-year and 4-year college teams from throughout the Midwest.

**Safari Club**
This week, some of the first photos were shared of another group of NCTA students who paid for their own study trip on January 1-10 to Costa Rica. Soon, on February 12, the members of the NCTA Safari Club will deliver their public presentations of this experience to learn about the types of plants, animals, geography and culture in which they were immersed. Join us at 7 p.m. at the NCTA Vet Tech amphitheater for this enjoyable evening!

We will have many more opportunities this winter and spring for our Aggie students to continue their education beyond the classroom on these weekend experiences.

**Collegiate Farm Bureau**
Four NCTA students and their advisor from the NCTA Collegiate Farm Bureau will be participating in the 2020 Young Farmer & Rancher Conference at Kearney on Friday and Saturday. Club president Clade Anderson has served on the state YF&R planning committee this past year and promises some top-notch industry tours and speakers.

Next week I’ll discuss ways in which our Aggie students gain from academic partnerships and workforce development throughout the year, particularly through their summer internships.

> NCTA is devoted to a statewide mission of preparing students for successful careers in agriculture, veterinary technology, and related industries. The college provides open access to innovative technical education resulting in associate degrees, certificates, and other credentials.

**Upcoming events**
Jan. 30 – NE Grain Sorghum seminars, 9 a.m., NCTA Ed Center
Jan. 30 – Curtis Rotary, noon, Ed Center
Jan. 31-Feb. 1 – NCTA Collegiate Farm Bureau at YF&R Conference, Kearney
Feb. 8 – NCTA Livestock Judging at Heart City Bull Bash, Valentine
Feb. 9 – NCTA Livestock Judging at Iowa Beef Expo, Des Moines
Feb. 9-11 – Higher Learning Commission re-accreditation site visit to NCTA

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Costa Rica 2020

NCTA Safari Club members and guests study tour in Costa Rica. Online article at: [https://go.unl.edu/whnf](https://go.unl.edu/whnf)