



Feb. 7, 2020

## **What is your takeaway?**

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

CURTIS, Neb. - Each learning environment and opportunity that our students encounter at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis has a takeaway.

For some in the hands-on learning laboratories of the NCTA campus, it may be refining one of the 100-plus skills required of veterinary technicians.

Or, for eighth-graders who visit during customized STEM program dates, it may be witnessing the digestive aspects of a ruminant animal.

On-the-job training in a requisite college internship yields an abundance of new information and lifelong skills for our graduates.

This week, I provided testimony to a public hearing of the Nebraska Department of Education regarding workforce development and career-building technical skills.

My comments were specific to a state plan for how Nebraska incorporates federal "Perkins Funds" for teaching programs in our community colleges and technical trades such as those here at NCTA.

Officially, the title of the program is "Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act."

I have been directly involved in two educational program revision processes, one with North Platte Public Schools and one with the schools within Lincoln, Logan and McPherson Counties. The process was well received by those within these communities and provided evidence of the need for agriculture curriculums in our secondary programs.

Unique to these discussions was the overwhelming support of the opportunities for collaborations regarding University of Nebraska faculty and facilities located across our state. Recently the University of Nebraska added "Education" to the name and mission of our Research and Extension Centers located at North Platte, Scottsbluff and near Ithaca. The University's ability to collaborate with institutions wishing to develop our agriculture workforce is a priority for us.

NCTA has a statewide mission as a campus within the University of Nebraska system. Each year, we work with our partners at all age levels – elementary, middle school, high school, community colleges, Nebraska extension and many youth in 4-H and FFA programs, for example.



*NCTA freshmen majoring in Diversified Agriculture (agronomy and livestock emphasis) gathered with Professor Brad Ramsdale, front right, before the fall semester began. (Crawford / NCTA News)*

Agriculture is Nebraska's No. 1 industry, supporting one out of every four jobs in the state. There are over 300 different jobs existing in agriculture, which include business, science, technology, animal health and related fields.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that nearly 58,000 jobs are available annually to students with a degree in agriculture. Many of these positions require post-secondary training, which NCTA provides through the authority from Nebraska's Legislature.

We wisely use federal Perkins Funds at NCTA for classroom technology and equipment, and for precision farming systems. This past year, funding went to enhance X-ray and lab equipment for our Veterinary Technology students so that their training stays current with industry standards.

With 33% of Nebraska farms hiring farm employees, we have opportunities to assist in workforce training. NCTA strengthens career development by providing dual credit courses in agriculture. Last fall, dual credit enrollment doubled by high school youth in agricultural courses at NCTA.

We connect students to the science and technology of agriculture. Collaborations that encourage secondary programs and community colleges to connect with NCTA as well as the University of Nebraska's statewide Research, Extension and Education Centers, will leverage our state's funding to fill an important need for the agricultural workforce.

I recently visited with one of our students who last summer completed a rewarding agribusiness internship with a Nebraska company. As a result, they hired her for a fulltime job. Today, while taking online college classes to complete her associate degree through NCTA her "takeaway" is gainful employment.

## What is your takeaway?

*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**

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

Feb. 12 – NCTA Safari Club public program on Costa Rica Study Trip, 7 p.m., Vet Tech building

Feb. 13 – Curtis Rotary, 12 noon, Ed Center

Online article: <https://go.unl.edu/s8hf>

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