



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

February 15, 2022

NCTA salute to FFA Week

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

Agriculture educators make a huge impact in the lives of their students, no doubt about it.

FFA members in 203 chapters in Nebraska make a huge difference in their communities, be it rural or urban areas.

Community friends and residents of southwest Nebraska are familiar with our academic programs and campus of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture.

What some may not know, however, is that in addition to hosting FFA members throughout the year to campus for leadership and career development activities, NCTA also teaches future educators.

NCTA and Doug Smith established the first Agricultural Education program over a decade ago. Since then, NCTA has graduated 29 Aggies with an Associate of Science degree in Agriculture Education.

Teaching requires a four-year degree. Most students transfer from NCTA with their AS degree to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication program.

Twelve of these Aggie graduates from the past decade are in classrooms. Eleven have industry positions in business, production, or with ag-related organizations. Five are studying education for bachelor's or master's degrees at UNL or nearby universities.

Aggies in Ag Ed

Currently we have eight freshmen and sophomores at NCTA majoring in Ag Ed. They plan to go into education, either to high schools and FFA chapters, or to Extension education with 4-H programs.

Let's look back to previous years, as well. NCTA and its predecessor, the University of Nebraska School of Technical Agriculture (UNSTA), also generated several educators through general ag or production agriculture.

Some went to the family farm or ranch or another job, first, before earning a bachelor's degree. This group of Aggies includes Jack Broderick and Craig Frederick, retired; Dana Hall (McCool Junction), Siera Meyer (Shelby-Rising City), Julia Schwartz (Elgin), Phil Simpson (Burwell), Randy Vlasin (Hayes Center) and Dan Stehlik (NCTA).

Members, families, and educators involved with FFA will tell you this month is an extremely busy period for FFA chapters. Early mornings and late evenings. Record books, applications for proficiency awards. Interviews. Competitions for teams and individual honors in leadership and career skills.

National FFA Week

With National FFA Week coming up on February 19-26, we asked some of our Aggie graduates who are now teachers and advisors to share how their FFA chapters will be observing the week.

First-year teacher Kayla Mues is a native of Cambridge and graduated from NCTA in December 2019. She completed her UNL program and student teaching at Wallace in December. Last month, in January, she began her work at Dundy County-Stratton High School.

Emily Whipple, also a native of Cambridge, is a 2016 graduate of NCTA, student taught at Pender, and is in her third year at Ainsworth Community Schools. She also is a UNL graduate.

Wade Overturf was in the first class of Ag Ed graduates from NCTA in 2014. He is a native of Sutton and started his teaching career at Wisner-Pilger High School in 2016 after graduating from UNL.

Dundy County-Stratton FFA Chapter – Kayla Mues, advisor

“We have the typical drive your tractor to school day on Monday, Feb. 21. Wednesday we are holding a high school pickup judging contest with prizes going to the cleanest, dirtiest, oldest, newest, and fan favorite. On Thursday, Feb. 24, because it is Career and Technical Education Month the FFA along with help from the FCCLA and FBLA we are holding a school faculty and staff appreciation breakfast. We will have dress up days throughout the week as well. The wrap-up for FFA Week is on Friday with students and myself going to the Nebraska FFA Mission and Impact Conference in Kearney.”

Ainsworth FFA Chapter – Emily Whipple, advisor

“Our chapter does Ag Mini-Lessons. We have an FFA Chapter Supper co-sponsored with local banks, host a State Officer, and various activities here at school throughout the week. This includes the golden cow and the golden tractor event (a scavenger hunt around the school). We will have a have dress-up day for all grades. Students also write articles for the newspaper about how FFA has impacted them.”

Wisner-Pilger FFA Chapter – Wade Overturf, advisor

“Our FFA week is full of activities, many are directed by our FFA officers. They include a teacher breakfast, dodgeball tournament, elementary lessons, a barnyard, drive your pickup and tractor to school days, and a fundraiser for charity. Our community support in Wisner and Pilger is outstanding. The ag community is extremely supportive to our members as they recognize the need for youth to be involved and connected to agriculture.”

In addition to National FFA Week, February also is the timeframe for Nebraska 4-H Month, and Career and Technical Education Month, as noted by Advisor Mues. Along with these entities, Nebraskans weave a strong educational, career and leadership program for our youth.

I look forward to seeing many of our alumni and FFA members soon, and after a two-year break due to the pandemic, at the in-person State FFA Convention in Lincoln on April 6-8, 2022.

From all of us at NCTA, we salute agriculture educators and advisors who serve us across the nation and here in Nebraska. Have a great FFA Week!

NCTA Aggie Events:

Feb. 16-19: NCTA exhibit, Nebraska Cattlemen’s Classic, Kearney

Feb. 19: NCTA Crops Judging, West Texas A&M contest, Canyon

Feb. 19-26: National FFA Week

Feb. 23: FFA District 9 CDE, NCTA campus

Feb. 24-25: NCTA Women in Ag Conference, Kearney

Feb. 26: NCTA Shotgun Sports Team at MPCC match, North Platte

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.