



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

March 1, 2022

NCTA plans for students, growth

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

When I officially started my first day as the new dean of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture on June 15, 2020, our nation's higher education system faced great unknowns.

We knew, however, that NCTA at Curtis was the only campus in the University of Nebraska system operating with in-person classes that summer. Two dozen Veterinary Technician students and their instructors were ready for opening day, also on June 15.

As NCTA had always done, summer session was eight weeks of in-depth, hands-on laboratory and classroom learning. The unusual aspect, however, was the immensity of health and safety protocols designed and implemented by VT faculty and administrators here that spring to ensure a safe environment.

I walked into a well-executed plan, complete with one-way traffic routes in and out of classrooms, hallways, and the VT building. We entered from a back parking lot at the complex and exited out the main entrance on the south.

The extraordinary planning by VT Division Chair Barbara Berg and her team, along with NCTA's Interim Dean Kelly Bruns and Associate Dean Jennifer McConville, was stellar. A new frontier.

There is likely no department better equipped on an agricultural campus to face such a challenge than individuals whose expertise is science, animal health, medical certifications, and rigid protocols.

In my observation, throughout the pandemic, it has been beneficial that NCTA is a smaller campus. We have been nimble. Our circumstances and resources require flexibility. After all, we are agriculturalists who work with innovation and technology yet can switch to Plan B or Plan C when required. NCTA has been fully functioning with classes, programs and public events ever since.

Successful Aggies

I marvel at the changes and forward progress we have made together these past 20 months. Teamwork and cooperation has been at the fore. Our students, staff and faculty have pulled together, with fortitude and respect for each other, and for that I am grateful.

Aggies begin our final eight weeks of spring semester on Monday. More than 200 will be on campus through the end of April. The Class of '22 will graduate on Thursday, May 5 at the old football field.

For 23 veterinary technicians, they take exit exams this week and begin their internships at veterinary clinics and animal hospitals on March 7. We wish them well and look forward to seeing them on May 4 for Awards Night and May 5 for graduation.

New Frontier

On Thursday, NCTA begins a new project of long-term vision and planning. I have asked 16 of our current students to join me in this significant venture.

Recently, NCTA received a grant to bring to campus a group of interested, future-minded, passionate stakeholders to meet and discuss the future of NCTA programming, systems, and infrastructure.

The 16 students will join several NCTA faculty and staff along with the stakeholder planning partners for two meetings during March. I've extended an invitation to representatives across the state. Some have connections to NCTA. Some do not. The college requests their dedication of time and counsel.

We will evaluate: How can NCTA play a part in closing the access and achievement gap in rural Nebraska, address the workforce needs of the region, solidify itself as the flagship location for technical agriculture in the state, and create a state-of-the-art environment for student success?

First, we will spend Thursday looking at the following:

- Programmatic – academic programs, workforce demands, technology and resources
- Systematic - student recruitment, retention, success; shortfalls and needs
- Infrastructure – current structures, resources, technology; shortfall and needs

The group will provide direction to administration and faculty for strategic planning, a roadmap for future growth, and a prioritized list of needs for budgets and financial support. A second session is later in March.

This is a critical conversation for NCTA's future. I am enthusiastic for what lies ahead in our new frontier.

Our campus first opened its doors to students in 1913. Those doors of that one building, constructed in 1912-13, led to the classrooms and offices within Agriculture Hall.

We are still here, in Ag Hall, where NCTA has a long and proud heritage in Curtis.

NCTA Aggie Events:

March 1: NCTA Discovery Day

March 2: FFA District 11 Career Development Events

March 3: NCTA Planning Advisory Committee

March 4-5: NCTA Beef Cattle AI Course (students, only)

March 4-6: Aggie Ranch Horse Team to Colorado

March 4-6: Aggie Shotgun Sports Team to Oklahoma

March 5-6: Aggie Crops Judging Team to K State

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.

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Online article: <https://go.unl.edu/z4fy>



NCTA Student Leaders

The Student Senate at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture represents Aggie clubs, teams, and student organizations on campus. Representatives are selected by their peers. Sixteen Aggies are involved this week in a long-range planning session at NCTA. (Photo by Eric Reed / NCTA)