



# NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

## NCTA NEWS

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NCTA Dean's Column by Ron Rosati, Ph.D.

### **One Nebraska – One University: NCTA is a key part of both**

The University of Nebraska is the state's only public university, with campuses and programs throughout the state. The Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is one of the components. The services provided by the University of Nebraska complement those offered by our other outstanding higher education institutions in Nebraska including state colleges, community colleges and private colleges.

We commonly refer to the university as a system of independent universities. The flagship campus is the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, our land-grant university. The system also contains two regional comprehensive institutions: University of Nebraska at Kearney, and University of Nebraska at Omaha. UNO fills a vital role as the system's urban university.

Two specialized institutions also add to the comprehensive nature of NU academic programs. The University of Nebraska Medical Center provides graduate education in health science. The Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis is the only two-year, open admissions institution in the university. NCTA's mission is to serve Nebraska as the state's two-year agriculture college, with a focus on workforce development.

Unique characteristics of NCTA differentiate it from other NU campuses. The Curtis campus is the smallest of the system with enrollment near 300 students. NCTA focuses on providing open access to higher education with special attention to those who are first-generation college students. In addition to production agriculture courses in livestock, crops, and agribusiness, NCTA offers unique workforce development programs in irrigation technology, equine industry management, agricultural welding, veterinary technology, and agricultural chemical applications.

### **Academic agility**

NCTA is a nimble institution able to expediently address the emerging workforce needs of Nebraska's agricultural employers. Last month, NCTA announced a creative and high-quality academic partnership for poultry science to address demand for skilled employees in this rapidly expanding segment of Nebraska agriculture.

In order to provide high quality and robust support services to students, NCTA works closely with UNL to access broadened expertise. NCTA is officially "assisted by" UNL so that we can offer campus services in Curtis in the most cost-effective manner. Our NCTA community greatly appreciates this outstanding support from our UNL counterparts.

During part of its 104-year history NCTA was a unit of UNL but about 20 years ago that organizational structure was modified. NCTA is now an independent institution fully accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. The college is also unique because it is the only component of the University of Nebraska with an independent line item appropriation from the Nebraska Legislature.

NCTA administrators report to Dr. Mike Boehm who is the system Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources. He reports to Dr. Hank Bounds, President of the University of Nebraska, who, in turn, reports to the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

The Board of Regents receives two appropriations from the Nebraska Legislature: one for NCTA and a second for the remaining units of the system. These two budgets are occasionally addressed separately by the Legislature but this year, as in most years, the two appropriations have received similar recommendations from the Appropriations Committee. A firewall exists between the two appropriations so that funding from one cannot be moved to the other.

### **Budget proposals**

The Governor's budget recommendation made in January proposed a 4 percent reduction to NCTA and the University of Nebraska. As a limited resource institution which receives 77 percent of its budget from state sources, NCTA relies heavily on Legislative support. A 4 percent budget cut (or \$136,000) would be challenging to NCTA and would severely impact our ability to provide top-quality programs.

We appreciate the good work done by President Bounds, Vice President Boehm and the many supporters of the University who informed appropriators about the devastating impacts which would result from a 4 percent cut. Appropriations Committee members listened to university officials and constituents, studied the situation, talked with colleagues, and made a recommendation for an appropriation cut of 1 percent. Thank you to the committee members for their thoughtful consideration of budget concerns. A 1 percent cut to NCTA would result in a \$34,000 reduction.

Appropriation cuts will result in institutional belt-tightening. However, the mission of educating a skilled and knowledgeable workforce in agriculture and veterinary technology is stronger than ever. Federal government data from 2017 shows that NCTA ranks among the top two-year colleges in the U.S for graduate career success, graduate salaries and return to educational investment. Our long-range strategic plan for NCTA focuses on expanding enrollment, continuing to enhance our academic programs and student services, and maintaining a great team of faculty and staff. Be assured, NCTA will continue offering the nationally-ranked academic programming the state of Nebraska has come to expect.

We look forward to the Legislature's deliberation of the Appropriation Committee recommendations.

On March 6, an "I Love NU" Advocacy Day brought University of Nebraska and NCTA supporters to the State Capitol to meet with state senators. Details for advocacy are outlined at <https://go.unl.edu/2esp>.

Ultimately, the final state budget decision for all Nebraska spending and government operations lies with Governor Pete Ricketts. After Legislative deliberation and appropriations voting, the budget goes to the Governor for signing or veto.

We at NCTA appreciate the strong support locally in Curtis, and across the state from all of our stakeholders and industry partners. We are One Nebraska – One University. Feel free to contact me at Ag Hall on campus with any questions regarding our budget process and NCTA programs.

***NCTA Mission:** The Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is devoted to a statewide mission of preparing students for successful careers in agriculture, veterinary technology, food and related industries. The college provides open access to innovative technical education resulting in associate degrees, certificates, diplomas and other credentials.*



Students representing NCTA Aggie teams, clubs and academic divisions outside Ag Hall in 2017. (Craig Chandler/NCTA photo)