



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

August 25, 2020

By Dean Larry Gossen, Ph.D.

Fall classes begin at NCTA campus

CURTIS, Neb. – We are off to a great start for our fall semester at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture.

Welcome to all NCTA Aggie students who are making their college home on campus, in Curtis and the beautiful Medicine Valley region of southwest Nebraska. Nearly 125 Aggies are incoming freshmen or transfer students.

We are so glad you are here, ready for a new beginning and studying for a career in agriculture or veterinary technology. Have a great 2020-21 year!



The Resident Assistants team at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis welcomed Aggie students to campus for the fall semester. (Photo by M. Crawford / NCTA News)

As students moved into the community and filled our residence halls over the weekend, the process went smooth and enthusiasm was palpable. The “first day” of the semester was exciting for me as well.

Like many who document semester beginnings, I, too, captured an image for my first “first day of school” since 2000.

You see, after teaching agricultural education and leading FFA chapters in Kansas high schools for 24 years, my career took me to education and leadership roles at the Kansas Department of Education, the National FFA organization, and last year with the Nebraska Department of Education.

Admittedly, at NCTA I am enthused not only in my role as the new dean, but also for opening day at an academic institution where I join nearly 45 faculty and staff. We are committed the success of each Aggie student whether they are with us on campus for in-person classes or taking courses online.

The University of Nebraska will announce NCTA’s final enrollment numbers, including high school students taking dual credit classes, after Labor Day. Enrollment ends Friday, Aug. 28, so there is still time to register.

Community Welcome

The Curtis community has again been very welcoming to students and their families. When early arrivals came to NCTA to serve as resident assistants in campus halls, for NCTA Livestock Judging Team workouts, or to get settled in after a long journey across the U.S., area residents were ready to lend a hand.

Private boarding facilities for student horses had lined up hay for sale. Owners of rental housing had prepped homes, businesses and potential employers prepped job applications, eating establishments greeted new customers, and the local Chamber of Commerce “welcome packets” had been stuffed with materials and delivered to the NCTA Welcome Center.

During this time of COVID-19, Frontier County is adopting health measures to keep us as safe as possible.

The weekend move-in process into our three campus residence halls was well designed by Residence Life Manager Erika Arambula. Students had staggered move-in periods to lessen foot and cart traffic densities in hallways. One-way traffic at central entrances and departures from side hallways and exits helped as well.

In place of a traditional, community welcome picnic on Sunday, the meal was served at the campus cafeteria, Aggie Dining. All went well for nourishing and welcoming our Aggies the night before classes began.

Campus health

Meanwhile, as campus moves forward for the fall semester, I ask our community to assist in staying healthy, respectful of each other, and follow health guidelines. Our 2020-21 Health and Safety Plan is outlined at <https://ncta.unl.edu/coronavirus-covid-19>.

Most important is the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff, as well as the entire Curtis community. In a letter dispatched Monday to all of campus, I advised that NCTA’s ability to enjoy an in-person experience is all predicated on the expectation that our campus and community remains COVID-free.

Just because we are back on campus does not mean things are all back to normal. Our success at remaining in our current environment of in-person classes, in-house dining with a buffet line, and groups living and working together, is in their hands.

To students, your actions, behaviors and attitude towards a safe, healthy campus relies on how you approach your evening and weekend activities, visits back home and to areas outside Curtis that have active cases, and even the campus interactions and contacts made here each day.

Let’s all continue to work as part of the NCTA team, holding each other accountable, but being patient with each other, recognizing that we all have different levels of comfort and concern for our loved ones, our neighbors and friends.

Our door is always open for business, to take last-day registrations until August 28, and to visit with our students and community members. If you have any questions, please give Josi, Jennifer or me a call at the Dean’s Office in Ag Hall at (308) 367-5200. Have a great semester, Aggies!

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 numerous 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.

#