



# NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

Oct. 26, 2020

## FFA memories of the NCTA Dean

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

This week from Tuesday through Thursday evening is the virtual 93<sup>rd</sup> National FFA Convention and Expo. This will be the first time since 1977 I have not traveled to either Kansas City, Missouri, Louisville, Kentucky, or Indianapolis, Indiana for the convention. Of course, this year nobody is traveling to the convention, so I'm not alone.



*NCTA Dean Larry Gossen displays his FFA jackets as a Cherryvale Kansas chapter officer, a Southeast Kansas district treasurer, and on the wall is a chapter advisor jacket. He has attended the National FFA Conventions since 1977. (McConville / NCTA photo)*

From my first year as an agricultural education instructor at Longton, Kansas in 1977, until last year as the Nebraska State FFA Advisor, I have made every single convention, either with a load of high school FFA members, as a State Advisor with a group of state FFA officers, or as a National FFA staff person. It really seems odd to be sitting here in my house watching sessions on RFD-TV along with everyone else.

I joined FFA during my freshman year of high school, back when we still used stone tablets and chisels to take notes.

No, it just seems like it was that long ago. I still remember my ag classroom, my advisor, Mr. C.B. Tuck, of the Caney Valley FFA chapter in Ochelata, Oklahoma. I didn't buy an FFA jacket that year, but my sophomore year my family moved to Kansas and I got involved in the Cherryvale FFA chapter. My advisor there, Mr. Chuck Smith, singlehandedly changed my life.

From a very young age, I knew I wanted to be involved in agriculture. Growing up on a dairy farm, then moving to a beef and diversified crop farm, agriculture was in my blood. I could often be found with all my farm implements lined up against the fireplace, carefully farming the carpet in the living room, tending to my herd of blue, green, red and yellow animals of all species, fixing plastic fences and staving off the wicked tornadoes bent on destroying the farmstead, aka my big brother.

Joining FFA and spending time with Mr. Smith set me on a lifetime course of agricultural education. There was no doubt by the time I had served as the chapter reporter and vice president, and the southeast district treasurer, of where I was going to college and what my major would be. Sure enough, four years later I found myself in my own classroom, mirroring all the great things Mr. Smith had taught me from classroom management to overseeing students' Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects.

My career in agricultural education led me then to serve as the Kansas State FFA Advisor, as a Local Program Success Specialist for the National FFA Organization, and then most recently, as the Nebraska State FFA Advisor. And now here I am, serving in a role so closely aligned to my roots, that I feel a natural connection with the community of Curtis and the students of NCTA.

Many of our Aggies here have FFA or 4-H backgrounds. They understand the meaning of hard work and have developed leadership skills necessary to be successful in today's working environment. Even those who come to NCTA without FFA or 4-H backgrounds have a chance to learn these skills. When they graduate and leave us, they are prepared for the workplace. Our faculty work hard every day to instill these same characteristics and employability skills through lessons and hands-on labs.

FFA members who demonstrate these skills and have successful SAEs during their FFA years can earn various degrees. The highest is the American FFA Degree. We are proud that this year we have eight FFA members on campus and two recent graduates who have achieved the degree through their home high school chapters and will be recognized during the Thursday night session at 6 p.m. CDT on RFD-TV.

These 10 students are: Trevin Arnold, Fairbury; Tucker Hodsdon, Morrill; Jake Jenkins, Kimball; Jacob Jenkins, Morrill; Nic Krykowski, Doniphan-Trumbull; Lauren Nichols, Scottsbluff; Tyler Peterson, Gothenburg; Darci Reimers, Centura; Amanda Schmidt, Stanton; and Addison Villwok, Randolph.

Along with these recipients, I imagine some NCTA Aggies will join in virtually viewing the national events. Our campus FFA/4-H Club is led by President Emily Grote, Minnesota; Vice President Gillian Brinker, Alaska; Secretary Taylor Hendrix, Colorado; and Treasurer Taylor Sayer, Nebraska. Gillian Brinker and Taylor Hendrix were FFA state officers in Alaska and Colorado, respectively.

Being an agricultural educator proved to be an excellent choice for me. I highly encourage anyone who is interested in a career in Ag Ed to check out the 2-year program at NCTA. We now have 14 Aggie alumni teaching in Nebraska classrooms and advising FFA chapters. Read more at <https://go.unl.edu/48np>.

Also, seven NCTA graduates are in the agricultural education transfer option to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This transition is seamless and a great way to start that career path.

If you have always had a passion for FFA, 4-H, teaching or just mentoring people, NCTA is a place where your passion becomes a career!

#### **NCTA Events:**

Oct. 26: Collegiate FFA observes National FFA Convention  
Oct. 31-Nov. NCTA Stock Dog Trial, 8 a.m., LTC Arena  
Nov. 7: NCTA Shotgun Sports Clay Shoot, Curtis Gun Club, 8 a.m.  
Nov. 10: NCTA Discovery Day, 8:30 a.m., Ed Center  
Nov. 11: Salute to America's Veterans

*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.*

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

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