



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

Nov. 17, 2020

Adapting our FFA events at NCTA for 2020

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

Every educator I know is doing their best to teach students during this COVID-19 pandemic. As teachers, we work hard to keep each student engaged in their studies and to be successful individuals as they grow and learn.



FFA member evaluate livestock in Career Development Events at NCTA. (Emily Grote / NCTA photo)

We all want student success. This year and into 2021, that includes emphasis on keeping students, our schools, and communities safe and healthy.

For two days last week, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture faculty, students and staff dedicated extra effort to provide a sense of “normalcy” as well as health and personal safety precautions for FFA members from 34 high schools in Nebraska.

NCTA is a strong partner with Nebraska FFA. Two regional FFA districts had their traditional Career Development Events at NCTA in a non-traditional format.

FFA chapters were able to participate as segregated groups or high school teams here on campus, while others tested their CDE knowledge through virtual means.

Overall, these CDEs for about 500 students were possible only with careful planning by many entities, outstanding partners in multiple locations, and dedicated individuals who went the “extra” miles. I salute them all, and I would like to share a “behind the scenes” perspective.

Chief logistical coordinator and contest official was Dr. Doug Smith, NCTA associate professor of Animal Science and Agricultural Education. Dr. Smith is our main go-to coordinator for FFA events, and he also coaches our Aggie livestock teams.

Dr. Smith lined up NCTA students in Animal Science, Agricultural Education, the judging team, and other faculty and staff for the CDEs. Livestock came in on Wednesday from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, producers in several locations across the state, and a commercial feedlot.

He led his students in evaluating and recording the animals early Thursday morning. At the contest, electronic judging cards were submitted by FFA members, tabulated at NCTA and the results posted at judgingcard.com. The CDEs for Thursday in Agriscience and Natural Resources were coordinated by agricultural education teachers with Vicky Armstrong of Maywood FFA the District 11 coordinator.

Friday CDEs for District 9 were organized with Dr. Smith, Agriculture Educator Tim Negley of Gothenburg FFA, Dr. Brad Ramsdale for the Agronomy, and Professor Mary Rittenhouse in Agribusiness Management.

For COVID-19 safety, FFA members rotated by chapters to maintain segregation. All individuals on campus were

required to wear facial masks inside buildings and outdoors if physical distancing wasn't possible.

Seeking some normalcy

In my conversations here at campus with FFA advisors and Agricultural Educators, many shared their appreciation to NCTA for providing in-person events.

Vicky Armstrong, Maywood FFA Chapter advisor and District 11 representative, spoke for many.

"We are extremely grateful to NCTA and their faculty, staff, and students for their assistance in putting on our fall contests and allowing us to be on campus," Armstrong said. "Any opportunity we have for contests in person this year is what our students need."

"We appreciate all of Dr. Smith's work on scheduling our schools to follow all of the health guidelines," Vicky added. "I feel our contests ran smoothly throughout the day."

In serving at the Nebraska Department of Education for one year as FFA State Advisor, and now as NCTA Dean for nearly six months, I've certainly witnessed the strong bond of agriculture and partner traditions in Nebraska.

Many know the "ag school at Curtis" for its 107-year-long history of educating high school and college students in the fields of agriculture and veterinary technology.

Not only does NCTA have outstanding agricultural resources for academics, but the college does have a statewide mission, as well, serving as the sole two-year campus within the University of Nebraska system.

Agricultural Education is an integral curriculum at NCTA. Our Aggie students with career goals as agricultural educators in secondary schools or in extension youth programs enroll under the tutelage of Dr. Smith. We welcome anybody with an interest in being a teacher to come to NCTA and see what we have to offer. If Agricultural Education is your passion, we can help you make it your career.

NCTA can provide more in-person events on campus through dedication by many individuals. We are blessed with outstanding personnel in food service, facilities, academics, and the NCTA Farm who enable experiential learning for individuals and groups.

For as long as directed health measures allow, we will continue to serve students and stakeholders with educational resources and in-person events at NCTA in Curtis.

Thank you to our partners, near and far, for leadership and career development of students in agriculture.

NCTA Events:

Nov. 26-27: Thanksgiving break, campus offices closed

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/o68g>