



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

Dec. 16, 2020

To a healthy 2021

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

We have successfully completed the fall semester at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture thanks to the dedication and commitment of everyone on campus.

As we look forward to resuming classes in January, the ability to enjoy our in-person experience is all predicated on the expectation that our campus and community remain COVID-free.



NCTA Dean Larry Gossen, Ph.D.

Students are on holiday break until January 11, with most having left campus at the end of their final exams last Thursday and Friday. Pickups, horse trailers and cars were packed and ready to make the journey near or far to homes and holiday destinations for Aggie students.

However, we still have busy campus this week with district Leadership Development Events for high school FFA programs on Wednesday and Thursday. Welcome to NCTA, FFA members, chapter advisors and agricultural education teachers.

The following week, all NCTA buildings will be closed for six business days plus the two weekends spanning the December 25 to January 3 timeframe. Essential workers and students caring for NCTA animals and livestock will be around campus as needed. Offices will then reopen on January 4 as staff and faculty resume business operations.

We have steadily relayed to our campus community throughout this year that the health and safety of each of our students, staff and faculty is our highest priority.

As you may know, University of Nebraska President Ted Carter and UN-Lincoln Chancellor Ronnie Green announced last week that UNL will be implementing a mandatory COVID testing policy for all students, faculty, and staff who regularly come to the Lincoln campus.

NCTA has been offered these same health services here at Curtis which include a simple **saliva-based** PCR test with a 24-hour results response timeframe. The saliva test is much less invasive than the traditional nasal swab. This saliva test is as simple as using a straw.

Through careful consultation with the Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department based in McCook and our University of Nebraska leadership, we at NCTA have made the decision to incorporate an initial mandatory COVID-19 test to begin the spring semester.

This decision was not arrived at hastily or without serious consideration. By participating in this program at NCTA, we will reap the following benefits:

1. Identifying any cases of COVID at NCTA as the semester begins before the virus has a chance to spread. This will set us off on the right foot for 2021.
2. We intend to open the dining hall buffet line and Chandie's Castle once again on a regular schedule.
3. The risk dial will be able to change much quicker and the opportunity to lighten the mask mandate will be more likely.
4. Testing throughout the semester will be available on campus rather than having to wait on and find a Test Nebraska site more than 45 minutes away (this option is still available if needed).
5. Test results will be available much quicker so quarantine times (and time missed from classes) while waiting on test results will be greatly diminished.

We heard from several of our students and faculty this semester that we should do more to protect everyone on campus. Our plan will proactively let us provide this opportunity for campus safety. More details as to the process and building location will be coming in the next couple of weeks. The NCTA plan is:

- Begin testing all students, faculty, and staff on Saturday January 9 through Monday January 11.
- We will also test on Friday January 15.
- Random voluntary testing and testing of those with symptoms will be ongoing through the semester.
- Traveling teams and individuals will be required to test 48 hours prior to travel and within 5 days of returning to campus.
- Anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days (since October 11) will be exempt from this initial testing.

I will have more specific details regarding the logistics as these are finalized in the next three weeks. Meanwhile, please direct any questions you may have my way.

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.

Have a great holiday season.

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/u4f7>