



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

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NCTA awarded workforce skills grant

By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

CURTIS, Neb. – A \$100,000 grant used to expand distance, mobile and on-site education for workforce development at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture was announced late last week by the Nebraska Department of Education.

The two-year college located in Curtis plans to purchase cutting-edge technology in four academic areas for its youth and adult education programs, and to stimulate greater interest for high-demand jobs, said NCTA Dean Larry Gossen.



Welding courses at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture prepare workforce-ready graduates for skilled, high-demand industries. A \$100,000 federal grant will enhance state-of-the-art technology at NCTA. (Crawford / NCTA News photo)

“This is quite exciting for NCTA to be able to broaden its long-standing history of hands-on learning in careers serving agriculture and veterinary technology,” Gossen said. “The federal grant is significant in our ability to deliver educational programs beyond the traditional campus methods.”

NCTA is among 11 education providers in Nebraska receiving the funds from a Perkins V “reVISION Action Grant,” said Therese Marzouk, workforce partnership specialist in education department’s Office of Career, Technical, & Adult Education.

A robotic welder, full-size equine simulator, mobile agronomy demonstration unit, and robotic camera for livestreaming classes will be among technology acquired and in place by June 30, 2021, Gossen said.

“Preparation for students to enter the workforce is why NCTA has a statewide mission through the University of Nebraska system,” said Gossen. “Career development creates awareness of high need, high skill and high wage careers known as H3 jobs. At NCTA, we create industry-ready, skilled employees.”

Labor statistics from the Nebraska Works website combined with employer requests for NCTA graduates show H3 careers include agricultural welders, agronomists and crop consultants, and animal health workers as veterinary technicians, veterinary assistants, and laboratory animal caretakers.

“In addition to maintaining our high-quality, in-person programs here on campus, now NCTA faculty will be able to offer greater awareness and cutting-edge technology in their program delivery to junior and senior high school classrooms, remote learners in youth and NCTA Aggie student courses, and to adults seeking new careers or who are currently in the workforce,” Gossen said.

NCTA will apply the \$100,000 grant to purchase the equipment and technology. As needed, supplemental funding may come from external sources including industry partners, NCTA alumni and others.

NCTA's four-part priorities:

Expand Welding Program – Double the size of the existing facility, increase the number and types of welding equipment, add CNC plasma cutters, and purchase a robotic welder.

Mobile Agronomy Engagement and Recruitment Lab – Equip an interactive, hands-on mobile display and laboratory unit for outreach at schools, fairs and learning centers to provide an awareness of careers in plant and soil science and pest control, along with irrigation technology systems and natural resources.

Animal Science and Veterinary Technology Simulation Models – Provide real-life-size models of a horse, cat, and dog simulators in training animal care skills. The horse includes a palpation and colic simulator especially helpful for students unfamiliar with procedures on a larger, live animal. The models will be used at campus and in outreach education.

Technology for Remote and Livestream – State-of-the-art imaging system recommended by the American Veterinary Medical Association for hands-on teaching techniques used by private veterinary practices. Cameras, microphones, and mobile filming can livestream equine clinics, livestock judging, and animal science courses from the indoor arena to campus classrooms or virtual settings.

The initiative was compiled by the NCTA Action Grant leadership team comprised of Dean Gossen, Associate Dean Jennifer McConville, agronomy professor Brad Ramsdale, welding instructor Dan Stehlik, animal science professor Joanna Hergenreder, veterinary technology professor Barbara Berg, and NCTA business manager Jan Gilbert, as well as representatives from each department's advisory council.

"This federal grant is terrific news that will further strengthen NCTA's track record at placing students into the workforce upon graduation and address critical workforce needs related to Nebraska's #1 industry and economic driver," said Mike Boehm, NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor.

Industry partners and academic advisory councils in each of the NCTA academic areas have encouraged expanded technology and delivery methods from campus, Gossen said, to fully address workforce needs. The Nebraska Department of Education received 22 applications seeking \$1.7 million. The 11 successful recipients to receive the \$911,763 are:

- Bancroft-Rosalie Community School
- Columbus Public Schools
- ESU 9 (4 districts collaborating: Adams Central, Doniphan-Trumbull, Harvard, and Kenesaw)
- Hershey Public Schools
- Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture
- Northeast Community College
- Ralston Public Schools
- Seward Public Schools
- South Central Nebraska Unified District
- Stapleton Public Schools
- Sutherland Public Schools

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 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.

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Online link: <https://go.unl.edu/cm9a>