



## NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

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### **Kayla Mues, ag education major**

By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

CURTIS, Neb. – Future teacher Kayla Mues comes from a long line of agriculturalists.

The fourth-generation graduate of Cambridge High School says her roots on a family farm and ranch led to wide-ranging interests and leadership roles in FFA and 4-H.

“Agriculture is always flowing in my blood,” says Mues, the oldest of six grandchildren. “Growing up, I was always the teacher for my brother and cousin.”

She is eager to blend that passion with her college experiences and life skills in becoming an agriculture teacher.

In December, after three semesters at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, she graduated with an associate degree in agricultural education and transferred to the University of Nebraska in Lincoln for the next two years.

“I knew while I was in junior high that I wanted to attend NCTA in Curtis,” she says.

Mues was active in her high school FFA chapter as a leader and through her Supervised Agricultural Experiences in commercial beef and as a plant science paid placement for the FFA greenhouse.

She also was active in shotgun sports, public speaking and competed in rodeo queen pageants where she won Miss Furnas County in 2009.

The Cambridge FFA chapter frequently made the 100-mile round trip to Curtis for FFA contests, where the two-year degree programs focus on agriculture production, agribusiness and animal health.

Mues started her college preparation as a freshmen taking dual credit high school-college courses every year.

That plan saved on college tuition and gave Mues a full semester jumpstart to begin her Aggie career in August of 2018.

“I took three classes at NCTA and three from Central Community College for dual credits,” she explains of 18 hours of college credits.

Mues wasted no time making lifelong friends with six classmates who now also are transfers to UNL’s College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

Her leadership roles and activities at NCTA included work study student and Aggie student ambassador, Collegiate FFA & 4-H, Women in Ag officer, Collegiate Cattlemen and academic honorary Phi Theta Kappa officer.



*Kayla Mues and NCTA Professor Doug Smith*

Is there a favorite class or professor for Mues at NCTA?

“All of them were super great,” Mues says. “All of the people here at NCTA are very good.”

“Dr. (Doug) Smith does a wonderful job,” she said, appreciating the agriculture education and animal science professor’s expertise in advising, teaching, and livestock judging, combined with his perspective as a former high school agriculture education teacher and FFA advisor.

“Dr. (Brad) Ramsdale is amazing,” noting the agronomy professor’s leadership, teaching skills and award-winning crops judging teams.

With his nearly 30 years in high school and college Ag Ed programs, Dan Stehlik gives excellent advice on the “how to teach” aspects of welding and agricultural mechanics.

As a freshman, Mues appreciated the interpersonal skills class led by Tee Bush, a former professor.

In January of 2020, Mues transferred to her studies in Agriculture Leadership, Education and Communication at UNL.

However, two months later, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she returned to the family farm and finished the semester through remote courses. She will return to the ALEC program in August.

“Kayla is a motivated young educator that will make an impact in a classroom,” notes Doug Smith, her NCTA advisor and professor. “Her experience as an FFA member and being engaged in her studies is preparing her for an exceptional career in Ag Education.”

Her ALEC student teaching field experience in a Nebraska high school classroom is only a year away, before graduating in December, 2021.

*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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(Photo caption)

*Kayla Mues of Cambridge plans to be an Ag Ed teacher and FFA advisor, like Dr. Doug Smith, one of her mentors and professors at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. (Crawford / NCTA News)*