

## From cover letters to dining etiquette seminar strengthens skills

### Prior to this academic year,

College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources senior Jeremiah Blake didn't have a resume and wasn't sure how to write one.

"I had never needed one," the agricultural economics major from Madison, S.D., said.

But with graduation from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln looming this spring and the prospect of starting a career more real, Blake realized he needed to take action. He started last fall with the one-credit hour Employment Seminar offered by CASNR.

The seminar runs seven weeks each semester, and is coordinated by Jana Hafer, CASNR's career

specialist. For two hours each week, students learn

how to write resumes and cover letters, how to research companies and how to interview. A class on dining etiquette, with a meal for practice, ends the seminar.

The seminar "provides students with good career development tips and information to start with so they can prepare themselves to obtain internships and post-graduation jobs," Hafer said.

Faculty volunteers work with the class and representa-



Lori McGinnis

tives of various companies conduct mock job interviews for students.

Blake said he was "grilled" in his mock interview for a rural development position with the state of Minnesota, but the experience taught him what to expect and how to prepare when he faces the real thing.

"I learned a lot," he said. "If I hadn't taken it, I would not have realized the importance of preparing for an interview."

The spring class had 36 students – 20 seniors, 10 juniors, five sophomores and one freshman. The class is not limited to CASNR students, but Hafer estimated at least 95 percent are in the college. Students take the class as a pass/no pass elective. They are required to attend every class and complete assignments such as writing a resume.

Annie Hasselbalch, an agribusiness junior from Genoa,

already had a resume and interviewing experience when she took the class last fall. Still, her adviser encouraged her to take the seminar, and Hasselbalch said it was a beneficial experience.

"It was a good reminder," said Hasselbalch, who works as a part-time mortgage loan assistant for Union Bank. "It is always good to stay up-to-date on things."

Nebraska State Forester Gary Hergenrader volunteers with the class. He and other faculty are part of small group discussions and critique students' work.

Jami Frauen, an agricultural education senior from Grand Island, and Nick Hunke, a diversified agricultural studies senior from Dodge, enjoy soup during an etiquette dinner held as part of the Employment Seminar. The seven-week course offered by CASNR teaches students job-seeking skills.

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### Tips on career development

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# The Dean Says:

I came across the letter sifting through boxes in my late parents' home. I'd forgotten all about it; didn't know they kept it until I read:

*Dear Mom and Dad,*

*From the time Dad left Sunday until Tom got here at midnight Sunday, I was pretty lonely and ready to come home. I have never been so lost or felt so insignificant. Yesterday started out the same way, but it got better as it went along. ...*

I'd attended a two-year institution in southern Indiana and was a junior transfer student to Purdue University. After my father delivered me to campus and before my roommate arrived I felt homesick, insecure and alone.

Happily, within a day, it got better as it went along.

Also happily, today I work with CASNR faculty and staff who understand such feelings and know how one friendly face, one outstretched hand, one invitation to "drop by anytime" can help a day – and a life – get better as it goes along.

This newsletter tells some of the ways our students' educational experiences get better as they go along — through mentoring, an employment-oriented seminar, career- and life-building experiences, and people willing to lend a hand, people excited about teaching, people interested in who each of our students is, and what each wants to do.

We honored a few of those people March 13 with Holling Family Awards for Teaching Excellence – teachers and extension faculty working in agriculture and natural resources whose work

shows innovation, impact and program quality. James A. Gosey, Department of Animal Science; Lowell E. Moser, Department of Agronomy and Horticulture; James E. Partridge, Department of Plant Pathology; James H. Rupnow, Department of Food Science and Technology, are senior faculty teaching excellence award winners.



Steve Waller

The junior faculty Holling Family Award recipients are John E. Barbuto, Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication; and James P. Stack, South Central Research and Extension Center. Cristina Furdui and Horatiu Olteanu, both in the Department of Biochemistry, received teaching assistant awards.

They are wonderful examples of our many people dedicated to sharing knowledge and helping students build both careers and lives.

When I look back at that letter I wrote my parents so many years ago I find words I'd share with any student experiencing a rough patch now: *It gets better as it goes along.* And there are a whole lot of people here willing – and wanting – to help along the way.

Steve Waller  
 Interim Dean,  
 College of Agricultural  
 Sciences and Natural Resources

# Service learning applies class principles to life

Kyle Steffen hopes being a mentor for adolescent boys at a group home will help them as it helps him.

The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources diversified agricultural studies senior from West Point is mentoring for his Interpersonal Skills for Leadership class. Students in the class participate in 10 to 20 hours of volunteer service, or service learning.

The class, required for some CASNR majors, helps students increase self-awareness and understanding of others, said Jolene Schauer, instructor and project coordinator of the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication 102 course at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"The emphasis of this course is to gain knowledge about ourselves and others and apply these skills in a variety of personal and planned experiences," she said. "The component of the service learning project provides students with

opportunities to apply class principles in real-life situations."

Steffen said the time he spends with the boys gives him experience working with others, and he's glad to add the experience to his resume.

"It's something that gets you involved," Steffen said. "It's not just learning everything out of a book."

Service learning has been a component of the AgLEC course since the early 1980s. Steve Waller, CASNR interim dean, wants to spread the concept throughout the college. He said he hopes that this fall a service learning opportunity is part of the Introduction to Agricultural and Natural Resources Systems class required of CASNR freshmen.

"We're trying to incorporate this into the fabric of our curriculum," Waller said. "Our goal is that every incoming student has a service learning experience their first semester."

Diane Podolske, assistant director of student involvement, has coordinated service learning campus-wide for five years, helping faculty members throughout UNL who want



Lori McGinnis

to implement service learning in their classes. CASNR, she said, is the first to show college-wide interest.

Kristin Simonson, a College of Human Resources and Family Sciences student, discusses math problems with Casey Weiss, a seventh-grader at Pound Middle School in Lincoln.

"Steve is really the first one to say, 'OK, as a college, we're going to do this,'" Podolske said. "It's a great way for people to learn."

Waller said he believes CASNR students gain a better sense of citizenship through service learning.

"I think this will set our students apart," Waller said. "People will look to hire the kind of person who will represent them well in the community."

There are 70 organizations and agencies at which students can volunteer, including Lincoln Public Schools, the Lincoln Action Program and the downtown Senior Center.

Kristin Simonson, a family and consumer sciences freshman from Mullen, is taking Schauer's class. Simonson goes to Pound Middle School in Lincoln twice a week to help grade assignments, hand out papers and tutor.

"I think it's a really good program," Simonson said. "I think service learning is an influential way to get students involved."

— Lori McGinnis

## College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

### Calendar of Events

#### April

14-20 CASNR Week

#### May

11 Graduation Breakfast and Graduation

#### June

19-22 National Association of Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Annual Meeting  
24-25 Premier Animal Science Events  
26-28 ExpoVisions

#### July

10 Nebraska Agricultural Youth Institute  
14-18 Biology Career Workshop

#### August

23 Move into residence halls  
25 Big Red Welcome  
26 Classes begin  
29 Adviser Advantage

#### September

2 Labor Day  
6 Prairie Stomp

#### October

1 Career Fair  
21-22 Semester break  
30-Nov. 2 National FFA Convention

# Mentors provide encouragement, guidance

When Connie Reimers-Hild took a part-time job in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of Entomology in 1995, she never dreamed she one day would be its distance education coordinator.

She is, though, and credits it in large part to the confidence Entomology Professor John Foster

finished her master's degree in August 2000 and, thanks to her diversified background, now advises 70 enrollees in the department's distance education master's program. She also will join Foster and another entomologist in teaching her first course this fall. She said she hopes to encourage others as Foster encouraged her.

"I'm very proud of my students," said Foster, adding 14 now are department heads, deans, directors or research leaders worldwide.

It's that sort of faculty mentoring that inspires pride throughout the college, said Steve Waller, CASNR interim dean.

"You're an individual here – you are a person. If you think you're going to be a number, you haven't met our faculty," Waller said.

CASNR faculty also mentor outside the classroom. One example is the annual agribusiness tour Ron Hanson, professor of agricultural economics, leads.

Each January about 40 students from CASNR and UNL's College of Business Administration tour internationally-known agribusiness and financial trade headquarters in St. Louis, Chicago or Minneapolis. The tours help students explore company cultures and careers beyond production agriculture, Hanson said. As UNL students meet company presidents, traders, and sometimes UNL graduates now employed by these corporations, they leave behind favorable

impressions. "Our students present themselves very professionally," Hanson said. "That sometimes begins the networking."

Jessica McKillip, ag economics program coordinator and a former student of Hanson's, said Hanson uses his business connections to benefit students in the program.

The individual attention and opportunities CASNR students receive through mentoring are two of CASNR's greatest strengths, Waller said. Students who lack confidence to move forward on their own may gain it with faculty and staff encouragement.

Said Waller: "There's nothing magical about this; it's letting people help you make decisions – to follow the opportunity as much as the dream."

– Cheryl Alberts



Cheryl Alberts

As distance education coordinator for the Department of Entomology, Connie Reimers-Hild said she hopes to encourage others as Entomology Professor John Foster encouraged her when she was a student.

showed in her, and the encouragement he offered.

Foster urged Reimers-Hild, an outgoing, capable College of Agricultural

Sciences and Natural Resources undergraduate, to diversify her coursework, research and write an undergraduate thesis relating to both entomology and her agricultural sciences and natural resources major, and attend graduate school.

Foster "doesn't always look for the 4.0 top scholar," Reimers-Hild said. "He can see things in students that they don't see themselves" and guides them into young professionals.

Reimers-Hild became Foster's lead graduate student, overseeing other students and projects. She



Cheryl Alberts

Jessica McKillip, ag economics program coordinator and one of Agricultural Economics Professor Ron Hanson's former students, helps make arrangements for Hanson's annual agribusiness tours to help students explore company culture and careers.

# Mock congressional hearing

## part of class

Students in Professor Mary Beck's animal welfare class learn to depend on thorough research and their own wits while gaining insight into political processes as part of a joint via-satellite class with students from Kansas State University.

Beck's University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources students research assigned positions for and against real-life animal welfare issues.

Beck said students learn the history of animal use in research, food, sport and product testing. They assume roles of public policy analysts, spokespeople and lobbyists, prepare imaginary budgets and study demographics of imaginary constituents. They learn to think quickly on their feet during mock press conferences, and respond to news headlines. Ultimately, their research and preparation are tested in a face-to-face mock congressional hearing with KSU students.

"They get a flavor of how politics work," said Beck, an animal scientist who won a Holling Family Award for Teaching Excellence in 2001. "It's often emotional, often tricky."

Tom Satkus, an animal science senior from Homewood, Ill., took the class in 2000 and a year later was Beck's teaching assistant for it. Satkus said the class taught him to work with people whose convictions differ from his own, and to defend his assigned position based on research rather than personal beliefs.

UNL hosts the mock hearing in alternating years in a College of Law courtroom. This year the hearing is at KSU. Beck said the setting adds to the excitement and fervor – including last-minute cookie bribes by "lobbyists" trying to sway "lawmakers." Presentations, debate and closing arguments are evaluated by UNL and KSU professors.

– Cheryl Alberts



Cheryl Alberts

Mary Beck's animal welfare class teaches students such as Trish Kantor, an animal science junior from Omaha, the importance of thorough research and quick thinking as students work through real-life political issues.

## Learning in and outside the classroom

Helping students build strengths for successful lifelong learning and leading is the goal of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources' new Student Development Initiative, which offers learning inside and outside the classroom.

Agricultural leadership, education and communication and animal science faculty are piloting the curriculum portion of the initiative with 14 animal science students. Linda Moody, AgLEC faculty member and co-faculty leader with Dennis Brink on the pilot curriculum, said she hopes the leadership option will be available throughout CASNR in the future.

CASNR Interim Dean Steve Waller said the initiative integrates in- and out-of-classroom learning. Students might not appreciate the value volunteer or club activities have in relation to their educational or career goals now, but they will later, Waller said.

While mentoring, international study, internships and other options

already are available to students, the Student Development Initiative provides an administrative framework students and their faculty advisers can use to individually strengthen learning.

"The Student Development Initiative considers the whole picture a student provides: their technical skills, leadership skills, personal/social skills and their communication skills," said Moody. "We try to help them think about what strengths they need to build and then provide an experience, such as career shadowing, professional development activities, an internship or volunteer opportunity that helps them build those strengths."

Noting most students probably will have two or three careers in their lives, Waller said, "What we want to do with the Student Development Initiative is help students prepare both personally and professionally for those changes. I want our students to feel comfortable with change, and have the confidence to lead it."

– Barbara Rixstine

## A brief glimpse



Lori McGinnis

Scott Heinrich

Scott Heinrich, Hickman, a Syngenta Crop Protection sales representative and a 1994 agribusiness graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, represented the company at CASNR's fall 2001 career fair.

Heinrich sells Syngenta farm pesticides to co-ops and dealerships in Lancaster, Gage, Jefferson and Saline counties. He said CASNR's career fair is a good way to promote the Greensboro, N.C.-based company to potential student interns and prospective employees.

Heinrich said the quality of students attending the fair impressed him.

"We try to keep our name out there so we're familiar with the good students coming up," Heinrich said. "It's nice that the students can ask questions about what the company is doing and we can scope out the talent. These students have all got good interpersonal skills. They look professional and they can communicate. For our business, that's what we need. We have quite a few Nebraska grads working for the company."

— Lori McGinnis

Check out CASNR's Web site at  
<http://casnr.unl.edu>

# Ensuring your future

College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources students can get a head start toward their careers when they enroll in CASNR's Ensuring Your Future program – a guide for student success in career placement through academics, involvement and experience.

All CASNR students are encouraged to participate in the four-year program, said Steve Waller, University of Nebraska-Lincoln CASNR interim dean. Program requirements, including internships, adviser meetings, career preparation classes, involvement in clubs or organizations, a resume file and a one-credit hour Employment Seminar, focus on professional and personal development,

career preparation and continuing education.

Waller said the program carries a guarantee: Students completing the program who actively seek employment will receive at least one employment offer relevant to their academic program within the first six months following graduation.

The Ensuring Your Future program isn't just about academia, grades and credits – its emphasis on internships, involvement in student organizations and trips to places like the Chicago Board of Trade helps students evolve as professionals, Waller said.

"The Ensuring Your Future program helps students create a map to their destination," Waller noted.

— Barbara Rixstine

## CASNR Week April 14-20

Celebrate Excellence is the theme of the third annual College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Week, scheduled April 14-20.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln CASNR students annually host the week, which this year will strive for more community involvement, said Lisa Pfeiffer, an agricultural economics junior from Seward. Pfeiffer is co-coordinating CASNR Week with Kylie Brand, an ag education sophomore from Seward.

On April 15 members of the Lincoln Fire Department and others in the community are invited to participate in an evening barbecue, movie on the lawn and potential fireworks show outside Burr Hall, Pfeiffer said.

Other CASNR Week events include (an \* indicates tickets needed):

April 14 - Recognition banquet\*;  
April 15 - Ag Olympics; April 16 - noon barbecue with Froggy 98 radio broadcast on site; April 17 - Adviser luncheon\*, evening Love Hall chili feed (free-will donations accepted), hypnotist entertainment;  
April 18 - Kids Day and Alpha Gamma Rho barbecue\*; dance\*;  
April 19 - High school recruitment day, reception and scavenger hunt, evening UNL rodeo\*, evening dance, Lancaster Event Center;  
April 20 - Burr Hall Bull Fry\* and carnival; afternoon and evening rodeos\*, evening dance.

Event advance tickets may be purchased at the East Union. Check with the CASNR office for a finalized event/time schedule.

— Cheryl Alberts

# Publications, presentations part of this agroforestry course

There are no term papers in Agroforestry in Sustainable Agricultural Systems, taught by Professor Jim Brandle. But there is writing. And research. Peer review and presentations.

Brandle's undergraduate and graduate students don't prepare term papers; they prepare four- to eight-page color publications for which they choose the topic, research, write, locate appropriate photographs and design using the computer.

"The only requirement is it must be related to agroforestry," said Brandle, a natural resource sciences professor in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. "Without exception they have said this is harder than writing a research paper."

The assignment, which accounts for nearly half the class grade,



Chris Schroeder, a landscape design senior from Wisner, presents his publication, "The Benefits of Your Urban Forest," during class.

helps students write concisely and use a computer graphic arts program, Brandle said. A graphic artist from the National Agro-

forestry Center provides information on basic layout during one class period.

Students' publications go through several drafts and are reviewed by classmates, similar to the peer

review process professors follow in publishing, Brandle said. Once completed, students make oral presentations on their chosen topics. Scott Josiah, state extension forester, is working with one student to build the classroom project into a professional publication.

Brandle said many of his students will work in careers that require them to create such publications, and this provides experience in what such projects take.

Jenny Svoboda, an environmental studies senior from Lincoln, produced a four-page publication about bamboo, which interested her because she works at a store with bamboo products. She said she did not realize what was involved when she started the class.

"I figured it would be a brochure you would paste some pictures on. I didn't know it would be so extravagant," Svoboda said. "I'm so glad I did it. It was an interesting project."

Chris Schroeder, a landscape design senior from Wisner, said he learned composition and how to use the Adobe PageMaker computer program when he created his publication, "The Benefits of Your Urban Forest."

Gabe Bathen, a landscape design senior from David City, said he searched the Internet for information and photographs about farmstead windbreaks. It was tough because little information was available, he said, adding he learned a lot on a



Lori McGinnis

topic he thought worth exploring.

While research papers can be valuable learning projects, Brandle said he decided four years ago to substitute the publications to better prepare his students for their careers.

"How many times do they write a research paper after they graduate?" he said.

– Lori McGinnis

Jenny Svoboda, an environmental studies senior, examines the publication she created for her Agroforestry in Sustainable Agricultural Systems course.

## Seminar from page 1

"I think it's something that's very beneficial to the students and gives them a leg up when they look for a job," Hergenrader said.

"I strongly suggest it to anybody," Blake said. "No one is there because they have to be, it's because they want to be."

– Lori McGinnis



Lori McGinnis

Christina Fielder, assistant director of Career Services at UNL, discusses the proper use of eating utensils during an etiquette dinner held at the end of the Employment Seminar.

# Grazing livestock systems major unique

Animal science, agronomy (forage/range), and agricultural economics are integrated in the grazing livestock systems (GLS) major in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, offering a three-for-one package found in few academic programs.

natural resource-oriented agencies and offices, and the varied grasslands of Nebraska's High Plains and Sandhills as among the state's assets.

Internships are required for all GLS majors, Moser said. Each student's internship is tailor-made, and is paid by the provider. Students and advisers plan them together, based on students' career and education objectives, with most internships taken by juniors and seniors.

Casey Johnson, a GLS senior from Ainsworth, interned last year at the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Central Sandhills office in Thedford, working with Extension Educator Brent Plugge.

Johnson said the internship worked on a variety of levels. "I was able to see hands-on practices and talk with ranchers about not just livestock but range management," she said.

In their classes GLS majors study in state-of-the-art classrooms using individual computers, lab facilities with indoor pens and arenas, field laboratories and production-scale learning centers. Some students also may study at the nearly 13,000-acre Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory near Whitman.

"We want our internship students to have a basic knowledge they can build on," Moser said. "By building an internship on that core, it works two ways: students get valuable experience and a chance to display their skills to potential employers. Internship providers get high-level interns and experiences that are interesting and stimulating."

The program gets high marks from both students and internship providers, Moser said, adding, "We send out students and get back professionals."

— Barbara Rixstine



Barbara Rixstine

Casey Johnson, a GLS senior from Ainsworth, studies the internship opportunities on the board outside the agronomy and horticulture administrative offices in the Plant Science building.

Begun in fall 1999, the major is offered through the Center for Grassland Studies in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the

University of Nebraska-Lincoln. It focuses on the interrelationships of ruminant livestock production, grassland ecology and management, and business management.

"This is a unique major in that it integrates three distinct disciplines to better educate and prepare our students for their future careers," said Martin Massengale, center director.

"No other university in the U.S. offers this undergraduate major," noted Lowell Moser, Sunkist Fiesta Bowl professor of agronomy and horticulture and chair of the GLS coordinating committee.

"Nebraska is ideally suited for the major," Moser added, citing the state's number of cow-calf pairs,

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