

College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

## New perspective after study in India

Ashley Burns read three guidebooks about India before she traveled there. None of them came close to describing what her trip to India was really like.

"You don't know India. Anyone can tell you about India, but you don't know India till you see India," Burns said.

Burns spent two weeks in New Delhi, Agra and Locknow, India, in July 2011 as part of a study abroad course. Mobile Media in India was led by University of Nebraska–Lincoln journalism assistant professor Scott Winter.

"I am really proud of what we put together," she said.

Winter is, too. "She really showed off her skills in India, but she'd admit that more importantly, she has a new perspective on agriculture, journalism and planet earth after that trip," he said.

"I learned so much and developed so much as a person," Burns said. "It's almost indescribable."

Burns, who primarily wrote stories while there, said her only regret is that there was not enough time to cover some of the issues in greater depth. She focused on agriculture in India, which ranges from farming six to 12 acres with 1970s-era tractors, to farming with a plow and oxen, to planting rice by hand.

The trip helped her better develop her journalism, social media and teamwork skills.

"Basically, I can work more on the fly now," she said, adding she's "able to work in a newsroom environment

*"I learned so much and developed so much as a person. It's almost indescribable."*

Ashley Burns,  
agricultural journalism junior

where everything is just really fast-paced, everything is really 'now.'"

Some Nebraskans are surprised that

Burns, who grew up north of San Francisco, considers her parents' 12 acres to be a farm, that

she belonged to FFA, and that she's an agricultural journalism junior in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

She tried some other programs of study, such as education, range management and horticulture, before deciding she wanted to be an agricultural journalist.



Agricultural journalism junior Ashley Burns spent two weeks in India in July 2011 as part of a study abroad course, Mobile Media in India.

"I felt like it (ag journalism) had the most interesting subject matter and it was where I felt most comfortable," she said. "Ag journalism is what I'm really good at and where my interests lie."

After she graduates, Burns wants to write about agricultural issues in the U.S. that don't get a lot of coverage.

"Most people are so far away from agriculture. I want to write stories that make people care."

– Linda Ulrich



University of Nebraska–Lincoln

## The Dean Says:

College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Class Acts is published spring and fall semesters by the Educational Media unit at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln under the auspices of the Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Written material may be reprinted, provided no endorsement of a commercial product is stated or implied. Please credit College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Class Acts, University of Nebraska–Lincoln. To simplify technical terminology, trade names sometimes may be used. No endorsement of products is intended nor is criticism implied of products not mentioned.

There is no charge for this newsletter, which provides College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources information. Please send comments, questions and subscription requests to: Editor, College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Class Acts, 108 Agricultural Communications Building, P.O. Box 830918, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68583-0918.

Upon request, this publication can be made available in an alternative format for people with disabilities. For assistance call (402) 472-3031.

Chancellor, University of Nebraska–Lincoln  
*Harvey Perlman*

NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources  
*Ronnie D. Green*

Dean, College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources  
*Steven S. Waller*

Editorial  
*Cheryl Alberts*  
*Sandi Alswager Karstens*  
*Daniel R. Moser*  
*Judy Nelson*  
*Linda Ulrich*

Designer  
*Anne Moore*

Photography  
*Liana Calegare*      *Daniel R. Moser*  
*Sandi Alswager Karstens*      *Nebraska Farm Bureau*

The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources is part of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

### Partners with Nebraska



Land-grant universities work with the people they serve. NU's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources does so in priority areas of food, agriculture, agribusiness, natural resources, people and communities.

We teach, discover new knowledge through research, and extend that new, unbiased information across the state and beyond through extension.

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln does not discriminate based on gender, age, disability, race, color, religion, marital status, veteran's status, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation.

**Early this year there was a flurry** of Internet and other conversation about an article appearing on an online news outlet questioning the value of a college education in agriculture — is it worth a student's investment.

Yes, it is!

Job opportunities for agricultural graduates today are extremely good, and those who study agriculture have a strong and wonderful future.

A survey out of Georgetown University cites agriculture as one of the top fields with low unemployment. And a USDA study authored by two Purdue scientists, a USDA colleague and a colleague from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, with others consulting, found that in the next several years it appears there will be more employment opportunities for agricultural graduates than there will be graduates.

We in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources know our science-based curriculum prepares students for careers that extend across and beyond agriculture. The future will be driven by science, and our students graduate ready to drive.

We find employers want to hire our agricultural graduates for jobs inside and outside agriculture because of our students' great work ethic and academic preparation. Certainly CASNR's "Ensuring Your Future" program, which guarantees a job offer within six months after graduation, shows our confidence in the opportunities that await our students.

For Nebraska, a powerhouse agricultural state in need of agricultural leaders in a variety of careers, these graduates are definitely a plus.

The U.S. leads the world in agricultural exports, and agriculture plays a vital role in the U.S. economy. It's responsible for 1 in 12 jobs nationwide.

In Nebraska, 1 in 3 jobs depends in some way upon agriculture.

One thing the inaccurate Internet article reinforced for me is the importance of educating people about agriculture and its role in their lives.

Today, with so little of the U.S. population involved in production agriculture, too few people understand how food is produced, and the heroic importance of an industry on which the entire planet depends.

The story of food — enough for everyone, worldwide — and the natural resources that support it, is a story we must tell, and a story we must see is told, again and again, along with the story of the many challenges that face us in feeding the world while being thoughtful stewards of our natural resources.

Quite literally, the story of food and water and renewable fuel is the story of global survival.

It's our responsibility to make that known, as we continue to educate and prepare the next generation for the myriad ways in which they will be part of feeding the world.



Steve Waller

Steve Waller  
Dean, College of Agricultural Sciences  
and Natural Resources

# Online classes offer flexibility

Through online courses and degree programs, the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources is doing things it otherwise would be unable to do, reaching students it would otherwise be unable to reach.

CASNR online courses have grown more than 40 percent over the last five years; in 2010-11 CASNR students enrolled online generated 5,183 credit hours, according to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Office of Extended Education and Outreach.

Entomology offered CASNR's first online course in 1997.

Tom Weissling, associate professor of practice in entomology, coordinates the online master's program in entomology.

"Right now there are more than 120 active students across the U.S. and a few international students in the (master's) program," Weissling said.

Entomology online courses are open to undergraduate students on and off campus, and to high school students through the Advanced Scholars program.

Entomology professor Tiffany Heng-Moss teaches an introductory entomology course online to undergraduate students

on and off campus and to high school students through the Advanced Scholars program and the Nebraska Academy.

"Putting these courses online allowed us to provide flexibility in course scheduling to our on-campus students, meet the needs of site-bound students across the U.S. and reach out to Nebraska's high school students," Heng-Moss said.

Online courses allow participation from students all over the world, adding diversity to online discussions.

"There is a certain amount of satisfaction I get from helping students who would not otherwise have the opportunity," Weissling said.

Deana Namuth-Covert, associate professor and distance education director for agronomy and horticulture, teaches all her classes online. She also leads the online Plant and Soil Sciences eLibrary at *passel.unl.edu*. This award-winning repository of peer-reviewed educational materials offers interactive community building tools used in over 179 countries. Launched in 1999, it has received \$1.5 million in grants.

Teaching online, said Namuth-Covert, allows for enhanced faculty partnerships, improved enrollment, and interaction between on-campus students and distance students, who CASNR normally wouldn't reach.

"The interactions between students online bring a new perspective, especially distance students already working in the industry," Namuth-Covert said.

Agronomy and horticulture has been offering undergraduate, graduate and non-credit courses online since 1998.

CASNR also offers an online bachelor's degree in applied science, and certificates in Meat Culinology and legal studies. CASNR online graduate programs include agribusiness, applied science, food safety and defense, insect biology for educators, science for educators and community development.

– Sandi Alswager Karstens



Agronomy seniors Ethan Bruland, left, of Albion, and Trevor Gorecki of Dannebrog study online for a genetics quiz, also online.

## Calendar of Events

### College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

#### May

- 4 Salute to Graduates
- 5 Senior Send-off, Commencement

#### June

- 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20  
New Student Enrollment

#### July

- 3 New Student Enrollment

#### August

- 9-10 Late New Student Enrollment

Sandi Alswager Karstens

# Holoubek-CASNR connection runs deep

When Willow Holoubek decided to major in animal science in the late 1970s, only a few women studied agriculture.

Despite being in the minority, Holoubek said that the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources helped her develop the skills she needed “to live my lifelong passion of supporting agriculture.”

It was a comprehensive program, said the 1981 CASNR graduate. “It gave me a well-rounded education, great industry connections and lifelong friends.”

Three of her four children have had or are having the same CASNR experience.

“My legacy is my children and CASNR has helped them know who they are and helped them develop the skills to be successful,” said the organizational director for A-Fan (Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska). She also helps

her husband with the family’s grain and livestock farm near David City.

The Holoubek-CASNR connection includes husband Mark who graduated from CASNR in ag honors in 1979. Son Joe graduated from CASNR in 2010 and helps test new products at Ag Leader Technology in Ames, Iowa. Son Chase, who is in the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Scholarship Program, will graduate from CASNR in May and plans to work as a merchandiser for Gavilon Grain in Burley, Idaho. Daughter Katie, also an Engler Scholar, is a CASNR sophomore interning this summer with ADM in Decatur, Ill. (Son Luke graduated from the University of Nebraska at Kearney and is in his second year in the University of Nebraska–Lincoln College of Law).

When Chase Holoubek was a freshman, he saw an upperclassman’s business plan

and thought he would never be able to create one. Not only did he develop one, he won second place in the College of Business Administration’s Venture Plan competition for his business plan for his proposed company, Aerial Ag Solutions, an ag management tool that would use drones to fly over fields and create infrared images to better analyze fields and crops.

Chase Holoubek, who chose CASNR based on brother Joe’s recommendation, enjoyed CASNR so much that he attended the World Ag Expo in California and helped recruit students for CASNR during his sophomore year.

What Chase Holoubek likes best about CASNR is the personalized advising.

“CASNR advisers seem more willing to help. I’m thankful to have been in CASNR,” he said. “And CASNR has a lot of scholarships, which is a blessing.”

Katie Holoubek wanted to be part of the entrepreneurship program because she viewed it as an opportunity to learn from Paul Engler’s passion and enthusiasm for entrepreneurship and youth. Her dual program of study is agricultural economics and animal science. This spring she participated in a study abroad program in Olomouc, Czech Republic, working on an international business minor.

Her brothers also studied abroad, Luke and Chase in the Czech Republic, and Joe in New Zealand.

CASNR and studying abroad have expanded her children’s horizons and have furthered their understanding that agriculture is global, Willow Holoubek said.

– Linda Ulrich



Chase Holoubek (left) and Katie Holoubek are shown at the 2011 Alumni Masters Week reception with their father, Mark Holoubek. Chase and Katie’s mother Willow Holoubek was one of the alumni who participated in Masters Week. Mark and Willow Holoubek are CASNR alumni. Chase will graduate from CASNR in May and Katie is a CASNR sophomore. Their brother Joe is a 2010 CASNR graduate.

Courtesy photo

# Students learning from each other

The major principles of prevention and control of livestock disease, veterinary virology, agricultural economics and small animal surgery are subjects Renato Previdelli is learning during his time in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

A member of Brazil's Science Without Borders Program, Previdelli is among 25 of the country's best and brightest students welcomed to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in spring 2012.

The Brazilian government's new program provides student scholarships for up to 100,000 students to study science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) for one year at U.S. colleges and universities.

After one year of study, including a summer internship, the students return to Brazil to complete their degrees.

"Every opportunity of studying abroad is valuable and really enriches our academic lives and opens up future opportunities of getting a job," said Previdelli, whose primary focus is veterinary medicine. "Moreover, UNL is considered a very good university in agriculture and natural resources, which helps a lot, too. I am sure every single moment spent here will add new experiences to my life and bring me new opportunities in the future."

The Science Without Borders group at UNL is the largest single delegation anywhere in the U.S.

"The University of Nebraska has made a commitment to globalizing our education here at UNL," said Jack Schinstock, professor of biological systems engineering. "That means we are obviously going to be



UNL is collaborating with Brazil's Science Without Borders program, which brought 25 Brazilian students to UNL in spring 2012 for a yearlong study.

Liana Calegare

sending students abroad, and also bringing students here. Not everyone can go on an international study abroad opportunity, so to interact with international students is greatly enhanced by a program like this."

NU provided a \$1,000 presidential scholarship to each Brazilian student. In addition, CASNR liaison and Brazilian native Liana Calegare helps students with their documents and move to Nebraska. She helps ensure their experiences are positive, and is helping them find summer internships.

"I hope I've helped them adapt faster, knowing they have someone who speaks their language (Portuguese) and who has gone through a similar situation some years ago," said Calegare, who once participated as a scholar researcher at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center at Clay Center as part of her doctorate degree

completed at University of Sao Paulo Brazil. She now calls Nebraska home.

Previdelli said so far his classes have been great, and he has enjoyed hanging out with his new Nebraska and Brazilian friends.

"Lincoln seems to be a very nice and interesting city, and the people are especially very nice and polite here," he said.

Schinstock said UNL will continue participating in Science Without Borders throughout subsequent semesters.

He said students from Brazil and the U.S. who work together and collaborate now will better facilitate their collaborations when they are in the prime of their careers in 2050, solving global problems in energy, food, water and fuel for 9 billion people.

– Sandi Alswager Karstens

## A brief glimpse

**M**ozambique is a long way from Alliance, but Bryce Vaughn will be making that trip this summer. The agricultural economics-public policy



Bryce Vaughn

Courtesy photo

junior has an internship with ICM and Orphans Unlimited that will take him to a remote village in the African nation for 90 days.

He'll assist with buying corn and beans from local farmers and allocating it to villages.

"I am looking forward to helping the Mozambican people by working to provide food and shelter," Vaughn said. "My family and friends are excited for me."

Vaughn also received the first Keith R. Olsen Agricultural Policy Internship Award, named for the former Nebraska Farm Bureau president. It will enable Vaughn to intern in a public policy position in Washington, D.C.

"I really believe internship experiences help you confirm the path you want to take," said Vaughn, who may go to law school.

Vaughn also was named last year one of nine members of the national student advisory team for Agriculture Future of America. AFA helps college students who plan agriculture-related careers with personal and professional development, and leadership and career training. Vaughn helped plan AFA's 2011 Leaders Conference, which attracted more than 850 students from 37 states and more than 70 colleges and universities.

"It's a really diverse group of students," he said. "I would consider them top-notch leaders on their campuses."

As is Vaughn, of course.

— Daniel R. Moser

# Internship honors ag leader

**A** new internship in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources honors a longtime Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation leader, as it helps students gain valuable experience in the nation's Capitol.

Established in November, the Keith R. Olsen Agricultural Policy Internship honors the man who served for nearly 20 years on the Nebraska Farm Bureau board of directors, and was president from 2002-2011.

While at Nebraska Farm Bureau, Olsen emphasized creating opportunities in agriculture for young people, said Rob Robertson, the organization's chief administrator.

"Because of Nebraska Farm Bureau's extensive involvement in the public policy arena and support for agricultural youth and leadership development, we felt that this internship was a perfect match for both of those priorities," Robertson said, adding agriculture will benefit

in the long term because youth receiving the scholarship will learn how to influence future agricultural policy.

The first award recipient, Bryce Vaughn, was selected in January (see accompanying story). The agricultural economics-public policy junior from Alliance said the honor will "allow me to take what I have learned in the classroom and apply it to important issues that will determine the future of agriculture."

Listed as course 495C, the for-credit internship provides up to \$4,000 for interns to work in Washington, D.C., for a Nebraska Congressional office, congressional committee or approved agricultural organization. Students will attend hearings,

track legislation, research issues, draft briefs, meet with staffers, and edit correspondence and press releases.

After a summer internship takes him to Mozambique, Vaughn said he expects to work in Washington, D.C., this fall.

"Our goal is to encourage and support internship opportunities as a strong component of an undergraduate program and degree, whether taken for credit or not, and whether it is a paid or unpaid opportunity," said Brad Lubben, agricultural economist and faculty sponsor for the Olsen internship.

The Olsen internship — the first named award to pursue internships in agricultural policy — provides a foundation from which students can grow and contribute substantially to the ag policy process in their community, their organization, and even in state and national elected offices, Lubben said.

Added CASNR Dean

Steve Waller: "Internships are the convergence of academic preparation and practical experience that clarify and often define the career paths of our students. Students who are fortunate to receive a Keith R. Olsen Agricultural Policy Internship have the added prestige of the Olsen name, as well as the responsibility to continue the legacy of public service that defined Keith's career."

Olsen, of Grant, earned his agricultural economics degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1967, and was a 4-H leader for 30 years. He produces wheat, certified seed wheat and ecofallow corn.

— Cheryl Alberts



Keith Olsen

Nebraska Farm Bureau

# Namibia is a rewarding experience

What Walter Schacht remembers most about teaching and doing research in Africa is the students.

“They are captivating. They are enthusiastic, and they are hungry for knowledge,” said Schacht, a Fulbright Scholar who taught and did research in Namibia, a country in southwestern Africa, for all of 2011. Schacht, professor of rangeland ecology in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, taught at the Polytechnic of Namibia in Windhoek. Most of the students at Polytechnic are studying business and engineering with about 100 enrolled in the agriculture and natural resources programs.

For most students, a tribal or local language is their first language, Afrikaans is their second language and English is third.

“Teaching students whose first language was not English was a challenge, but the most rewarding part of my time in Namibia was the teaching,” Schacht said, “I had the greatest time.”

His research in Namibia focused on how soil water is related to the composition of grasslands, which are being encroached by trees and shrubs commonly called bush.

Schacht’s wife Carol accompanied him. She worked as a consultant to the Polytechnic’s president and his staff in

strategic planning, team building and talent identification and also did volunteer work at an HIV/AIDS orphanage.

This was not Schacht’s first experience in Africa. From 1976 to 1979, he and Carol were in the Peace Corps in the Central African Republic, which is where they met.

The thing Schacht missed most while in Namibia was advising CASNR students. Although Schacht’s faculty appointment is 60 percent research and 40 percent teaching, “advising is a big part of what I do,” said Schacht, who was awarded the Lawrence K. Crowe Undergraduate Adviser Award via Skype while he was in Africa. The annual award recognizes CASNR faculty who have made outstanding contributions in undergraduate advising.

“So many students are enthusiastic about what they want to do, but they don’t quite know how to get to where they want to go. I like to help them make that happen,” he said.

Schacht also received the CASNR Distinguished Teaching Award in 2008. In February 2011, he was recognized as a “Nature Hero” by *Nebraska Life Magazine*, in part for his UNL research on grazing management and more recently grassland ecology and management. His principal area of research emphasizes ecosystem response to grazing and associated

management practices in the Nebraska Sandhills.

“Overall, I am interested in developing management strategies that ensure the ecological and economic sustainability of grazing lands for multiple uses, including livestock grazing,” he said.

– Linda Ulrich

## A brief glimpse

Ask Joseph Guenther what sticks with him from his trip to Costa Rica last year, and the memories spill forth. For the Bancroft native, the two-



Daniel R. Moser

week trip with about 18 students last May was an eye-opener.

The mechanized systems management junior experienced both rural and urban agriculture on his first international trip. Both are practiced with an eye toward sustainability and environmental sensitivity.

“I’d never seen living fences before,” said Guenther, a coming December graduate of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. “It’s easier for them there. They can just cut off a branch, stick it in the ground and it grows.”

“I was also amazed at how much they recycled everything.” Two-liter pop bottles got new life filled with water and stuck in the ground to slowly irrigate plants. “Tacky-looking but effective” was Guenther’s verdict.

Guenther was impressed with farmers’ scattering of trees in farm fields — designed to give birds a safe passageway from forest to forest.

While coffee and bananas are the top crops, urban agriculture was impressive in its own way. “Everywhere they can (plant), they’re all about it,” Guenther said. Tomatoes and peppers are particularly popular.

Guenther has an internship with a manure consulting company in West Point this summer and hopes a full-time job might develop from that, though his experience in Costa Rica has opened him to the possibility of working outside the country.

– Daniel R. Moser



Courtesy photo

Walter Schacht, professor of rangeland ecology, spent 2011 in Namibia, a country in southwestern Africa, as a Fulbright Scholar. He taught and did research at the Polytechnic of Namibia. Schacht is shown here with some of the African students he taught.

# Grad drawn to diverse opportunities

**A**griculture is hot. And because it is, Ryan Downs is confident that graduates of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources have a bright future.

Agriculture is a strong sector of the U.S. economy, and there are more jobs in agriculture now than ever before, said Downs, who earned his bachelor's degree in agribusiness and agricultural honors from CASNR in 1991. "It (agriculture) is only going to get more and more interesting in the next two decades."

An agriculture degree is diverse enough and challenging enough that CASNR graduates will be prepared for a wide variety of jobs, he said.

Downs himself is proof of that. After graduating from CASNR, Downs earned his Juris Doctorate from Harvard Law School. He worked as an attorney in Denver and Chicago before becoming chief executive officer for eTopia Technologies in Omaha. Downs was recruited by PayPal in 2001 and helped to drive its IPO. He became senior vice president, Worldwide Operations for PayPal, which had been acquired by eBay



Ryan Downs, a 1991 CASNR graduate, now is president of Omaha-based Proxibid, the world's largest provider of online auctions.

Courtesy photo

in 2002. In 2010, he assumed his current position as president of Omaha-based Proxibid, the world's largest provider of online auctions.

"We are an online platform that allows buyers of goods to participate in real-world, live auctions," Downs said. The auctions range from specialized construction equipment to high-end collectibles.

"It's a Silicon Valley-type opportunity right here in Nebraska. It's a high growth technology company," he said. "We have a great team, a passionate team."

Although there might seem to be little connection between his CASNR degree and his work at Proxibid, Downs says that's not the case.

"For me, the part that has been most beneficial is the business background. There are pieces of my degree that I use every day," he said. "In particular, I use the leadership skills and knowledge I learned in economics and accounting classes.

"Going to a large university helped build my confidence. I really came to know all of my professors very well, and those relationships helped a small-town kid get his feet wet and gave me the confidence to perform at a high level," said Downs, who grew up on his family's farm and ranch near Hershey.

Downs maintains a connection to his rural roots. He owns farmland in eastern Nebraska, some of which he leases and some of which he farms himself.

"I still lead a fairly rural life," he said.

— Linda Ulrich