Undergraduate Student Recruitment
College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) is keenly aware of the need to educate both internal and external customers on its academic programs and related student development opportunities. As one of 16 universities in the nation that is both an AAU and Land Grant university, UNL attracts students with a wide range of interests. A majority of prospective and current UNL students—even they may be from Nebraska—do not understand the nature or purpose of CASNR to UNL and the State. In an effort to increase this understanding, CASNR partners with UNL Admissions and Cooperative Extension in recruitment efforts both on- and off-campus.

Traditionally, CASNR’s student population has primarily been comprised of rural students (80 percent or higher). With a decreasing number of high school students in Nebraska—and especially in rural areas—CASNR has taken measures to recruit more heavily in urban and out-of-state areas. A reflection of both the population shift and these efforts, CASNR majors more typically chosen by urban students—horticulture, fisheries and wildlife, biochemistry, food science, veterinary science, agribusiness and professional golf management—have seen increased numbers over the last three to five years. In addition, multicultural student populations are focused more heavily in urban areas of Nebraska and in communities that have attracted larger processing and labor-intensive industries. CASNR efforts to recruit multicultural students are focused in these areas and, in some cases, at an earlier age/grade level than our typical recruitment targets.

CASNR recruitment efforts for the 2003-2004 year include the following:

**CASNR Day** (open house on October 11, 2003) found over 265 prospective students, parents, faculty, staff and current students interacting in a browsing/discovery session, in academic program presentations, and over lunch, which included a campus life video and student panel.

**Media Campaign.** For the third year, CASNR launched a media campaign. Radio ads, which feature students talking about their interest areas and opportunities that have impacted them, run on selected weeks between October and early March. Coordinated materials—posters, brochures, folders, notepads and pens—were sent to high school teachers and Extension offices and used throughout the year for recruitment purposes.

**Email/Contact Campaign.** Beginning with invitations to CASNR Day in October, CASNR student ambassadors and a transfer student assistant contacted over 900 prospective students monthly by email and mail to connect with them, learn about their interests and concerns, and answer questions they may had regarding coming to UNL and CASNR.

**Calling Campaigns.** Over 250 prospective students were called in December and 230 admitted students the in February. Current students called prospective students and asked them about their interests, plans for college and if they had questions. The results confirmed that many prospective students are still deciding on colleges based on costs, support (usually in the way of scholarships), special programs (such as honors or leadership opportunities) and academic interests.

**Partnering with Admissions**
- **Admissions Office – Deans’ Days and January update.** Each September UNL college deans visit with UNL Admissions staff regarding college updates and focuses. New Admissions Office personnel visited CASNR January for an update.
- **Greater Nebraska College Fair – Lincoln.** Set up a display and talk with Fair visitors about CASNR programs. Each undergraduate college at UNL is represented.
- **Red Letter Days**: (UNL open house days—eight/year in fall/early spring) have anywhere from 200-800 students and parents visiting campus and include a browsing session and general sessions in the morning. Students with interests in CASNR travel to East Campus to join the CASNR Deans, staff and ambassadors for lunch followed by a CASNR presentation, time to visit with faculty members in their areas of interest and a brief tour.

- **NU Preview/Junior Day**: CASNR faculty presented six “mock classes” for students at a special Extension NU Preview with more than 200 students attending. In addition, CASNR faculty presented at all but one of the remaining junior five days.

- **Campus Visits**: start with the Admissions Office for an overview (9 a.m. for morning visits and 1 p.m. for afternoon visits) and tour followed by a visit to East Campus, a personal visit with faculty/staff in their areas of interest and a tour, if desired. CASNR hosted over 200 campus visits in 2003-2004.

- **Transfer visits to Nebraska community colleges**: The CASNR Director of College Relations traveled to community colleges, in fall and spring semesters, with the Associate Director of Admissions-Transfer Programs to visit with prospective students and community college faculty and staff.

- **Big Red Road Show**: Historically, UNL has not attracted a significant number of prospective Omaha students. In an effort to increase interest in UNL, we took UNL to Omaha for the second year. CASNR had 16 booths/activities—all under an area we named “N World.” We served “irradiated” hamburgers, made chocolate roses, had a Nebraska snake exhibit and had a master gardener on hand. Visitors could dance like a crane, learn about radio telemetry, test their knowledge of agribusiness, pet a ferret, learn about DNA and genetics or sink a “hole-in-one” in golf. For each activity in which they participated, visitors were given an “N World” dollar. Dollars were exchanged at the CASNR booth t-shirts, caps, coffee mugs, books, calculators, koozies, candy, pens and markers. “N World” was voted “people’s choice” traveling trophy award winner by those who attended.

### High School and Middle School Partnerships
- **Lincoln high schools**: CASNR presents on careers in agriculture and natural resources to sophomore-level career education classes (over 700 students in 2003-2004).
- **Elmwood-Murdock School Career Day**: presented to three groups of 7-12 grade students.
- **Omaha Public Schools Agribusiness/Construction Technology Career Fair**: visit with 20-30 students about CASNR programs.

### Business/Extension Partnerships
- **Husker Harvest Days**: three-day trade show visited by a number of vocational agriculture classes from surrounding areas
- **York Careers in Agriculture Day**: Students from surrounding schools are hosted by York State Bank (150 students attend 2-3 workshops sessions presented by CASNR faculty/staff)
- **Dawson County Careers in Agriculture Day**: Nearly 140 students from the Lexington area (high multicultural population due to meatpacking plant in Lexington) attend five different sessions on careers in agriculture and natural resources.
- **UNL Career Night**: (Extension satellite program) features college and career information on 3-5 undergraduate colleges at UNL (hosted by CASNR/Extension Division).
- **Career Outlook 2004**: nearly 140 eighth graders from Nebraska communities attended an all-day workshop that started on city campus in Career Services where participants learned about Holland categories (interests and skills inventory that matches interests and career possibilities). They traveled to east campus for lunch and then furthered their career focus with career-centered activities—CASNR Career Jeopardy and an on-campus CASNR Career Scavenger Hunt.
- **4-H Recognition Night**: Eleven CASNR program/unit booths and numerous faculty, staff and students visited with Lancaster County 4-H students (estimated 190 in attendance).
- **Gudmundsen Field Day**: (Whitman, NE) – 160 youth from eight schools attended an all-day event. Students learned about immunization and attended four workshops that focused on animal science, and ranch/range management. CASNR presented information on academics in related areas, UNL and career opportunities.
FFA
- **National Convention** – have a booth (Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Consortium of Nebraska--UNL and five community colleges).
- **State Convention** – CASNR presents workshops, hosts a CASNR club fair and has booth/scholarship giveaway on East Campus and booth/scholarship giveaway as part of the Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Consortium of Nebraska (UNL and five community colleges).

**Multicultural Recruitment**
- UNL Multicultural Senior Visit Day
- April 6 – Estimated 100 students from Madison-Winnebago (Multicultural Campus Event)
- Informational presentations one went to Horticulture and the other to Food Science. They were again split into two groups so they were a manageable size. Food Science toured the facility.
- Multicultural Admitted Student Reception (overnight)
- Omaha 4th Grade (4 inner city schools-160 students total) “Early Awareness Program” highlighted chemistry and entomology related activities.

**UNL Academic Days** (attracts students who may not be aware of possible CASNR majors)
- **Math Day** – set up a display/host an activity for students on campus for annual math competition.
- **Women in Science** – host tour groups and attend dinner with students/sponsors.

Plans for 2004-2005 include developing trackable recruitment campaigns for each major in CASNR using a fairly sophisticated prospective/admitted student database in an effort to better identify the most effective recruitment activities.