

Poster Type: Innovative Idea

**Utilizing a Reverse Transfer Agreement to Efficiently Facilitate
Two-Year College Students through a Baccalaureate Agricultural Education Program**

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Introduction

Transfer programs are gaining more attention in research literature with some institutions focusing on multiple transfer options. “At the same time that institutional leaders are focusing on the academic and social integration of their first-year students to ensure their retention and academic success, they also have begun to focus on increasing the baccalaureate attainment of community college transfer students” (Townsend and Wilson, 2006).

School-Based Agricultural Education programs have increased in local high schools by over 43% since 2010 which has likewise increased the need for secondary agricultural educators (Kreifels, 2018). The activities of the Tagged to Teach Ag program and the State Teach Ag Results program have helped attract student to the profession, but additional institutions in the state could more effectively contribute to the teacher pipeline that leads to the University of Nebraska—Lincoln (UNL), thus filling classrooms with highly qualified educators (Kreifels, 2018).

The two-year institution, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) has been in existence for 105 years (52 years as a high school and 53 years as a post-secondary institution) and has developed a large number of skilled individuals for the agriculture industry within Nebraska and surrounding states. The two-year institution prides itself on hands-on applied learning, not as a community college, but is revered as a statewide technical college as part of the Land Grant University System. In conjunction, the two institutions have developed an Associate to Bachelor (A to B) Articulation Agreement that includes teaching university courses on the two-year institution campus.

Methodology

Students attend NCTA engaging in the Associate of Science Degree in Agricultural Education pathway. The students enroll in courses which total 60 credit hours (28 credit hours in general education courses and 32 credit hours in agriculture courses) which can be transferred to UNL through an A to B Articulation Agreement. The agreement outlines the transfer course equivalency of courses taken at NCTA and the courses which correlate at UNL.

While the A to B program was established in 2013, more recently, students are able to take an *Introduction to Secondary Agriscience Education* and *Planning Leadership and Experiential Programs* courses (six credit hours) on the NCTA campus for credit at UNL as part of a **reverse transfer agreement** approved in the Fall of 2017. This opportunity was made possible by appointing a faculty member from NCTA as a Professor of Practice in Agricultural Education at UNL. This individual teaches the courses at NCTA in addition to serving as a UNL supervisor of student teachers. Due to this faculty arrangement, students are able to enroll in teacher preparation courses on the NCTA campus but receive UNL credit. Additionally, students have the choice to receive the credit as NCTA credit or as UNL credit. If taken as UNL credit, students may transfer additional technical agriculture coursework to UNL (allowing students to start at UNL with more than 60 hours of maximum transfer credit hours from NCTA).

Distinct from existing 2+2 community college transfer programs, this A to B program allows students that transfer to the UNL and be at the same point in the program as students attending the university that start as freshmen due to their ability to take teacher education coursework (including 60 hours of early field experience required for certification) at NCTA. Students enter UNL after completing the necessary professional education coursework at the

technical college as a junior in good standing. They then complete the remaining coursework at UNL, which includes the pedagogical courses and student teaching experience necessary to become licensed to teach in the field of Agricultural Education. With this opportunity established, teachers are being generated with a thorough knowledge of technical/hands-on applications of many activities they teach in the classroom and laboratories across the state based on their experiences at both NCTA and UNL.

Similar to previous studies, “student satisfaction, sense of belonging, and willingness to attend ‘all over again’” (Strauss and Volkwein, 2004) are a strong predictor of institutional commitment. We find that students not only enjoy the hands-on technical skill engagement, but the feeling of being a part of “The Ag Ed Family” by early participation in teacher professional development and other interactions with UNL faculty and students that will become their future peers by being invited to the same statewide in-service professional development activities as UNL pre-service teachers.

Results

The program was established in 2013 with two students participating in the inaugural program with numbers increasing annually to 12 students enrolled the Fall 2019 semester. Currently, five students who have entered and graduated the program are employed as educators in state high schools with an additional two starting in August 2019. Three students are entering the student teaching experience during the upcoming 2019-20 academic year. There are several additional students entering the university this fall and each subsequent semester. Unexpected outcomes from this partnership have also resulted in hosting various technical workshops for in-service trainings in addition to administering the Nebraska Agricultural Technology and Mechanics Career Development Event, and a NCTA faculty member serving on the UNL departmental advisory council and receiving graduate faculty status.

Future Plans

During the Fall 2019 semester, NCTA will have 12 students enrolled in the Agricultural Education program. Students entering NCTA in the Fall of 2019 will have the opportunity to complete 60 hours in addition to six hours at the university. Students then attend UNL to complete the baccalaureate program in Agricultural Education.

It’s recommended that in future classes, students will receive an “Incomplete” if they do not pass the Praxis I Core Academic Exam. Additionally, it’s recommended that this A to B option is advertised alongside the traditional 4-year program.

Resources Needed

The primary cost to implement this unique and innovative A to B program was faculty time in developing the articulation agreement, the reverse transfer agreement, and the coordination of syllabi and assignments between faculty at NCTA and UNL so students may experience a seamless transition to the second half of the degree program.

There are several positive aspects and opportunities for participating students. These include starting at NCTA with smaller class sizes, closer interaction with faculty, hands-on applied learning and less cost in tuition and fees to begin their educational pathway in Agricultural Education. Challenges include a delay in working with the faculty at UNL in addition the higher tuition for the two UNL courses taken at the technical college that are part of the reverse transfer agreement. Individual students will need to evaluate the opportunities for themselves as they enter this program, but participating faculty at both institutions observe it to be an excellent way to enter the field of Agricultural Education in Nebraska.

References

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