

Agriculture attracting students from cities

Urban students may not become farmers when they graduate, but they are becoming more interested in agriculture, according to the dean of the UNL College of Agriculture.

Dr. Ted Hartung said the urban student is becoming more aware of the importance of agriculture in our society because of the world's food and population problems.

"These students are finding agriculture relevant to society and they feel they can help society with agriculture," he said.

According to Hartung, 30% of the freshman class now enrolled in agriculture are students from cities. Urban students are classified as natives of a community larger than 10,000 persons, he said.

He said this is about a 10% increase over the last three to four years. Of the 1422 students enrolled in the College of Agriculture, 20 per cent are urban students.

Agriculture attracts urbanites

The difficulty of finding job opportunities other than agriculture and the demand to fill agri-business positions are factors attracting urban students, Hartung said.

Agricultural economics appears to be one of the fields which draws many students, he said. Food science and technology and natural resources are other fields which interest the city student, he added.

Students do not have to farm when they graduate, Hartung said, but with a background in farming, there are opportunities to pursue farm and ranch management, he said.

The traditional production fields of agriculture, such as animal science and agronomy, also attract the urban student, Hartung noted.

Although students come from cities throughout Nebraska, the majority are from the eastern two-thirds of the state, he said. Omaha and Lincoln are the major sources of urban agriculture students, he said.

High schools important source

Hartung said the addition of vocational agriculture programs in the larger high schools is an important factor in attracting students to agriculture. He said some high schools in Omaha have successfully adopted these programs in the last four years.

Lincoln's only vocational agriculture course is at Northeast High School, Hartung said, but all the city high schools have had graduates go into agriculture.

Enrollment of women in the College of Agriculture also has increased in the last few years, he added. In 1970 only 44 women were in agriculture, but in 1974, 144 Nebraska women were enrolled, he said.

Hartung said he thought urban interest in agriculture would continue. He said the urban student thus far has been successful and will be needed to keep the College of Agriculture going in the future.

"Because of Nebraska's population base, there will be a limited number of rural young people and we have got to draw from the urban areas."

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