

2 UNL agronomists to move to Kenya to train scientists

By Amy Edwards
Senior Reporter

Two University of Nebraska-Lincoln agronomists will move to Kenya in June to train scientists in corn and sorghum breeding.

William and Mary Compton are contracted with the United States Agency for International Development.

Under the contract, William Compton said, he will help train about 80 students with master's degrees and 55 with doctoral degrees during a 2 1/2-year stay.

Mary Compton said she will be a corn and sorghum agronomist doing on-farm research in Kenya. She will act mainly as a liaison between farmers and researchers identifying the needs of the farmers in corn and sorghum breeding.

William Compton said the program they are involved with called for professors who have worked with graduate students in their research. The program's contract lasts 10 years.

Two aspects of the Kenya area are vital to the project, he said:

— A seed company in Kenya called Kenya Seeding Co. has a good reputation, something Compton said is unusual for a lesser-developed country. The seed company provides a way to get the good seed to the Kenyan farmers, he said.

— Kenya has a widely recognized corn-breeding program. In recent years, financing for the program has dropped and people have left. Compton said he and his wife will be part of the team to revitalize the program.

Glen Vollmar, acting dean for international programs at UNL, said Mid-America International Consortium sent in proposals to the U.S. Agency for International Development for the Kenya project.

MIAC includes the University of Nebraska, Iowa State University, Kansas State University, Oklahoma State University and the University of Missouri.

A team of Kenyans visited the University of Missouri last year to review the proposals. Vollmar said the Comptons became interested in the program then and were chosen to travel to Kenya with a team of professors from MIAC institutions.

Vollmar said it is important for NU to be involved internationally. Any institution that doesn't have strong international ties will fall behind in the next 10 years, Vollmar said.

The professors are drawn to Kenya because Kenyan schools teach in English, he said.

The husband-and-wife team is an unusual combination, Vollmar said, because in the group each professor has one job, and it's seldom that a husband-and-wife team fills a niche.

William Compton said it will be easier to live in Kenya than in Lincoln. Because of unemployment in Kenya, he said, there will be plenty of help taking care of their house and their 1-year-old daughter, Beth.

After their Kenya contract is up in 2 1/2 years, Compton said, he and his wife will return to Lincoln, where he will resume his job as professor of agronomy and she will return to her popcorn-breeding program.

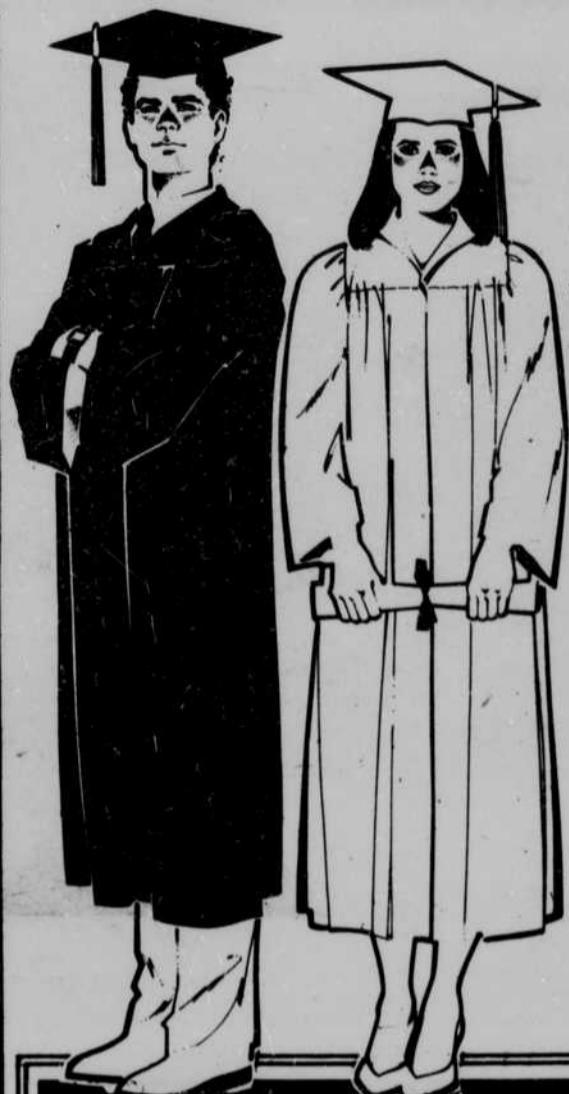
Mary Compton, who is from England, said although moving a family to a new country is challenging, she thinks she will feel at home in Kenya. She said not only do Kenyans speak English, but they also drive on the left side of the road.

Math tutors needed

From Staff Reports

Undergraduate students who want to be math counselors can pick up application forms and interview sign-up sheets posted outside of 822 Oldfather, April 25-29. Qualified applicants, must have completed Math 208, have a high level of success in math courses, maturity and a sense of responsibility, said Jack Eidswick, associate professor of mathematics and statistics.

Eidswick said candidates don't have to be a math major, but are expected to continue taking math courses and encouraged counsel concurrently.



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