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Spring/Summer

- **Message from Dept. Head—Kate Brooks**
Spring/Summer Edition
102 Filley Hall, UNL
- **2025 Outstanding Alumni and Service Award Winners**
Feb 27, 2025 | 5:30pm
East Campus Union, UNL
- **Student Scholarship Recognition Dinner—Nebraska Bankers Association & Dept. Of Agricultural Economics**
Oct 24, 2024 | 5:30pm
East Campus Union, UNL
- **CAP Report**
- **Graduate Student Page**
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- **Awards, Recognition & Highlights**

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Reflecting on progress,
looking to the future

*A message from Kate Brooks, Department Head
& Professor, Agricultural Economics*

Welcome to **AgHorizons**, your connection to the Department of Agricultural Economics.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As we share our spring/summer edition of *AgHorizons*, I invite you to reflect with us on the past year of remarkable progress, resilience, and growth in the Department of Agricultural Economics.

Over the past six months, we've celebrated faculty achievements, welcomed new colleagues, expanded our student engagement efforts, and deepened our connections across Nebraska and beyond. From impactful research through the Center for Agricultural Profitability to student successes in the classroom and in the field, our work continues to support informed decision-making and innovation in agriculture.

We are especially proud of the continued collaboration with our alumni, industry partners, and communities. Your support drives our mission and ensures that our students are prepared to lead in a changing world. As we look ahead, we remain committed to excellence in teaching, research, and extension that benefits producers, rural communities, and the broader ag economy.

This newsletter is your go-to source for the latest happenings across our department—from upcoming events and student graduations to faculty updates, service awards, and alumni highlights. Whether you're a former student, current collaborator, or long-time supporter, we're excited to keep you informed and engaged with the vibrant community that makes our department thrive.

Thank you for being part of our journey. Whether you're a graduate, a partner, or a supporter of agricultural education, your connection to this department matters. I hope you enjoy this issue and stay engaged with us in the years to come.

Warm regards,

Kate Brooks

Department Head, Agricultural Economics
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Thank you for being part of our journey—we're glad you're here.

2025 Alumni Awards

Agricultural Economics Honors Outstanding Alumni and Service Award Recipients

The Department of Agricultural Economics recently recognized **Senator Mike Jacobson, Daniel Michael O'Brien**, and the **Nebraska Farm Bureau** at its 2025 Student, Alumni, and Service Recognition Banquet held on February 27.

Each year, the department presents its **Outstanding Alumni Awards** and **Outstanding Service Award** to individuals and organizations whose contributions have significantly advanced the mission of the department and Nebraska agriculture. These honorees exemplify the department's core focus areas in agribusiness, agricultural production, natural resources, rural development, international trade, and beyond.



2025 Outstanding Alumni Award Recipients



Senator Mike Jacobson

A 1976 graduate in Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Education, Senator Mike Jacobson has had a distinguished career in banking, public service, and agriculture. He has served as Chairman, President, and CEO of NebraskaLand Bank since 1998 and currently represents his district in the Nebraska Legislature (2022–2026). A strong advocate for agricultural advancement, he remains involved with the University of Nebraska President's Advisory Council and serves as a CARET delegate, while also operating a crop farm in Clay County.



Daniel Michael O'Brien

Daniel O'Brien earned his B.S. (1978) and M.S. (1980) in Agricultural Economics from UNL, followed by a Ph.D. from Iowa State University. He is now a professor at Kansas State University and an Extension Agricultural Economist at K-State's Northwest Research Extension Center in Colby, Kansas. A leader in agricultural outreach, he is also an editorial team member for the *Western Economics Forum* and a 2023 recipient of the WAEA's Outstanding Extension Program Award.

2025 Outstanding Service Award

Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation

The Nebraska Farm Bureau continues to make a lasting impact on student success and agricultural education. The Federation awards 40 scholarships annually to UNL undergraduates in agriculture-related fields and enhances academic experiences through internships, guest speakers, and professional development. Many Agricultural Economics and CASNR graduates have gone on to serve in key roles within the organization, which also actively supports Extension programs across Nebraska.



Student Scholarship Recognition Dinner

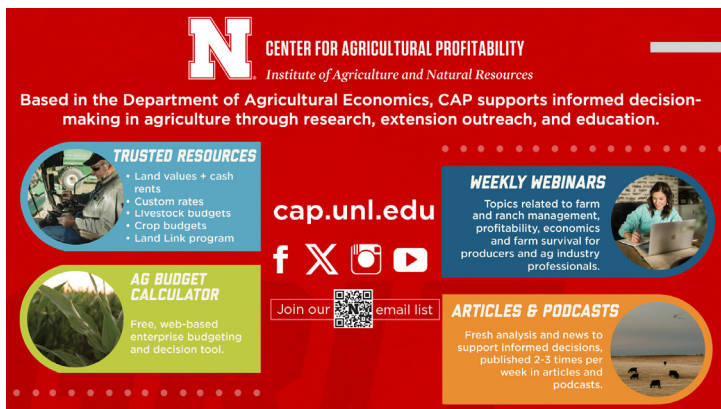


The Nebraska Bankers Association (NBA) and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Department of Agricultural Economics recognized scholarship recipients at a dinner on October 24, 2024.

The honored students, part of UNL's Ag Banking and Finance program, are studying agribusiness with an emphasis in banking and finance. Students in the program receive a scholarship from the NBA. Since the program began in 2006, Nebraska's banking industry has provided over \$1.2 million in scholarships, and numerous students have completed internships through the program.

NBA Interns & Bank Sponsors

Intern	Bank	Bank Sponsor
Cevahn Ernesti Ashton Stubbert	Bank of the Valley	Kristel Hall Austin Witmer
Jersey Jansen	Security Bank	Lee Potts
Hayden Jennings	NebraskaLand Bank	Erin Brown
Kasch Morrison	Western Nebraska Bank	Ryan Hunter Lance Polk
Zane Niemann	Homestead Bank	Mitch Nelson
Ty Schlueter Samantha Weeder Kade Wiese	First State Bank Nebraska	Brandon Lesoing
Skylar Shanahan	RVR Bank	Jonathan Rohlfs
Jake Shuck	First Nebraska Bank	Matt Goracke
Jake Twiss	Pathway Bank	Chad Jacobsen
Reed Weyers	Union Bank and Trust	Morgan Ochsner



Timely resources and trusted insights to empower Nebraska agriculture in 2025

*Ryan Evans, Communications Specialist,
 Center for Agricultural Profitability*

Through the first half of 2025, the Center for Agricultural Profitability (CAP), housed in the Department of Agricultural Economics, has continued to advance its mission of supporting informed decision-making in agriculture through applied research and education. As the primary

hub of the department's agricultural extension outreach, CAP leverages the expertise of specialists and educators in Agricultural Economics and other disciplines to help producers and ag professionals navigate real-world problems.

With continued uncertainty in agricultural markets and policy, the demand for timely, practical solutions remains high. CAP is meeting this need through a robust blend of in-person education across Nebraska and online resources that provide producers and other decision-makers with relevant, accessible information.

CAP's weekly webinar series has attracted thousands of views in 2025, offering timely education on cost of production, crop insurance, employee management, marketing strategies, and more. Highlights include a five-part "Grain Marketing in 2025" series and collaborations with USDA agencies on safety nets, disaster assistance, and conservation programs.

CAP specialists and educators have delivered dozens of in-person workshops across the state in 2025, addressing estate planning, equitable lease arrangements, land management, ag policy developments, livestock risk management, and other critical topics.

Recent publications include a new custom rates report for livestock services, a farm income report and outlook, and the widely used Nebraska Farm Real Estate Market Survey and Report, detailing average land values and cash rental rates across the state.

The center's team continues to produce weekly articles and podcasts on topics like farm succession, financial management, ag policy, labor management, and more areas related to farm and ranch risk management. CAP's free online Agricultural Budget Calculator continues to gain users as it prepares to expand into livestock budgeting, helping producers build customized enterprise budgets to evaluate profitability.

The center also invests in the future of agriculture in Nebraska by educating the next generation of farmers, ranchers, and agricultural leaders. Each year, CAP invites FFA students from high schools across the state to participate in the Farm and Agribusiness Competition. The interactive event during the FFA state convention, April 2-4, welcomed over 300 students to the Agricultural Economics Commodity Trading Room in Filley Hall to showcase their knowledge through individual tests, simulations, and case studies, fostering critical skills in marketing, risk management, and real-world farm operations.

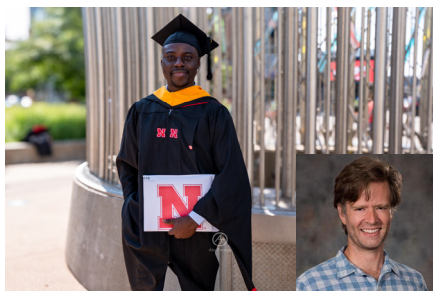
By connecting with the Center for Agricultural Profitability, Nebraska agriculture professionals and students become better informed to make economic and business decisions. We look forward to continuing to grow our impactful work in the second half of 2025 and for years to come.

To explore CAP's full slate of tools, programs, and publications, visit <https://cap.unl.edu>.

Graduate Students Page

Congratulations to all our graduates! This milestone marks the culmination of years of dedication, perseverance, and hard work. As you step into the next chapter of your journey—whether it leads to continued research, industry roles, entrepreneurship, or new academic pursuits—know that you carry with you not only advanced knowledge but also the resilience and curiosity that define true scholars. The world needs your insight, your innovation, and your leadership. We're proud of all you've achieved and excited to see the impact you will make in the years ahead.

Thank you to all that shared photos with us.



Samuel Olumide and
advisor, Dr. Chris
Gustafson



Kaouter Essakat with
her advisor, Dr. Karina
Schoengold



Milan Chauhan with his
advisor, Dr. Brad Lubben



Iyore Eronmwon with advisors, Dr. Cory Walters and
Dr. Emie Yiannaka



Johanna Ives and
advisor, Dr. Fabio
Mattos

JB Hassler MS – Samuel Olumide

JB Hassler PhD – Kaouter Essakat

Tomek MS - Gerald Van Tassell

Tomek PhD - Iyore Eronmwon

List of students graduating Spring/ Summer 2025

Iyore Eronmwon (May)

Milan Chauhan (May)

Johanna Ives (May)

TaraLee Hudson (August)

Wajdi Belgacem (August)

Faculty Spotlight —Dave Aiken, Professor

Celebrating 50 years this year!

Tell us a little about yourself. Native Nebraskan. Grew up in South Sioux City, Omaha & Lincoln. Worked on a Dakota County farm one summer in high school and briefly in a Clay County hog confinement during college. Graduated Hastings College with English major and from the George Washington University college of law.

What is your position at UNL? Undergraduate teaching, research & extension in agricultural law and natural resources/environmental law. 50 years at UNL as of December 2025.

What drew you to this career path and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln? I went to law school with an interest in environmental & natural resources law. I worked on a USDA water law study my last two years in law school.

What is the most memorable moment in your career? In 2018 high Nebraska property taxes were a hot political issue within the agricultural community. I decided to look at how Nebraska ag property taxes as a percentage of net Nebraska farm income compared to the US as a whole. Somewhat to my surprise I found that Nebraska farmers and ranchers paid about 50% more of their income in property taxes than the US average, to me a significant finding. Ag property taxes are high in Nebraska and my little study demonstrated that pretty clearly.

Is there a personal highlight or achievement you would like to share? In the 1980s Nebraska farmers and ranchers were suffering. As our extension farm management specialists were trying to help producers through this difficult period, I shifted my program away from water law and towards dealing with farm financial distress. I published one of the first law review articles analyzing the new 1986 chapter 12 family farm bankruptcy act and gave extension programs on farm foreclosure and bankruptcy options to producers across Nebraska.

What is your greatest achievement? In 2020 I published an analysis of how climate change would affect rural domestic water users and communities in Nebraska and the Great Plains region. I identified how rainwater capture and sewage reclamation might be required by rural households and communities to deal with increasingly dry summers in the years to come.

What is something that most people don't know about you? My dad was a large animal veterinarian in northeast Nebraska until he had to leave his practice for health reasons. I would often accompany him on calls which was my first introduction to Nebraska agriculture.

What do you enjoy outside of work? Spending time with wife Kathy (especially doing jigsaw puzzles), daughter Becky & her boyfriend David.

What's your advice to next generation? If we can't find ways to slow and ultimately reverse climate change, future prospects are grim for Nebraska, the US, and globally. So get informed & be sure to vote for candidates who share your climate concerns.



Staff Spotlight—Jodie Barnes



Tell us a little about yourself. I have been married for 22 years to my husband Kevin (together for 32). We have two beautiful daughters, a couple of great son-in-laws, and an incredibly smart 7-year-old grandson! I have lived my entire life in Lincoln, with most of my extended family here as well. My mom is my inspiration, she has been a single parent for almost my entire life, losing my biological father at age 5. She set out to create a wonderful life for myself and my two older brothers and accomplished it. I enjoy reading, listening to a variety of music, and Kevin and I attend a large number of concerts or Broadway plays throughout the year and anytime I can be outside in the mountains or forest is my favorite place to be (as long as it is warm!!).

What is your position at UNL? Administrative Associate

What drew you to this career path and the University of

Nebraska-Lincoln? I declared to my mom at the age of 7 that I was going to be a secretary, and I have never veered off of that path. For the longest time, I worked in law enforcement with the Nebraska State Patrol but when my oldest daughter decided to come to attend the university, I looked into the tuition benefits and decided to pursue a career here. I have never been happier!

What is the most memorable moment in your career? Receiving the Omtvedt Servant Leader Award. Being nominated by my department and the very kind words that were shared.

Is there a personal highlight or achievement you would like to share? While working at Fleet Management, I worked alongside IANR / TJ McAndrew to coordinate an auction of ag equipment and supplies from all research locations statewide, bringing funds back to IANR, and I received my Certified Educational Office Employee Distinction through NAEOP Professional Standards Program.

What is your greatest achievement? My children. Charissa is a planning supervisor with Kawaski and an incredible momma to our grandson Grayson and Hanna is in patient services for Bryan Heart. Both have created wonderful lives, are happy, and healthy.

What is something that most people don't know about you? I can read a book a day - when I have the time! Reading has always been one of my favorite and relaxing pastimes.

What do you enjoy outside of work? Camping with my grandson and adventures with my husband and our Polaris RZR side by side. We have traveled to Wyoming, Colorado, South Dakota and Arkansas to ride in national forests as well as Halsey, NE, numerous times a year.

What's your advice to next generation? Give yourself grace and enjoy the ride.

Department of Agricultural Economics

Awards, Student Recognition, Highlights, & Seminars



A warm welcome to T. Jake Smith who has joined our faculty. He will be teaching agribusiness management courses. He earned his Ph.D. in Economics from Iowa State University in August 2023. Before joining the University of

Nebraska–Lincoln, he was a postdoctoral research associate at Iowa State’s Center for Agricultural and Rural Development. Jake’s research examines how policies, new technologies, and market structures affect economic and environmental outcomes. He has studied topics including the Renewable Fuel Standard, adoption of genetically engineered crops, and competition in the beef industry. Drop him a welcome message: <https://agecon.unl.edu/person/jake-smith/>



Kanij Fatema was awarded the Dean’s Fellowship for the 2024–2025 academic year in recognition of her outstanding academic performance and scholarly

potential. Her nomination was put forward by Professor Karina Schoengold and recommended by the UNL Graduate Fellowship Committee. Kanij is currently a third-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Agricultural Economics. Her research centers on Consumer willingness to pay for BioWRAP (Bioplastics With Regenerative Agricultural Properties) produced food products. Congratulations Kanij!



Congratulations Bruno Morone Pinto on receiving the Farmers National Fellowship at the Distinguished Fellowships and Award Recognition banquet. Bruno also received the Widaman Distinguished Graduate Assistant Award. He is pictured below with his family.

