

Just What Do Graduates with a GLS Degree Do?

We e-mailed some of our 2009 graduates to ask them. Here are some replies.

“I am currently in Hartington, NE working for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service as a Soil Conservationist [and am working toward soon becoming] qualified for a Range Management Specialist position. I am really enjoying it, and my supervisor is going to give me a majority of the range/EQIP contracts to work on.” *Briana Brooks*

“This spring, I’m calving some heifers for my uncle. This summer, my husband and I will lease ground from my parents and will buy some late-calving cows that I will manage. We’re also running some cows on shares with my dad, but we are moving toward taking care of them ourselves. The goal is to get to the point where we have enough cows for both of us to work for ourselves, and possibly do some custom calving on the side.”

Lacy Hoksbergen

“I am working for Cargill Cattle Feeders in Bovina, TX. It is a 58,000 head feed yard and I am working as the feed department manager. I love life in Texas and my job!” *Meredith Jordan*

“I am currently employed by Lone Creek Cattle Company as an assistant ranch manager. I am at their Pullman Ranch near Mullen, NE. The maternal



When Clay Chihasz from South Carolina was featured in the Fall 2008 issue of this newsletter, he was quoted as saying, “Everything is on such a bigger scale here. Back home you take the cattle to the pens; here you take the pens to the cattle.” The 2009 graduate must have liked the “bigness,” as he now works on a ranch in the Sandhills.

cow herd is on this ranch. I have been doing a lot of feeding. We are getting ready to start calving. The challenge here is that all 650 head we are calving out are first-calf heifers.” *Clay Chihasz*



GLS Students Learn About Australian Rangelands

We try to capitalize on opportunities when grazing experts are on campus for some purpose by scheduling a time when they can visit with GLS students. Such was the case when Dr. John Taylor, Director of Rangelands Australia and Professor of Rangeland Management at the University of Queensland, Australia, was here in February to visit with faculty about resident and distance education programs at UNL. Dr. Taylor's career includes research on sheep grazing behavior and interactions with landscape features. His concerns about rangelands include not only their management for forage use but also for wildlife habitat. He has also worked on use of legumes in permanent pasture systems, primarily for beef cattle production.

He delighted GLS students with a dynamic presentation on the uniqueness of grazing livestock systems in Australia. Our students also learned that many of the issues facing the Australian ranching industry are familiar to U.S. farmers and ranchers.

Dr. Taylor described some of the ecological concerns including water sustainability related to infrequent rainfall and climate change; pest animals, invasive species and weeds; and the need to demonstrate "clean and green" beef production for quality assurance and sustainability.

Social issues of concern include the information explosion, an ageing ranching population, and movement of youth to the cities. Challenges include



Dr. John Taylor visits informally with students after a presentation he gave on ranching in Australia.

being part of the global economy, managing rangelands for multiple uses, and the need for timely and predictive weather forecasts about droughts and floods. Significant societal changes in Australia include greater awareness of environmental issues and policy decisions being driven by urban centers. Again – not unlike issues related to American agriculture.

Dr. Taylor emphasized to GLS students that the ranching profession will need to remain competitive through productivity, efficiency, and quality improvements; be attentive to sustainable natural resource management; respect animal welfare and environmental concerns; manage for climate variability and change; and foster innovation and change adaptation.

Student Profiles

Not all Grazing Livestock Systems students come to the major with an agricultural background. **Frank Zakrzewski** is from La Vista, just outside of Omaha. He worked at a car dealership while in high school, and until late in



Frank Zakrzewski

his senior year had planned to enter a trade school for auto mechanics. But he realized how much he enjoyed working on his uncle's farm near Gretna during the summers, and began exploring programs at UNL that involved working with cattle. As he read the information on the web sites, he decided that the combination of animal and plant sciences and business courses in the Grazing Livestock Systems curriculum better suited what he would like to do

for a career. He entered UNL in Fall 2009. He hopes to manage an operation some day, ideally owning his own cattle somewhere in Nebraska. While it may have seemed a strange choice to his parents, he said they were supportive, adding that his mom told him to “chase your dreams.”

Frank said he has been working on ways to “catch up,” since most of the students in his agriculture classes come from farms and ranches. He does this by reading books from the library and “listening to people.” He also is working with his adviser, Dr. Walter Schacht, who has been very helpful in arranging an internship this summer on a farm or ranch.

When asked to comment on his impressions of UNL, without hesitation he replied: *professional*. “Everybody seems to know what they’re doing,” he added.

And some GLS students *are* from agriculture backgrounds, like **Dan Werner** from Davenport, NE. His family operation consists of a couple thousand acres of crop land, about 300 cow-calf pairs, and a 250 head feedlot. The farm is still



Dan Werner

expanding, and Dan thinks there may be an opportunity for him to manage the operation in the future – after gaining varied experiences in other positions, including internships. He is currently a sophomore, and plans to conduct his GLS internship after his junior year, preferably on a ranch in western Nebraska so he can see how things are done in a different environment than what he has learned from his dad and uncles.

“I like CASNR a lot. The classes are smaller and the teachers really care – they know the students personally.”

—Dan Werner

Speaking of dad and uncles, they are alumni of the UNL College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. So it was natural for Dan to consider following in those footsteps. He’s glad he did. “I like CASNR a lot,” he said. “The classes are smaller and the teachers really care – they know the students personally.” He especially likes the “grass and cattle” courses, adding “they are intriguing to me.”

Like most students, Dan learned about the GLS major from the program’s web site. “GLS is a great opportunity for people who want to get involved in pasture/range land and cattle operations,” he said.

Upcoming Educational Opportunities

There are multiple opportunities for students to add to their education outside of the classroom. Here are a few this summer related to grazing. GLS students may apply for partial scholarships to the first three events; see the web sites and speak to a GLS faculty member, if interested.

Nebraska Grazing Conference, August 10-11, Kearney, grassland.unl.edu/grazeconf.htm. Many presenters from multiple states will be on

the program for this 10th annual event. Past GLS students who have attended (and in some cases, presented) have found this event extremely valuable.

Nebraska Ranch Practicum, multiple dates and locations, June 2010-January 2011, nebraskaranchpracticum.unl.edu. Three-season, hands-on sessions teach how to use decision support tools to evaluate management and marketing alternatives dealing with grazing strategies and many other aspects of ranching.

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Upcoming Education Opportunities *(continued)*

Nebraska Range Shortcourse, June 21-25, Chadron State College, www.ianr.unl.edu/srm/2010ShortcourseBrochure.pdf. The week-long course focuses on the principles of range ecology and management and the efficient use of rangeland resources for a variety of purposes.

Nebraska Range Youth Camp, June 7-11, 4-H camp, Halsey, www.ianr.unl.edu/srm/RangeCamp.htm. Know any young people (ages 14-18) interested in obtaining hands-on experience with rangeland resources while meeting new friends and having lots of fun? Tell them about this camp coordinated by the Society for Range Management Nebraska Section. Dr. Walter Schacht, a founder and leader of the GLS major, is an instructor at the camp. Several GLS students have been former Range Youth Camp participants.



Each year the UNL Parents Association and the Teaching Council query UNL parents, in consultation with their sons and daughters, to recommend faculty and staff who have had a significant impact on their student's experience. **Dr. Dennis Brink**, one of the faculty members who co-developed the GLS major and continues to have a leadership role in the program, was among the 2010 recipients of the Certificate of Recognition for Contributions to Students.

For more information or to receive GLS materials, please contact:

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