

Schacht Sends Greetings from Africa

One of the founding faculty members of the Grazing Livestock Systems major is Dr. Walter Schacht. He is still on the faculty committee that guides this program, but for 2011 will be providing that guidance from a distance... a very long distance! From Namibia where he is on professional development leave, he sends the following message.

“Many of you may have dreamed about traveling through the grasslands and savannas of Africa while viewing the many antelopes, elephants and cats, and feeling the excitement of such a ‘wild’ place. When picturing African wildlife, we commonly think of East Africa; countries like Kenya and Tanzania come to mind. Africa, however, is a huge continent, and there are many wide-open spaces that offer opportunities to see and study Africa’s relatively undisturbed ecosystems. Namibia, a semi-arid country in southwestern Africa, is one such place. Namibians recognize the attractiveness of their landscapes, wildlife and cultures. Since becoming independent in 1990, a focus of the Namibian government has been the development of its tourism industry, especially ecotourism. A network of commercial and communal conservancies has been developed where the natural landscapes



Walter Schacht

and native wildlife are sustainably managed for an ecotourism industry. Namibia has become a destination for trophy hunters and a variety of ecotourists. A huge challenge for land managers and the ecotourism industry, however, has been the encroachment and thickening of woody plants (mostly Acacia species) on the grasslands and

savannas. Especially from a hunting and ecotourism perspective, this conversion not only affects habitat for the valuable wildlife species, but also changes the “typical” grassland/savanna appearance expected by tourists in Africa.

“My wife, Carol, and I arrived in Namibia on January 6, 2011. We will be living in Windhoek (the capital city) until the end of the year. I am

here to work with Namibian scientists on the many questions associated with woody plant encroachment to conduct research on the soil water relations between the encroaching woody plants and the understory grasses. I also will be teaching rangeland sciences and natural resources management at the Namibia technical college. While here, I will be traveling to ranches, wildlife parks, deserts (the world’s largest dunes are in the Namib Desert), prehistoric



sites, the Atlantic coast, and elsewhere with students, faculty, and my wife. This is a once-in-a-life experience that was made possible through an award from the Fulbright Program. Best regards to everyone in the colder climes of Nebraska from the

warm Southern Hemisphere. And for any Grazing Livestock Systems students who are graduating in 2011, I wish you the best as you pursue your careers and your dreams.”

Student Profiles

Football, basketball, track, drama, and 4-H were some of the activities **Jason Jagels** participated in at Bruning-Davenport High School. Oh, and while he was doing all of that, he managed to find time to earn 18 college credit hours. He said it was nice to get English and history courses (through Peru State College) “out of the way” before actually coming to campus. He also took an animal products course and a plant science course as a UNL visiting student during his senior year of high school. Makes one wonder how he fit in chores on his family’s cow-calf and row crop operation!



Jason Jagels

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Jason learned about the Grazing Livestock Systems major in material sent to him by the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. Although he had considered attending a community college first before coming to UNL, he’s glad he began here.

“Not only is the quality of education at UNL what I was looking for, I think it also helps to know the faculty and other students right away,” Jason said. “CASNR instructors come to know you on a first-

name basis, and can help with things like writing recommendation letters,” he added.

Jason believes flexibility with the curriculum is an attractive feature of the GLS major. “It allows you to concentrate on areas of particular interest to you, such as animal science, agricultural economics, or range and forages,” he noted. He likes the fact that the major is guided by faculty from all three areas.

Recognizing that not all education happens in the classroom, Jason has attended some of the GLS seminars as well as Nebraska Cattlemen meetings. And this year he is considering participation in other opportunities such as the Nebraska Grazing Conference and Ranch Practicum (see last page of this newsletter for information on these events). Jason believes all of these activities can help with networking, which he says is important to future career possibilities.

Jason plans to do his GLS internship in the spring of 2012, and then after graduation, find a management position with a commercial cow-calf operation that focuses on good range management practices. When asked if that will be in Nebraska, he couldn’t answer “yes” fast enough!

Like grandfather, like father, like son. Using the information he has learned from those who came before him, coupled with what he learns as a Grazing Livestock Systems major, **Kyle Schultz** hopes to carry on the traditions and create



Kyle Schultz

some new ones on his family's farm. The operation in Superior, NE, consists of about 200 head of cows in a rotational grazing system and 2200 acres of crop land on which they rotate corn, soybeans and wheat. They also background some calves.

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Kyle says he has always been interested in grazing. “From the time I could walk, I was building cross fences and doing other chores related to grazing,” he said. “At first it was just labor, but as I got older, I saw the progress of the pastures and began to understand the concepts behind the things I was doing,” he added. He enjoyed accompanying his dad to events such as the Nebraska Grazing Conference, which he has attended multiple times.

That interest in grazing and desire to attend a four-year institution that wasn't too far from home led him to the GLS major at UNL, where he is currently completing his sophomore year. “I have particularly enjoyed the ag economics and cow-calf courses,” Kyle noted. He's anxious to learn how the economics, animal and land management pieces all fit together, which he will when he takes the capstone course for the GLS major, Livestock Management on Range and Pasture, his senior year.

As a Nebraska Beef Industry Scholar, Kyle is looking forward to participating this summer in a five-day, multiple-state beef industry tour.

Upon graduation, Kyle plans to return to the farm and expand the cow herd and backgrounding aspects of the operation right away. Using all the knowledge he will have gained through the years from work experience, education both inside and outside the classroom, his GLS internship, and of course, his elders, he will be well prepared to accomplish his goals!

Others Recognize Value of Our Faculty!

For two decades the UNL Teaching Council and UNL Parents Association have teamed up to recognize those who are particularly helpful to students. Each year they send a mailing that asks parents of UNL students to nominate a UNL employee who has made a significant difference in their student's life. This year, **Drs. Dennis Brink, Darrell Mark and Bryan Reiling** were among those so honored, and each has received this recognition several times over the years.

The Range Science Education Council and the Society for Range Management presented the 2011 Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award to **Dr. Walter Schacht**. This national award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated excellence in teaching, advising, and mentoring over an extended period. Students describe Walt's availability, openness, involvement, dedication, and genuine interest

in each student as characteristics that had a profound effect on them during and after their undergraduate programs. Students also appreciated his extensive knowledge about the subjects he teaches and his ability to provide a rich, lively learning environment.

Animal scientist Brink and range scientist Schacht were part of the team that developed the GLS major in the late 1990s, and today they are joined by agricultural economist Mark, animal scientist Reiling, and a relatively new faculty member, grassland ecologist John Guretzky. The major is administratively housed in the Center for Grassland Studies, which has as its director Dr. Martin Mas-sengale, President Emeritus of the University of Nebraska.

Upcoming Educational Opportunities

There are multiple opportunities for students to add to their education outside of the classroom. Two such events related to grazing for which GLS students can apply for partial scholarships are listed below. See the web sites and speak to a GLS faculty member, if interested.

Nebraska Grazing Conference, August 9-10, 2011, Kearney, grassland.unl.edu/grazeconf.htm. Many presenters from multiple states will be on the program for this 11th annual event. Past GLS students who have attended (and in some cases, presented) have found this event extremely valuable. The conference typically has 225-250 participants.

Nebraska Ranch Practicum, North Platte and

Whitman, eight dates June 8, 2011 - January 5, 2012, 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. Application deadline is May 2, and enrollment is limited.

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

Center for Grassland Studies
University of Nebraska–Lincoln
203 Keim Hall
P.O. Box 830953
Lincoln, NE 68583-0953
p: 402-472-4101
e: grassland@unl.edu

f: 402-472-4104
w: gls.unl.edu

