

Center for Grassland Studies Alumni Update

Austin Holliday, Manager University of Nebraska-Lincoln Cow/Calf Unit

Austin's exposure to agriculture began when his father managed a large farrow-to-finish swine operation near Fairbury, Nebraska. His connection to cattle came from the few cow/calf pairs his family kept on their small acreage. They started with a small herd of Black Angus and later switched to registered Texas Longhorns, birthing the family operation name Hangin-J Longhorns. Building on this background through formal education was the next logical step for Austin.

Attending college is something Austin wanted to pursue after graduating high school, however, he was not sure what he wanted to study; maybe a degree that would get him a job in the national or state park system as a forest ranger. After some deliberation, Austin made the decision to enroll in the diversified agriculture program at Southeast Community College – Beatrice (SCC). During the course of his studies at SCC he realized he wanted more experience in the cattle industry. An internship organized through SCC with **Barr Arrow Cattle Company** in Phillipsburg, Kansas gave Austin that experience.

The internship was a great opportunity, but making connections with the SCC faculty was equally important. **Mark Goes**, instructor of agriculture business and management technology at SCC, was the first person to speak with Austin about the Grazing Livestock System (GRLS) degree program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). Austin said, "The degree offered a large range of options, which was important to me and made making the decision to enter the GRLS program a simple one."

For Austin, one of the most beneficial parts of the GRLS program was the hands-on experience provided in the livestock management on range and pasture capstone course. This course sparked his interest in grassland management, as well as in working with agencies like the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Additionally, the program's internship requirement allowed Austin to complete another internship at Barr Arrow Cattle Company.

Although the GRLS coursework was essential, the connections Austin developed with faculty proved invaluable again. He really enjoyed working with **Walt Schacht**, agronomy and horticulture, and **Dennis Brink**, animal science; Dennis advised Austin's dad when his dad attended UNL. Other influential staff and faculty included **Karl Moline** at UNL's cow/calf unit, **Clyde Naber**, **Brent Johnson** and **Jeff Bergman** in the animal science complex, and **Andrea Cupp**, reproductive physiology. "Andrea and Jeff have been instrumental in my path to my current position," commented Austin.

After graduating in 2018, Austin took temporary positions in the animal science complex — research technician and research technician III. After a year within those positions, the manager position within the cow/calf unit became available. Austin interviewed and was offered the job, which he began in July 2019. "What I enjoy most about my work is that I am able to manage grasslands as well as work with cattle on a daily basis," said Austin.

Keeping an open mind, taking advantage of opportunities presented, and making connections can pay dividends. For Austin, what started as a somewhat uncertain path developed into a career that was the perfect blend of his interests.