October 21 - 23, 2015
Nebraska Innovation Campus | Lincoln, NE

October 21 - 22, 2015
Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture | Curtis, NE

HOPE Inspires Vision

WIRELESS ACCESS
User Name: rfc2015
Password: Rural2015

facebook.com/ruralfutures
@rural_futures
ruralfutures.nebraska.edu
ruralfutures@nebraska.edu

#RFC2015
The official hashtag to stay up to date on the Rural Futures Conference via Facebook and Twitter.
Dear Conference Participant,

On behalf of the University of Nebraska Rural Futures Institute, I am delighted to welcome you to the 2015 Hope Inspires Vision Rural Futures Conference. This is our third ‘sold-out’ conference and I believe this huge expression of interest and willingness to participate is a reflection of how important the future of rural places are to so many people.

The theme of this conference, ‘Hope Inspires Vision,’ is something I am passionate about. I believe that a strong vision coupled with active hope for the future can energize the rural landscape and create brighter futures. By attending the conference and connecting with a powerful network of catalysts you will discover and learn how to build hope and invigorate rural places.

The RFI felt it was important to demonstrate the use of technology to connect with rural areas. New this year was the option to attend the Rural Futures Conference in one of two locations. The Lincoln site at Nebraska Innovation Campus (NIC) and for the first time ever, the Rural Futures Conference is connecting live with a second site at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) in Curtis, Nebraska, on October 21 and 22.

Attendees will be able to enjoy the main stage presentations and select breakout sessions at both locations. Throughout the event there will be opportunities for the audiences to engage with presenters and build connections.

I want to thank a very dedicated RFI team and a highly engaged Conference Advisory Panel, which includes representatives from each University of Nebraska Campus along with student and community representatives, for bringing this conference to fruition.

Over the next three days and beyond, I encourage and challenge you to let your voice be heard and to learn from others in this transdisciplinary conference.

Thank you for attending,

Chuck Schroeder
Executive Director, Rural Futures Institute
We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who has assisted in the planning and preparation of the Rural Futures Conference.

**RFI TEAM**

Chuck Schroeder, Executive Director
Connie Reimers-Hild, Associate Director
Kim Peterson, Outreach Program Specialist
Kayla Schnuelle, Integrated Marketing Specialist and Young Leader Coordinator
Rachael Herpel, Research and Outreach Coordinator
Lauren Simonsen, Graphic Design Specialist
Jessica Shoemaker, Assistant Professor of Law
Randolph Cantrell, Rural Sociologist
Jeanne Surface, Education Star Point Leader
Jordyn Bader, Graduate Assistant
Preston Peterson, Student Worker
Amber Burenheide, Student Worker
Toni Rasmussen, Student Worker

**CONFERENCE ADVISORY PANEL**

Kim McFarland, Associate Professor, UNMC College of Dentistry
Greg Ptacek, Director of Economic Development, City of Neligh
Mary Kay Quinlan, Associate Professor, University of Nebraska–Lincoln
Roni Reiter-Palmon, Professor of Psychology, University of Nebraska at Omaha
Ron Rosati, Dean, Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture
Dennis Potthoff, Professor, University of Nebraska at Kearney

**NCTA LOCATION COORDINATORS**

Dottie Evans, Lecturer of Psychology
Kevin Martin, Student Services Advisor
Scott Mickelsen, Associate Dean
Jennifer McConville, Assistant Dean
Catherine Hauptman, Administration Associate, Dean’s Office
Mary Rittenhouse, Chair, Agribusiness Management Systems
Justin Baugher, IT Services Manager
Mary Crawford, External Relations Coordinator

A special thanks to:
Michelle Bassford, Jessie Brophy, Jill Brown, Darla Heggem, Murd Holland, Mike Kamm, Haley Steinkuler, and Corrie Svehla.
VISION

The RFI will be an internationally recognized leader for increasing community capacity as well as the confidence of rural people to address their challenges and opportunities, resulting in resilient and sustainable rural futures.

MISSION

Building upon the strengths and assets in rural Nebraska, the Great Plains, and globally, the RFI, through a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, will mobilize the resources and talents of the University of Nebraska and its partners, including community partners, to create knowledge and action that supports rural people and places to achieve unique paths to their desired futures.

CORE VALUES

The core values of an organization can be thought of as those belief systems which form the foundation upon which the work is performed. In an ever-changing world, core values remain constant and represent the basic elements of how an organization goes about its work. The core values for the RFI can be described as:

» BOLD
» INNOVATIVE
» COLLABORATIVE
» TRANSDISCIPLINARY
» AGILE
» REFLECTIVE
The 2015 Rural Futures Conference theme, ‘Hope Inspires Vision,’ encourages all of us to envision vibrant rural futures. A strong vision coupled with active hope for the future can energize the rural landscape and create brighter futures. Attend the conference and connect with a powerful network of catalysts to discover and learn how to build hope and invigorate rural places.

OBJECTIVES

1. Inspire faculty, staff, students, and partners to engage with the Rural Futures Institute.
2. Encourage attendees to forge partnerships that promote bold innovative ideas that result in vibrant rural futures.
3. Foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship that builds hope and invigorates the rural landscape.

ONE CONFERENCE, TWO LOCATIONS

This year the Rural Futures Conference is being held in two locations. The Lincoln site is being held at Nebraska Innovation Campus on October 21–23, and for the first time ever, the Rural Futures Conference is connecting live to a second site at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) in Curtis, Nebraska on October 21 and 22.
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

5:00 PM  Welcome to the Rural Futures Conference  Ronnie Green, Vice President of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska, and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln

5:15 PM  Finding Hope: Pioneering Your Own 40 Chances  Howard G. Buffett, Chairman & CEO, The Howard G. Buffett Foundation  Howard W. Buffett, Lecturer, University of Nebraska–Lincoln  Ronnie Green, Vice President of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska, and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln

6:45 PM  Evening Reception

6:45 - 8:00 PM  Conference Registration Open

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22

7:00 AM  Registration Open

8:30 AM  Welcome  Chuck Schroeder, Executive Director, Rural Futures Institute

8:35 AM  Dream Big with Me  Hank Bounds, President, University of Nebraska
### 9:00 AM
**Imagine the Possibilities**
*Imagination is powerful! Though unsure of how success would look, listen as Taulbert explains how his hope for the future fueled his dreaming and shaped his imagination. He will share how having the right mindset can enable all of us to change the world.*

**Speaker:** Clifton Taulbert, Entrepreneur. Businessman. Author.

### 10:00 AM
**Mix and Mingle: Refreshment and Networking Break**

### 10:30 AM
**‘Hope Inspires Vision’ Video**
*Hope is at work in rural America. This video showcases how hope has impacted individuals and communities to create a stronger vision for the future.*

### 10:40 AM
**The Importance of Hope**
*“Hope matters. Hope is a choice. Hope can be learned. Hope is contagious.” In this newest evolution of positive psychology, Dr. Lopez provides strategies for building a high-hope mindset and shares uplifting stories of real people who create hope and who change their own lives as well as their schools, workplaces, and communities.*

**Speaker:** Shane Lopez, Gallup Sr. Scientist in Residence and Research Director, Clifton Strengths Institute

### 11:40 AM
**Envisioning the Future Through a Lens of Hope**
*Hope is an important element in creating places that embrace the future and focus on opportunities to create brighter futures. Accepting the challenge to dream big will require positive psychology and grit that builds hope and invigorates rural places.*

**Speaker:** Chuck Schroeder, Executive Director, Rural Futures Institute

### 12:00 PM
**Noon Luncheon: Rural Arts & Culture: A Modern Perspective**
*Students used their passion for the arts when creating the ‘Fly Over Me’ video documentary. This project shares modern life in rural areas through the lens of college students.*

**Speakers:**
- Andrew Dickinson, Founder, Fly Over Me
- Jacob Zlomke, Writer, Fly Over Me

### 1:15 PM
**Turning Knowledge into Action: Concurrent Sessions (choose one)**

- **Shift Your Thinking: Win Where You Stand – Breaking the Entrepreneurial Code**
  *Listen as Taulbert shares his seven strategies for breaking the entrepreneurial code. The individual and collective resolve to succeed is what matters most and allows you to have bigger ideas and bigger dreams.*
  
  **Presenter:** Clifton Taulbert, Entrepreneur. Businessman. Author.

- **The Science of Hope**
  *Using discoveries from the largest study of hopeful people ever conducted, world-renowned expert on the psychology of hope, Dr. Lopez, reveals that hope is not just an emotion but an essential life tool. Learn more about the science of measuring hope.*

  **Speaker:** Shane Lopez, Gallup Sr. Scientist in Residence and Research Director, Clifton Strengths Institute

### Locations
- **Auditorium**
- **Banquet Hall**
- **Food Science Room 277**
- **Breakout Room A1-A3**
Getting Wired: Connecting Your Community to Broadband

This session will focus on how technology/broadband increases hope in a community. The panelists will share how they have been able to encourage broadband deployment, and the impacts of what broadband has meant to their community. In this session, you will learn ideas that you can take to your community to increase broadband deployment as well as their ideas on how to increase adoption and utilization.

**Panelists:** Nate Wyatt, Chief Financial Officer, Gothenburg State Bank
Dan Hoesing, Superintendent, Schuyler Community Schools
Boni Carrell, Executive Director, Rural Nebraska Healthcare Network

**Moderator:** Roberto Gallardo, Associate Extension Professor, Mississippi State University

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Entrepreneurs Energizing the Rural Landscape

Entrepreneurs energized by their personal aspirations and professional experiences share stories of rural investment and risk taking in their personal business ventures. These entrepreneurs utilized their strong community connections and rural resources to develop niche industries in value-added specialty foods, agricultural communications and tourism.

**Panelists:** Ken Rahjes, Editor, AgView
Sarah Pinet, Co-owner, Victory Hill Farm
Barry Fox, Co-owner, Kikaider Brewing Co.

**Moderator:** Scott Mickelsen, Associate Dean, Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture

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**2:15 PM**

**Mix and Mingle:** Refreshment and Networking Break

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**2:45 PM**

**Envision Rural Talks, Part 1:** Igniting Creative Ideas

Big ideas are shared in mini TED-style presentations that are future-focused and encourage you to imagine new possibilities.

**Moderators:** Jordyn Bader, Rural Futures Institute/Nebraska Extension Graduate Student
DeWayne Taylor, University of Nebraska–Lincoln Student

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**3:15 PM**

**Breaking the Mold to Create Rural Opportunities:** Panel Discussion

Join this combined panel from both conference locations as they share how their unique entrepreneurial thinking has generated economic fuel for their region. Learn how these energetic entrepreneurs drive community change through bold and creative ideas.

**Panelists:** Matt Wolters, Co-founder & Sales Manager, SureFire Ag Systems
Donelle Wolters, Independent Consultant/Curriculum Development
Anne Burkholder, Manager, Will Feed, Inc.
Lance Morgan, President and CEO, Ho-Chunk, Inc.
Ben Blecha, Entrepreneur and Owner, Ace Ortho Solutions

**Moderator:** Tom Field, Director, Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program

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**4:30 PM**

**Envision Rural Talks, Part 2:** Igniting Creative Ideas

Continue to hear more Envision Rural Talks.

**Moderators:** Jordyn Bader, Rural Futures Institute/Nebraska Extension Graduate Student
DeWayne Taylor, University of Nebraska–Lincoln Student
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<td><strong>Speaker:</strong> Connie Reimers-Hild, Associate Director, Rural Futures Institute</td>
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<td>5:30 - 7:00 pm</td>
<td><strong>Nebraska Innovation Studio Tours</strong></td>
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<td><em>Optional tours of Nebraska Innovation Studio (the UNL Makerspace) are available for interested conference attendees.</em></td>
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<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td><strong>Conclude for the Day</strong></td>
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<td>8:00 - 10:00 pm</td>
<td><strong>After Hours Social:</strong> Sponsored by Connecting Young Nebraskans**</td>
<td>Courtyard Marriott</td>
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<td><em>Mix and mingle with conference attendees at this after hours social. A cash bar will be available.</em></td>
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**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23**

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<td>8:30 am</td>
<td><strong>Engaging Discussions and Moving into Action</strong> (sessions repeated at 10 AM)</td>
<td>Banquet Hall</td>
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<td>GROUP A:</td>
<td><strong>Coffee Shop Discussions</strong></td>
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<td><em>Vote with your feet and join the table conversation that you are most passionate about and participate in a lively conversation with others who share your interests.</em></td>
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<td><strong>Facilitators:</strong> Kayla Schnuelle, Integrated Marketing Specialist and Young Leader Coordinator, Rural Futures Institute</td>
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<td>Greta Leach, Director of Community Development Philanthropy, Nebraska Community Foundation</td>
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<td>GROUP B:</td>
<td><strong>Concurrent Sessions (choose one)</strong></td>
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Building Brighter Futures: The Importance of Giving Back
Giving back is an important aspect for rural communities. Hear how these individuals strive to give back through the work they do. They are social entrepreneurs who utilize their talents and gifts to impact their communities.

Panelists: Andrew Norman, Executive Director, Hear Nebraska
Brian Thompson, Vice President of External Relations, Consolidated Companies
Brent Nollette, Vocational Agriculture Teacher, Valentine High School

Moderator: Nick Brozovic, Director of Policy, Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute

Discovering the Future: Charting a Rural Research Path
One key to understanding and advancing rural issues is pursuing a robust research agenda. Panelists will discuss their experiences in working with rural issues, projects and communities in a variety of cultures and countries. An open Q&A session will follow their presentations.

Facilitator: Connie Reimers-Hild

Panelists: Tom Farrell, Senior Advisor to the Chancellor, International Affairs at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln
Christopher Gustafson, Assistant Professor, Behavioral Economics and Health Disparities at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln
Jessica Shoemaker, Assistant Professor, University of Nebraska College of Law

Education to Action: Climate and Ecotourism Programs to Increase Local Resiliency
In this session participants will be introduced to Climate Masters of Nebraska and the Ecotourism Opportunities in Rural Nebraska course, both programs offered through UNL. Former students will give session attendees a look into their experience within these programs and the group will discuss how they envision gapping the bridge between climate, ecotourism and increasing resiliency in rural communities. The link between the work done at the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance and the focus of the two programs will lend itself to actionable, achievable outcomes with the help of local students, community members and practitioners.

Facilitators: Claire Phillips, Madeline Howell, and Jodi Delozier, all University of Nebraska Students

Panelists: Meghan Sittler, Coordinator, Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance
Nicole Wall, Outreach and Research Specialist, National Drought Mitigation Center
Tonya Bernadt, Project Coordinator, Climate Masters of Nebraska

9:30 AM Mix and Mingle: Refreshment and Networking Break

10:00 AM Engaging Discussions and Moving into Action
(repeated from 8:30 AM session)

GROUP A: Concurrent Sessions (choose one)

Building Brighter Futures: The Importance of Giving Back
Discovering the Future: Charting a Rural Resesarch Path
### Education to Action: Climate and Ecotourism Programs to Increase Local Resiliency

**Breakout Room B1-B3**

### GROUP B: Coffee Shop Discussions

**Banquet Hall**

### New Hope: Profound Rural Engagement Experiences

*Students are excited about the impacts they have made through service learning or other rural work opportunities. Join a panel of dynamic individuals as they share their profound experiences in rural communities and how it has impacted their future decisions.*

**Panelists:** Dana Marsh, University of Nebraska Medical Center Student  
Amber Ross, Callaway High School Student  
Jeff Story, University of Nebraska Law Student  
Heather Tomasek, former University of Nebraska–Lincoln Student

**Moderator:** Katie Samples Dean, Access to Justice Law Clerk

### Creating a Better Future for the Next Generation

**Auditorium**

**Speaker:** Pete Ricketts, Governor of Nebraska

### Noon Luncheon

**Banquet Hall**

### Announcement of Poster Awards

**Banquet Hall**

**Presenter:** Rachael Herpel, Outreach Coordinator, Rural Futures Institute

### Collective Hope: A Ripple Effect

*Build on the momentum of your conference experience and take collective action with other attendees. This session provides everyone with the opportunity to share their ideas with other participants while generating collective hope and creating a movement focused on advancing rural people, places and partners.*

**Presenters:** Connie Reimers-Hild, Associate Director, Rural Futures Institute  
Greg Ptacek, Director of Economic Development, City of Neligh

### Closing Remarks

**Banquet Hall**

**Speaker:** Chuck Schroeder, Executive Director, Rural Futures Institute

### Conference Adjourns

**Banquet Hall**

Have a safe journey home!
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

4:45 PM  Welcome Reception  Lobby

5:00 PM  Welcome to the Rural Futures Conference  Auditorium
  **Speaker:** Ronnie Green, Vice President of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska, and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln

5:15 PM  Finding Hope: Pioneering Your Own 40 Chances  Auditorium
  **Everyone has the potential to accomplish great things.** What will you do? No matter how big or small – whether locally, nationally, or globally – you can make a difference. We can all play an important part in finding solutions to some of our most challenging problems.
  **Presenters:** Howard G. Buffett, Chairman & CEO, The Howard G. Buffett Foundation
  Howard W. Buffett, Lecturer, University of Nebraska–Lincoln
  **Moderator:** Ronnie Green, Vice President of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska, and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln

  This session is jointly sponsored with the Heuermann Lectures in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

6:45 PM  Conclude for the Day

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22

7:30 AM  Registration Open  Lobby

8:30 AM  Welcome  Auditorium
  **Speaker:** Chuck Schroeder, Executive Director, Rural Futures Institute

8:35 AM  Dream Big with Me  Auditorium
  **President Bounds has an inspiring vision of the university’s world-class potential and ability to have a meaningful impact across the globe, particularly through the work of the Rural Futures Institute, which focuses on solving crucial challenges that span national borders. Dream big with President Bounds!**
  **Speaker:** Hank Bounds, President, University of Nebraska

9:00 AM  Imagine the Possibilities  Auditorium
  **Imagination is powerful! Though unsure of how success would look, listen as Taulbert explains how his hope for the future fueled his dreaming and shaped his imagination. He will share how having the right mindset can enable all of us to change the world.**
  **Speaker:** Clifton Taulbert, Entrepreneur. Businessman. Author.
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<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td><strong>Noon Luncheon: Impacting Hope</strong></td>
<td>Student Center</td>
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<td>Hope motivates learning. Three educational partners with NCTA’s dual credit programs share their</td>
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<td>vision for student preparedness and work-ready careers. Hear how Cozad, Cambridge and Elm Creek</td>
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<td>schools are working to address industry demand for skilled employees. These high school schools</td>
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<td>are matching needs of agriculture and rural communities to job opportunities.</td>
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<td><strong>Panelists:</strong> Cindy Burton, Guidance Counselor, Cambridge High School</td>
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<td>Dustin Favinger, School Counselor, Cozad Community Schools</td>
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<td>Dean Tickle, Superintendent, Elm Creek Public Schools</td>
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<td><strong>Moderator:</strong> Scott Mickelsen, Associate Dean, Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture</td>
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<td>2:45 PM</td>
<td><strong>Envision Rural Talks, Part 1: Igniting Creative Ideas</strong>&lt;br&gt;Big ideas are shared in mini TED-style presentations that are future-focused and encourage you to imagine new possibilities.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Moderators:</strong> Jordyn Bader, Rural Futures Institute/Nebraska Extension Graduate Student&lt;br&gt;DeWayne Taylor, University of Nebraska–Lincoln Student</td>
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<td>3:15 PM</td>
<td><strong>Breaking the Mold to Create Rural Opportunities:</strong> Panel Discussion&lt;br&gt;Join this combined panel from both conference locations as they share how their unique entrepreneurial thinking has generated economic fuel for their region. Learn how these energetic entrepreneurs drive community change through bold and creative ideas.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Panelists:</strong> Matt Wolters, Co-founder &amp; Sales Manager, SureFire Ag Systems&lt;br&gt;Donelle Wolters, Independent Consultant/Curriculum Development&lt;br&gt;Anne Burkholder, Manager, Will Feed, Inc.&lt;br&gt;Lance Morgan, President and CEO, Ho-Chunk, Inc.&lt;br&gt;Ben Blecha, Entrepreneur and Owner, Ace Ortho Solutions&lt;br&gt;<strong>Moderator:</strong> Tom Field, Director, Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program</td>
<td>Auditorium</td>
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<td>4:30 PM</td>
<td><strong>Envision Rural Talks, Part 2: Igniting Creative Ideas</strong>&lt;br&gt;Continue to hear more Envision Rural Talks.&lt;br&gt;<strong>Moderators:</strong> Jordyn Bader, Rural Futures Institute/Nebraska Extension Graduate Student&lt;br&gt;DeWayne Taylor, University of Nebraska–Lincoln Student</td>
<td>Auditorium</td>
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<td>5:00 PM</td>
<td><strong>Impacting the Future:</strong> Closing Remarks&lt;br&gt;<strong>Speaker:</strong> Scott Mickelsen, Associate Dean, Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture</td>
<td>Auditorium</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:15 PM</td>
<td><strong>Conference Adjourns</strong>&lt;br&gt;Have a safe journey home!</td>
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HOPE Inspires Vision
Howard G. Buffett manages the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, a private charitable foundation. He oversees a 1,500-acre family farm in central Illinois and farms in Nebraska with his son. He oversees four foundation-operated research farms: 3,900 acres in Arizona, 4,400 acres in Illinois, 1,000 acres in Nebraska, and 9,200 acres in South Africa.

Mr. Buffett currently serves on the corporate boards of Berkshire Hathaway, Inc., an investment holding company; The Coca Cola Company, the world’s largest beverage company; and Lindsay Corporation, a world-wide leader in the manufacturing of agricultural irrigation products. Mr. Buffett has served on the boards of Archer Daniels Midland, a leading world food processor; Coca-Cola Enterprises, Inc., the largest Coca-Cola bottler in the world; ConAgra Foods, one of North America’s largest food service manufacturers and retail food suppliers; Agro Tech Foods, a publicly traded food manufacturing company in India; and Sloan Implement, a privately owned distributor of John Deere agricultural equipment in North America.

Mr. Buffett serves as Undersheriff in Macon County, Illinois. He has traveled to over 139 countries and authored eight books on conservation, wildlife, and the human condition.

He is the co-author of 40 Chances: Finding Hope in a Hungry World. Mr. Buffett is the executive producer of Virunga, an award-winning and Academy Award-nominated documentary about Africa’s oldest national park. Buffett has received numerous honors and awards for his service to conservation and agriculture, and his efforts to combat hunger throughout the world.

Howard W. Buffett is a lecturer at both the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and Columbia University where he teaches on topics related to International and Public Affairs, Philanthropy, and International Food and Agricultural Policy. He also serves on the Board of Counselors for the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Buffett previously held the following roles: Executive Director of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, Program Director at the U.S. Department of Defense where he received the Joint Civilian Service Commendation Award for his service in Afghanistan, Policy Advisor for the White House Domestic Policy Council, and Special Assistant in the Office of the Secretary at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Buffett earned his Bachelor of Arts from Northwestern University and his Master of Public Administration in Advanced Management and Finance from Columbia University. He is a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations and serves on advisory boards for the Aspen Institute, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, and the National 4-H Council. Buffett co-authored the New York Times bestselling book 40 Chances: Finding Hope in a Hungry World, which examines global agriculture and food systems challenges. He is from Omaha, Nebraska, where he operates a 400-acre conservation-based farm enrolled in USDA’s Conservation Stewardship Program.
Shane J. Lopez, Ph.D., author of *Making Hope Happen*, is the world’s leading researcher on hope. His mission is to teach people that investing in their future pays off today. Dr. Lopez is also one of the most vocal advocates of the psychological reform of America’s education system. He helps schools function less like impersonal factories and more like dynamic human development centers that enable students to achieve meaningful futures.

Dr. Lopez researches the links between hope, strengths development, academic success, and overall wellbeing, and collaborates with scholars around the world on these issues. He specializes in hope and strengths enhancement for students from preschool through college graduation. He advocates a whole-school strengths model that also builds the strengths expertise of educators, parents, and youth development organizations. He is co-author of the statistical reports for the Clifton StrengthsFinder and the Clifton Youth StrengthsExplorer.

A prolific author, Dr. Lopez has published more than 100 articles and chapters and ten books. Dr. Lopez is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association. He is now a professor of business at the University of Kansas.

Clifton L. Taulbert, noted author and entrepreneur businessman, could have failed had he not encountered community builders and entrepreneurial thinkers early on in his life. He serves as the President and CEO of the Freemount Corporation, a human capital development company that serves clients around the world. Taulbert is also the President and CEO of Roots Java Coffee, an African-American owned national coffee brand that imports coffee from Africa. To pass his life lessons along, Taulbert shares his entrepreneurial journey with others as a Thrive15.com mentor. Outside his business ventures, he served as a knowledge source content provider to Korn Ferry International and is involved on multiple boards and committees such as The University of Tulsa Trustee, Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence Advisory Board, and is a founding member of the Anne Kathryn Taulbert Sickle Cell Fund, among many others.

Taulbert was born on the Mississippi Delta during the era of legal segregation, where he completed his secondary education. Following high school graduation and a short banking career in St. Louis, Taulbert enlisted in the United States Air Force. After successfully serving in the 89th Presidential Wing of the United States Air Force in the late 1960s, Taulbert was honorably discharged and continued his college education, graduating from Oral Roberts University and the Southwest Graduate School of Banking at Southern Methodist University.

Mr. Taulbert celebrates life with his family—his wife Barbara and their adult son, Marshall Danzy Taulbert, an aspiring actor and writer.
Tonya Bernadt is the Education and Outreach Specialist for the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Bernadt has more than 15 years of experience in environmental education and outreach coordination. She previously worked for WasteCap Nebraska and Midland Recycling. While at the NDMC, Tonya has been involved in many research projects and is currently the project coordinator for Climate Masters of Nebraska. This program is one of three Climate Masters programs in the nation. She is also currently on the National Integrated Drought Information Systems (NIDIS) Engaging Preparedness Communities (EPC) team, UNL Extension’s Climate Resiliency Initiative working group, and part of the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) drought group.

Bernadt holds a B.S. in agricultural sciences and natural resources and a M.S. in leadership education, both from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Ben Blecha owns and operates Sky Prosthetics, which provides counseling, treatment, and devices for those in need of braces, orthotic support, and artificial limbs. Ben worked in a private practice for 13 years in Denver, Colorado before returning home to Benkelman. Once home he tried to recruit a manufacturing facility. This initiated his journey of entrepreneurship and passion for rural development. He has thoroughly enjoyed the challenging process of rural development, and hopes to focus on growing manufacturing jobs in rural Nebraska, one win at a time.

Blecha studied electrical engineering and secondary education at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, and prosthetics and orthotics at Texas Southwestern Medical Center. He completed his orthotic residency at University of Texas Southwestern in Dallas, Texas, and his prosthetic residency at Rehab Designs of America in Kansas City, Missouri.

Jordyn Bader is a graduate student studying Agricultural Economics at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. She is a graduate assistant for Nebraska Extension and the Rural Futures Institute. Jordyn earned her bachelor’s degree in agribusiness from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and is a proud alumna of the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program. Jordyn is passionate about connecting young people with opportunities in rural communities. Dedicated to this issue, her graduate research is focused on rural healthcare workforce attraction and retention in rural regions.

A native of Ainsworth, Nebraska, Jordyn Bader is a graduate student studying Agricultural Economics at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. She is a graduate assistant for Nebraska Extension and the Rural Futures Institute. Jordyn earned her bachelor’s degree in agribusiness from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and is a proud alumna of the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program. Jordyn is passionate about connecting young people with opportunities in rural communities. Dedicated to this issue, her graduate research is focused on rural healthcare workforce attraction and retention in rural regions.

Hank M. Bounds began his role as the President of the University of Nebraska on January 12, 2015. Additionally, Bounds holds faculty appointments in the College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and in the Colleges of Education at both the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the University of Nebraska at Kearney. He is working to make the University of Nebraska a giant in higher education for the benefit of the state, the country, and the world.

Bounds grew up on a rural Mississippi farm where his family raised hogs, cattle, and hauled hay. His service in the Army National Guard helped him pay for college. He earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Southern Mississippi, and a doctorate from the University of Mississippi. He and his wife, Susie, are the parents of a son, Will, and a daughter, Caroline. They reside in Lincoln, Nebraska.
Anne Burkholder grew up a “city kid” in urban Palm Beach County, Florida. She attended Dartmouth College where she majored in psychology. In college, she met her husband, Matt, a local Nebraska farm boy. Shortly after receiving her Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Dartmouth College, Anne moved to Nebraska and started working on Matt’s family owned and operated, diversified, farm business. Today, nearly 18 years later, she is known as the “boss lady”. Anne received the Beef Quality Assurance Producer of the Year Award in 2009, voted to Vance Publishing’s 40 under 40 in Agriculture in 2013, and received Beef Magazine’s Trail Blazer Award in 2014. Anne finds tremendous satisfaction from the knowledge that she is, literally, “feeding the world.” Anne and her husband happily raise their three daughters—Ashley Grace (15), Megan (13), and Karyn (10)—on the family farm.

Boni Carrell is the executive director of the Rural Nebraska Healthcare Network (RNHN), a not-for-profit corporation of nine hospitals and related health clinics in western Nebraska. Carrell manages the operations of the RNHN Fiber Network. She has knowledge and experience with the Federal Communications Commission and Universal Service Administrative Company’s Rural Health Care requirements, processes, and reporting. Carrell graduated from the University of Nebraska Medical Center with a bachelor of science in nursing, and has worked in Nebraska and Idaho. Her experience is concentrated in regional systems of care, including the Rural Nebraska Healthcare Network, emergency and flight nursing, trauma systems improvement, hospital emergency preparedness, and Six Sigma.

Cindy Burton serves as an educator and school counselor in Southwest Nebraska. Burton earned her undergraduate degree in education from Fort Hays State University, and her master’s degree in school counseling from the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

During the past 19 years she has become passionate about providing quality education and opportunities for our youth in rural Nebraska. She works with students to plan for their future, and guides them to explore the ever-changing opportunities that are available. Agriculture is a driving force in Southwest Nebraska; Burton sees Cambridge Public School’s involvement with NCTA as an opportunity to provide college readiness programs to the students of Cambridge that will not only prepare them for their futures, it will encourage them to return to the community with the skills needed to continue a thriving economy.
Katie grew up in a small town on the front range of Colorado and spent much of her childhood on the family’s dairy farm located in northeastern Colorado. She attend Kansas State University, spending four of the best years of her life in Manhattan, Kansas, where she majored in agribusiness and minored in Spanish. After undergrad, she attended law school at the University of Nebraska College of Law, where she focused on agriculture and business law. In her first year as a law student, Katie recognized the need for attorneys in greater Nebraska and support for those that wanted to practice in a rural area. Along with two other students, she formed Greater Nebraska Connections, a student group focused on connecting students with opportunities in rural Nebraska. With the help of this group, Katie landed her dream job and now practices transactional law at a small firm in Sidney, while living on a pig farm outside of Oshkosh, with her husband, their Corgi, and a beautiful view of the sandhills.

Andrew Dickinson is a freelance visual journalist living in Lincoln, Nebraska. He has interned for the Cedar County News Service in Hartington, Nebraska, ZUMA Press in San Clemente, California, and the Omaha World-Herald in Omaha, Nebraska. He has worked on documentary multimedia projects in seven countries, including internship experience while living in Lincoln. Andrew is a founding member of Fly Over Me, and Fly Over Media. He has been published by the New York Times, National Public Radio, Education Week, and CNN.com, among others.

Jodi Delozier is a graduate assistant with the School of Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln where she is pursuing an advanced degree in natural resources sciences, with an emphasis in human dimensions. Prior to returning to school, Jodi taught German and Language Arts at the college, secondary, and primary levels. She has a bachelor of arts degree in international affairs, and a master's degree in german literature and linguistics. Jodi currently serves her community through a variety of volunteer organizations, and has two school-aged daughters who are actively involved in athletics and music.

Thomas Farrell is Senior Advisor to the Chancellor for International Affairs at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. He reports directly to Chancellor Harvey Perlman and is responsible for advising on international priorities, global cooperation, and the creation of a strategic approach.

Prior to assuming his current position in May 2014, he served as President James Milliken's Vice Provost for Global Engagement at the University of Nebraska.

From 2002 until January 2009, he served in the U.S. Department of State as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Academic Programs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. He worked at the Institute of International Education (IIE) from 1987 until 2002, serving for most of that time as Vice President for Exchange Programs and Regional Services. Prior to joining IIE, he worked as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer from 1978 until 1987 in Washington.
DUSTIN FAVINGER
Cozad, Nebraska

Dustin Favinger, a 1995 graduate of Cozad High School, who returned to his alma mater in 2006, serves as the 9-12 school counselor and new program developer. Favinger earned his bachelor’s degree in secondary science education from the University of Wyoming in 2000, and master’s from Chadron State College in K-12 school counseling. He is currently finishing up a master’s in school administration from Chadron State College. A proud father of two and a passionate educator, Favinger believes in finding new ways to reach groups of diverse learners. He is an avid outdoorsman, runner, and lifelong learner.

TOM FIELD
Ceresco, Nebraska

Tom is a passionate advocate for education, agriculture, free enterprise, engaged citizenship, and the potential of young people. He serves the people of Nebraska as the Director of the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program and holder of the Engler Chair in Entrepreneurship at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. He is also a noted agricultural author with works including his column “Out of the Box” and featured commentator of “The Entrepreneurial Minute” in the Angus Report on RFD-TV. A frequent speaker at agricultural events in the U.S. and abroad, he has consulted with a number of agricultural enterprises and organizations, and has served on numerous boards related to education, agriculture, and athletics. He is the co-owner of Field Land and Cattle Company, LLC in Colorado. He and his wife Laura watch over a brood that includes three college graduates and three-year-old twins.

BARRY FOX
Broken Bow, Nebraska

Barry Fox is a rural entrepreneur who owns and operates Diamond Express Car Wash. He is also one of four owners of Kinkaider Brewing Company. Fox is part owner and serves on the executive committee of Cobblestone Hotel & Suites and the One Box Convention Center in Broken Bow. He operates a 75-head cow herd ranch, and serves as Custer County Supervisor.

Fox believes that rural entrepreneurial experiences allow him to grow and culture his passion. He found rural entrepreneurs can face many challenges, but when you are able to find a business that is unique to a community, as well as an area, the challenges become less of ‘how to survive’ and more of ‘how to grow’ your business while maintaining the core values that created the business.

ROBERTO GALLARDO
Starkville, Mississippi
@robteroge

Roberto Gallardo (pronounced GaYardo) is an associate extension professor at the Mississippi State University Extension Service. Gallardo is interested in local and regional community economic development, including use of technology. He spearheads the efforts of the Mississippi State University Extension Service Intelligent Community Institute that helps rural communities transition to, plan for, and prosper in the digital age. He holds an engineering degree from the University of the Americas in Mexico, a master’s in economic development from Southern Miss University, and a Ph.D. in public policy and administration from Mississippi State University.
Ronnie Green was appointed in July, 2010, as the Harlan Vice Chancellor of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources of the University of Nebraska system. On July 1, 2015, he also began as interim Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Ronnie served as the senior director of Pfizer Animal Health, overseeing global technical services of animal genetics prior to coming to the University of Nebraska.

Green earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in animal science from Virginia Tech and Colorado State University, respectively, and a doctorate in animal breeding and genetics jointly from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the USDA-ARS U.S. Meat Animal Research Center.

Dan Hoesing is currently the Superintendent of Schuyler Community Schools in Schuyler, Nebraska. Hoesing first graduated with a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Yankton College in Yankton, South Dakota, and has since received numerous degrees throughout his working years. Most recently he received his doctorate from the University of South Dakota-Vermillion in 2005. Previously, he has been a teacher, coach, principal, and shared superintendent duties at several other school districts. Throughout his 35 years in education, he has served on numerous committees and appointments including: the Governors’ appointment to the Nebraska Information Technology Commission; UNL Extended Education & Outreach Statewide Advisory Council; and Distance Education Task Force Committee. He has also received several honors and awards including: Alliance Chamber Outstanding Person of the Year, Alliance Service Clubs “Boss” of the Year, and eSchool National Technology-Savvy Superintendent Award.

Christopher Gustafson’s research, teaching, and outreach activities focus on human decision-making, food, and health in the U.S. and internationally. He conducts research in Tanzania, studying the effects of agricultural productivity interventions on livelihoods, health, and nutrition. In the United States, Gustafson conducts research on food choices and health in childcare, school lunchroom, and retail settings. In one project at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, he examines how students’ involvement in fruit and vegetable promotion in an elementary schools affects the efficacy of the promotional materials. In another project, funded by the Rural Futures Institute, he studies how the food environment and culturally relevant labeling influence food choices on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota.

Gustafson received a doctorate in agricultural and resource economics from the University of California, Davis and a bachelor’s degree in agricultural economics from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Madeline Howell is currently a graduate student at the University of Nebraska Medical Center pursuing a master’s degree in public health with an environmental, occupational, and agricultural health concentration. She previously attended the University of Nebraska–Lincoln where she obtained her bachelor’s degree in environmental studies with an applied climate science emphasis. After graduating from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Madeline held a position at the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) as a research assistant. During her time at NDMC, she provided research on drought mitigation plans and helped facilitate workshops for farmers and ranchers about drought preparedness. In terms of her own research, Madeline applied her interest in climate science by spending time abroad in New Zealand connecting incoming UV radiation with melanoma occurrences. This experience has led her to pursue the subject of public health and how it’s connected to environmental influences.
Greta Leach is the Director of Community Development Philanthropy with the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF). Leach directs NCF’s programs helping communities use philanthropy as a tool for rural community development. Greta is passionate about strengthening leadership, growing local assets, and enhancing community impact in NCF’s 220 affiliated funds throughout Nebraska. Leach has extensive professional experience working with community-change organizations in fund development, non-profit and faith-based leadership, and public accounting. Prior to joining NCF, she directed traditional and grassroots fundraising programs for the Colorado Anti-Violence Program and The Gathering Place in Denver, Colorado. Leach began her career in public accounting and was a Senior Auditor with EKS&H.

Leach is a native of Aurora, Nebraska, and received a bachelor’s degree in business administration from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, and a master’s of theological studies from the Iliff School of Theology.

Dana Marsh grew up in Hartington, Nebraska. She attended Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska where she graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in nursing. Following graduation, she began medical school at the University of Nebraska College of Medicine in Omaha, Nebraska. She is currently in her second year of medical school. Although she has not yet determined a specialty, she hopes to someday work in rural Nebraska. She is currently president of the Student Association for Rural Health, a support system for students of all health disciplines who are interested in rural health. Fun fact: her dog is a Dorkie (Dachshund and Yorkie mix).

Scott Mickelsen has served as the Associate Dean at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) in Curtis, Nebraska, since 2011. He previously served 14 years on faculty and as an administrator within two-year college systems in Iowa and Wisconsin. He greatly enjoys NCTA because of its focus on agriculture and its setting in rural America.

One of Scott’s passions is agricultural issues with an international perspective. This passion has taken him to Mexico, China, and Brazil where he led college students from the U.S. to look at crop production. His international interests have allowed him to further explore international relations with Brazil in the areas of agronomy and livestock management, and Nigeria focusing on irrigation technology with Reinke Irrigation. Scott and his wife, Mitzi, have been blessed with eight wonderful kids.

Lance Morgan is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Ho-Chunk, Inc., the award winning economic development corporation owned by the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. Morgan was one of the initial founders of Ho-Chunk, Inc. Additionally, Morgan is the managing partner in the law firm Fredericks, Peebles, and Morgan, LLP. The firm specializes in Indian law related to legislative and governmental issues, corporate and financial affairs, energy and tax issues, as well as litigation. Morgan is also an adjunct professor at Arizona State University and currently serves on the board for several corporate entities and Liberty National Bank.

He earned a bachelor’s degree in economics from the University of Nebraska and his Juris Doctorate from Harvard Law School. Morgan is an enrolled member of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska.
Brent Nollette is the agricultural education instructor at Valentine Community Schools. After graduating from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, he took his first teaching job in Amherst, Nebraska, where he taught for six years. After his time in Amherst, Brent moved to Valentine two years ago to teach ag ed. Brent is also actively involved in his family ranch operation and spends time helping with his family’s vineyard and winery, Niobrara Valley Vineyards, located in Nenzel, Nebraska.

A fourth-generation Nebraskan who was born in Grant, and raised in Imperial, Andrew Norman is the executive director of Hear Nebraska, a nonprofit cultivating Nebraska music and arts through multimedia journalism. He is a graduate of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln journalism school. He served as managing editor of Omaha alternative newsweeklies, Omaha City Weekly and The Reader before earning his master’s in environmental journalism at Michigan State University. He and his wife, Angie, created Hear Nebraska, which began as his master’s project in 2010. He lives with Angie and their son, Townes, in Omaha’s Benson neighborhood.

Claire Phillips is a senior hospitality, restaurant, and management major with an emphasis in ecotourism and rural lodging at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Claire is a student ambassador for the College of Education and Human Sciences as well as a member of the Hospitality Student Development Organization. She has completed ecotourism field work with the City of Ashland, Nebraska. She was the recipient of the 2014-2015 Tourism Cares/International Air Transport Association Scholarship. Claire is interested in helping rural communities market their various opportunities, and hopes to one day own a bed and breakfast that caters to ecotourism and those who enjoy being outdoors.

Sarah Pinet is both owner and operator of Victory Hill Farm, a 50-head goat dairy and cheesemaking operation in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, that has been in operation for five years. The entire process of dairying and cheesemaking is handled at Victory Hill Farm, from conception to consumption. Sarah’s husband, Lee, is also involved in keeping the farm running and their three children will become more involved as they grow older.
Greg Ptacek is the Director of Economic Development at the City of Neligh. Ptacek’s passion for rural Nebraska drove him to his current position where he promotes the growth of Neligh and Clearwater. He is a graduate of Wayne State College and is six hours short of his master’s in public administration from UNO. Greg has a beautiful wife, Kelly, who he believes is slightly blind, and two children under three: Alexis and Crispin. In his free time, Greg thoroughly enjoys watching Frozen with his bossy two year old. He has a love-hate relationship with the game of golf and is attempting to corrupt his children to take up golf rather than track, which his wife coaches. Ptacek occasionally escapes into fantasy novels because, really, who doesn’t dream about being a wizard?

Ken Rahjes is the managing editor for AgView.net. He was raised on a diversified farm and ranch near Agra, Kansas. Ken got his start in radio at the age of 15 and has nearly three decades of experience in agriculture broadcasting. In early 2014, he and his wife formed Authentic Ag Inc., to help tell the story of food, fuel, and fiber production through traditional media, social media channels, and public speaking. AgView.net has nearly 50 broadcast and web affiliates in the Midwest and is also featured on KOTA Territory News in the Panhandle. He is a strong believer in rural America and is bullish on the future. Educated at Colby Community College and Kansas State University, he is also a Nebraska LEAD XXVII Fellow. Ken and his wife, Lori, have four children.

Connie Reimers-Hild currently serves as the Associate Director for the Rural Futures Institute at the University of Nebraska. The Rural Futures Institute is dedicated to becoming an internationally recognized leader for increasing community capacity as well as the confidence of rural people to address their challenges and opportunities, resulting in resilient and sustainable rural futures. Prior to her role with the Rural Futures Institute, Dr. Connie spent nine years as Unit Leader and Extension Educator at the Kimmel Education and Research Center in Nebraska City, and ten years in the Department of Entomology at UNL.

She is also a married mompreneur, futurist, and author of two books: Go Wild with Confidence! and Blue the Bee Learns to be Happy. Dr. Connie authors the blog, AskDrConnie.com and is a firewalker, mini wiener dog lover, and 80’s hair band fanatic!
Governor Ricketts was sworn in as Nebraska’s 40th Governor on January 8, 2015. Governor Ricketts was first elected to office upon winning the Nebraska gubernatorial election on November 4, 2014. Prior to his election as governor, he worked to support Nebraska entrepreneurs and start-up companies.

Ricketts graduated from Westside High School before attending the University of Chicago where he earned his bachelor’s degree in biology and an MBA in marketing and finance. After graduate school, Ricketts returned to Omaha and worked for Union Pacific before working as a customer services representative in his family’s business, a company that would eventually become known as Ameritrade.

Born in Nebraska City and raised in Omaha, Ricketts is the son of an entrepreneur and a public school teacher. Governor Ricketts and his wife, First Lady Susanne Shore, have been married for 18 years and live in Omaha with their three children, Roscoe, Margot, and Eleanor.

Amber Ross is a senior at Callaway High School, and the daughter of Vaughn and Stephanie Ross of Callaway, Nebraska. Amber is actively involved in high school rodeo, speech, one-act play production, Family Career and Community Leaders of America, Callaway Scholastic Honor Society, instrumental and vocal music, 4-H, and Youth Leadership-Custer County. Amber has developed her leadership skills through National 4-H Congress in Atlanta, Georgia, Citizen Washington Focus Group in Washington D.C., Custer County Youth Leadership Mentor, and as a Cornhusker Girls State representative. Amber plans to attend the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, and then return home to the family farm to utilize her degrees in accounting and agricultural business.

Kayla Schnuelle is the Integrated Marketing Specialist and Young Leader Coordinator for the Rural Futures Institute. Kayla coordinates the Connecting Young Nebraskans network where she has developed a deep understanding of the opportunities and trials that young professionals experience in rural places. She earned a bachelor’s degree in business and a master’s degree in agricultural leadership education and communications from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Upon graduation she assumed a position with the Nebraska Rural Initiative and eventually that position evolved into her current position with the Rural Futures Institute. Schnuelle has been a part of the initial brainstorming and development that has led to the formation of the RFI.

Schnuelle is a Valentine, Nebraska, native and currently lives and farms near Diller with her husband Joey and sons, Lane, Samuel and Liam.

Charles “Chuck” Schroeder is a native of western Nebraska ranch country and is the Founding Executive Director of the Rural Futures Institute at the University of Nebraska. Prior to joining the RFI, Schroeder served as President and Executive Director of the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Before moving to Oklahoma, Schroeder was with the Schroeder Cattle Company for about 30 years, the last 10 as owner and president. Chuck is a graduate of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln with a degree in animal science.

Schroeder is an active team roper, and his interests span American Quarter Horses, art, rodeo, political history, and livestock genetics. Chuck and his wife, Kathi, have one daughter, Lindsay Hastings, who is a faculty member at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and are also proud grandparents of two wonderful granddaughters.
Jessica Shoemaker is an assistant professor at the University of Nebraska College of Law. Her scholarly and teaching interests include rural land tenure and land use, community economic development, federal Indian law, and renewable energy development and policy. Prior to joining the University of Nebraska, Professor Shoemaker clerked for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit; earned a prestigious Skadden Fellowship doing public interest law and policy work on behalf of family farmers and rural communities with Farmers’ Legal Action Group, Inc. and practiced at a private law firm in Colorado representing primarily Native American interests, renewable energy developers, and businesses in major litigation. Her current research focuses on Native American land tenure, and she is engaged in an international project to develop public participation strategies and tools for collaborative thinking and decision-making around rural land use.

Jeff Story is a first year student at the Nebraska College of Law. He recently graduated from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in May, with majors in political science and English. In 2013, Jeff completed the Rural Futures Institute Servicships Program in Red Cloud, Nebraska, where he planned two community clean up days and coordinated a housing survey of historical properties in town with his partner, Jared Knobbe. Due to his involvement in this internship opportunity, Story developed an interest in rural law and hopes to further give back to rural areas after graduating from law school.

DeWayne Taylor (better known as D-Wayne) is an Emcee, Speaker, Beatboxer, and lover of Twizzlers from St. Louis, Missouri. Since moving to Nebraska, D-Wayne has been featured in various media outlets including 10-11 News, PBS, TEDx, 106.3 KFRX, and has made appearances at the Lied Center for Performing Arts, Century Link Center, Memorial Stadium, Verizon Wireless, and more. D-Wayne is a true Cornhusker studying broadcasting and communication studies with minors in entrepreneurship and leadership development. He has emceed for tens of thousands of people from various audiences and yet, all the while, D-Wayne’s philosophy is simple: To create a positive environment and a memorable experience for the event planner and the audience.
Brian Thompson is currently the Vice President of External Relations with Consolidated Companies, Inc., where he has worked for 21 years. He served the Nebraska Community Foundation as a board member for nine years, including Chairman of the Board for two years. He graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1991 with a bachelor’s degree in agricultural education.

Thompson was born in Aurora, Nebraska, in 1968 and moved to Dunning, Nebraska, in 1979 with his family to begin running the family ranch that was established in 1909. The ranching operation is currently operated by his parents, brother, and sister. Thompson has been married to Kelli (Johnson) for 18 years. They have four children: Daniel (24), Brady (22), Aelyn (16), and Grant (13).

Heather Tomasek is currently the landscape designer for the City of Council Bluffs. Throughout her undergraduate experience, Heather completed several projects including a service-learning studio in Crete, Nebraska, a summer internship focused on the implementation of recommendations from class planning efforts, and an international experience with the Island of Santa Cruz in the Galapagos developing three parks on the island. She began her career as the City of Council Bluffs Parks, Recreation, and Public Property Department’s first landscape designer. Her professional work with the City has been focused on riverfront development, park design, and conducting a citywide tree inventory while establishing a recovery plan for the city combating the Emerald Ash Borer. She is a 2014 graduate from the landscape architecture program at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Dean Tickle is in his fourth year as superintendent at Elm Creek Public Schools. He is a native of Ogallala, Nebraska, and graduated from Ogallala High School. He graduated from the University of Nebraska at Kearney with B.S., M.A. and Ed Specialist degrees. He has been in PK-12 education for 27 years. Mr. Tickle taught English and social science at Boys Ranch ISD in Texas, and in Nebraska at Logan View Public Schools in Hooper, Culbertson Public Schools and Lexington Public Schools. While in Lexington, he also served as the assistant principal/activities director at Lexington High School for two years and principal of the Lexington Middle School for 12 years.

In 2015, Elm Creek Schools launched a first-year agriculture program and a new FFA chapter, and is proud to partner with the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in offering multiple educational opportunities for its high school students.

Nicole Wall is currently a research and outreach specialist for the National Drought and Mitigation Center (NDMC). She has more than 15 years of experience in research methodology and public participation practice. Previously, she worked for the Heartland Center for Leadership Development in Lincoln, Nebraska, the University of Nebraska Medical Center, and the College of St. Mary. She is skilled in facilitation methods, survey design and implementation, grant writing, and project management. Throughout her work at NDMC, she has led the coordination, design, and facilitation of numerous workshops relating to drought and climate. Wall previously served as a co-facilitator for the Republican River Task Force and is currently on the National Integrated Drought Information Systems (NIDIS) Engaging Preparedness Communities (EPC) team. Wall holds a bachelor’s degree in anthropology from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and a master’s from Nebraska Wesleyan.
Donelle Wolters resides with her husband, Matt Wolters, in Atwood, Kansas, which has provided her with the opportunity to observe and appreciate the emphasis on entrepreneurship and community engagement within a rural community. She has worked as a local agricultural education instructor and FFA advisor, and for the National FFA Organization. Wolters has most recently served as the executive director for the Nebraska FFA Association. Her responsibilities included working with agricultural educators throughout the state of Nebraska, managing the state FFA officer teams, and the coordination of leadership conferences and the state FFA convention. Throughout her career she worked with numerous student entrepreneurs and spent time in a variety of small communities. Donelle is originally from Lyons, Nebraska, and received a bachelor’s degree in agricultural education from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Matt Wolters is co-owner of SureFire Ag Systems. After college, Matt worked in the Kansas City area before returning to Atwood, Kansas, to begin his career working in agricultural equipment manufacturing and sales. After two and a half years of working as a territory salesman for a local manufacturer he partnered with Blaine Ginther and Josh Wolters, founding SureFire Ag Systems, Inc. SureFire Ag Systems manufactures liquid application solutions for agricultural equipment. As the company has grown, they have focused on building a product development group to bring new innovation and technology advancements to agricultural equipment.

Matt received a bachelor’s degree in agricultural economics from Kansas State University in 2003. He was born and raised on a family farm in Rawlins County, Kansas.

Nathan Wyatt is currently an investment officer and CFO of Gothenburg State Bank. He is also the Gothenburg Board of Education President, Gothenburg Redevelopment Authority President, Gothenburg Public Schools Foundation Chairman, and Gothenburg Improvement Company Vice President. Wyatt recently led an effort to recruit the company Pinpoint to locate and establish a fiber optic network in Gothenburg, Nebraska. This effort enabled local businesses, schools, medical facilities, and residences to gain access to broadband and succeed in an increasingly competitive market.

Nate and his wife have chosen to raise their family in a rural community of less than 4,000 people. Having grown up in North Platte and graduating from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, he is proud to call “the Pony Express Capital of Nebraska” home.

Jacob Zlomke produces content for and helps direct Fly Over Me. Jacob also works in public relations and freelances for publications like The Reader in Omaha. After college, he began pursuing multimedia documentary journalism with the Fly Over Me project in and around Valentine, Nebraska. While Fly Over Me has continued to grow and evolve, Jacob spent two years as a staff writer for Hear Nebraska, where, on top of producing journalism about Nebraska’s music community, he wrote grants, planned events, and hosted a radio show on the organization’s behalf.

He attended the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and graduated with degrees in English and film studies in 2013.
On the opening day of the Rural Futures Conference, the RFI held the first ever Rural Opportunities Fair to connect students with opportunities in rural communities.

The Rural Futures Institute recognizes the need to connect students with rural communities and businesses, and believes that students are seeking meaningful connections and experiences as they consider where to pursue their career.

The Rural Opportunities Fair is a pilot event for the RFI and more than a career fair. Community representatives from over 50 communities and organizations engaged with students who are interested in establishing their futures in a rural place. Students not only learned about internship and career opportunities, they learned about social and leadership experiences that are available.

Communities and organizations attending this event were seeking students with a variety of interests, from healthcare to entrepreneurship and agronomy to journalism, among many others. The need for diverse talent shows how rural places are legitimate options for students to establish their future.

Thank you to the communities and organizations that were part of this pilot experience! We look forward to continuing our work to connect students with the opportunities available in rural communities.

PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

21st Century Equipment
Auburn Development Council
Ariens Company
Boone County Development Agency
Box Butte Economic Development Corp.
Broken Bow
Central Nebraska Economic Development
Central Valley Ag
Chase County
City of Sidney/Cheyenne County
UNMC College of Allied Health
Columbus
Connecting Young Nebraskans
Dawson Area Development
ExtensionCorps
Falls City
Fillmore County
Furnas-Harlan Partnership
Hastings
Holt County/O’Neill Area
Intern Nebraska
Nebraska DHHS Office of Rural Health
Nebraska Rural Living
Nebraska Public Power District
Nebraska State Bar Association
Neligh
Norfolk Area
Ogallala Commons
Ord & Valley County
Phelps County
Rural Futures Institute Serviceship Program
Seward County
Sherman County
Beatrice/Gage County
USDA
Viaero Wireless
Waddell & Reed
Wayne
York County
ENVISION RURAL TALKS: Igniting Creative Ideas

MATT REZAC
Sherwood Foundation
“Nature As Muse: Local Expertise and Community Abundance”
Biomimcry, the study and application of nature’s design principles, can be used to explore nature as a model, mentor, and muse as we think about how to strengthen rural communities.

KYLE RYAN
Peru State College
“Know Thyself: How Academic Institutions Can Facilitate Change in the Local Environment”
The strength of academic institutions is being the catalyst of collaboration with surrounding communities to facilitate change for future growth.

ALAN KOLOK
Nebraska Watershed Network, University of Nebraska at Omaha
“Taming Superwicked Environmental Problems with an Engaged Community”
Today’s environmental problems encompass wide geographies and long time scales. To confront such problems requires new tactics and engaged citizens.

VISHAL SINGH
Quantified Ag
“Changing an Industry”
When technology meets animal health, innovation happens. Discover how this tech company is changing the beef industry as we know it.

JESSICA SHOEMAKER
University of Nebraska–Lincoln College of Law
“The Public Parts of Private Property: Community Engagement and Rural Design”
Rural communities are built upon a series of discrete public land use decisions and public engagement. “Plainsopoly” facilitates conversation around key strategies and connects decision-makers through simulation.

HUNG VO
Habitat III Regional Focal Point, UN Major Group for Children and Youth
“Revitalizing Rural America: Mobilizing Towards Development”
Discover replicable lessons from the UN Millennium Development Goals to improve current rural planning and development efforts.

RANDY STRINGER
The University of Adelaide, Australia
“Agrarian Landscapes, Brand Identity and Rural Prosperity”
Explore how local governments and rural organizations across the globe can identify and promote both the tangible and intangible benefits of agrarian landscapes.

JEFF YOST
Nebraska Community Foundation
“The Role of Discretion in Leadership Development”
Opportunity capital allows community leaders to envision a brighter future, think critically about their opportunities, and make investments to move their dreams closer to reality.

MELISSA GARCIA
Custer Public Power District
“Eat Your Wheaties. They are Going to Need a Champion”
Behind every community success story is a community, grassroots champion with the power to impact change.

LARKIN POWELL
University of Nebraska–Lincoln
“Proactive Landscape Management Can Benefit Rural Communities”
Explore the possibilities for public and market-based support to diversify the rural economy, retain an emerging generation of young adults, and provide for our future through meaningful landscape design that necessitates cooperation with neighbors.

SHANE FARRITOR
University of Nebraska–Lincoln
“Makerspaces in Rural Communities”
Explore a makerspace model where communities can band together, create the critical mass, and form an innovative making environment that promotes economic growth, STEM education, and community vitality.
The 2015 Rural Futures Conference features a juried poster competition for undergraduate and graduate students. Twenty-nine abstracts were accepted for the competition. Additional posters were submitted by faculty, partners and other professionals and are listed in a section following the student sections. A total of forty abstracts were submitted.

Prize winners are determined by a team of judges who will evaluate the posters before and during the conference. Cash prizes are awarded for both undergraduate and graduate divisions.

Prizes for undergraduate students are:
- First Place: $500
- Second Place: $350
- Third Place: $150
- Honorable Mention: $100

Prizes for graduate students are:
- First Place: $750
- Second Place: $500
- Third Place: $250
- Honorable Mention: $100

Posters are on display throughout the 2nd floor of the Link and the conference center at Nebraska Innovation Campus beginning Wednesday. Judging takes place during the poster session and reception Thursday evening.

### UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT POSTERS

- **Rural Civic Action Program: Tecumseh Restroom Renovations**
  *Jessica Bartak, Clara Durham, L.J. McElravy, UNL

- **Themes of Successful Leadership Transfer within Rural Nebraska Communities**
  *Hannah Brenden, *Melissa Laughlin, Morgan Netz, Lindsay Hastings, University of Nebraska–Lincoln UCARE

- **MobileWash**
  *Thomas Kayton, MobileWash

- **Hartington: Revealing a Community’s Strengths**
  *Nathan Kathol, Dana Fritz, UNL

- **Finding a Beefy Niche in Rural Nebraska**
  *Laura Gorecki, Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program, UNL

- **Johnson-Brock: Unitig Two Communities**
  Katie Brock, *Taylor Hart, Kelsey Arends, L.J. McElravy, UNL

- **Comparing Urban and Rural Institutional Trust Development**
  *Addison E. Fairchild, *Alexandria Pytlik Zillig, Lisa M. Pytlik Zillig, University of Nebraska Public Policy Center

- **Physical Fitness and Academic Performance**
  *Callen Maupin, Matthew Bice, Kate Heelan, Todd Bartee, Undergraduate Research Fellows, UNK

- **Evaluating Perceptions of Climate Change Impacts in the Greater Horn of Africa Using the Community Capitals Framework**
  *Jake Petr, Deborah Bathke, UNL

- **Four Seasons Organic Vegetable GREENhouse**
  *Chris Ruiz, UNL

- **Rural Civic Action Program: Nebraska City**
  *Sarah Schalm, Kelsey Arends, L.J. McElravy, UNL

- **Rural Civic Action Program: Johnson-Brock**
  *Katie Wilkins, Kelsey Arends, L.J. McElravy, UNL

- **University of Nebraska at Kearney - Enactus Team**
  *Jonathon Vasquez, Abbey Rhodes, UNK Enactus
Outcomes of a Family-Based Obesity Treatment Program: Consumption of a Low-Fat Diet and Weight Loss
*Marissa Bongers, Kate Heelan, Todd Bartee, Bryce Abbey, UNK

Using Crowdlearning for Leadership Development in Rural Communities
*Eric Scheller, Roni Reiter-Palmon, Stephanie Sands, David Kocsis, Abdulrahman Alothaim, Gina Scott-Ligon, Lynn Harland, Doug Derrick, Gert-Jan de Vreede, Susan Jensen, UNO

Across the 100th Meridian: Comparing Quality of Life in the Rural Cultures of the American West & Midwest
*Joshua Fergen, Anne Junod, Mary Emery, South Dakota State University

Extending Concussion Evaluations with Telemedicine for Certified Athletic Trainers
*Scott McGrath, Melanie McGrath, Dhundy Bastola, UNO

Determinants of Retention for Non-metropolitan Healthcare Providers
*Jordyn Bader, UNL

We Need New Stories
*Amanda Breitbach, UNL

Minnesota Rising “Our Minnesota” Cascading Conversations
*Brooke McManigal, Diane Tran, Eriks Dunens, Heidi Smith, Nick Stuber, Jenny Hegland, Minnesota Rising

A Tale of Two Rural Cities: Interaction of Community Capitals During a North Dakota Oil Boom
*Felix Fernando, Gary Goreham, North Dakota State University

Head, Heart, Hands, and Health: A Study of Rural and Urban 4-H Volunteers in Nebraska
*Sheridan Trent, Lisa Scherer, Volunteer Program Assessment, UNO

Investigating Barriers Facing Rural Versus Urban Volunteer Programs: A Partnership Between UNO’s Volunteer Program Assessment Team and the Nebraska CASA Association
*Stephanie Weddington, Lisa Scherer, UNO

Steering Civically Minded Students to Rural Nebraska through Co-Curricular Service
*Victoria M. Graeve-Cunningham, Lisa L. Scherer, UNO

Open-Data Mapping Innovations
*Paul Hunt, University of Nebraska

*Nancy Qwynne Lackey, Lisa Pennisi, UNL

KidQuest: A Nutrition and Physical Activity Program Designed for Preadolescent Students
*Ashley Cleveland, Kathryn Painter, Shinya Takahashi, Jean Ann Fischer, Johnna Hall, Becky Jensen, Linda Boeckner, Mindy Anderson-Knott, Melissa Wallinga, Deepa Srivastava, UNL

Improving Rural Teacher Practices: An Investigation of the Teachers and Parents as Partners Intervention
*Amanda L. Moen, Susan M. Sheridan, Samantha R. Angell, Tyler E. Smith, Amanda L. Witte, Sonya A. Bhatia, UNL

Teachers and Parents as Partners in Rural Communities: Effects on Student Engagement and Attention
*Tyler Smith, Susan M. Sheridan, Amanda Witte, Sonya Bhatia, Samantha Angell, Amanda Moen, UNL

Social-Ecological Resilience in the Platte River Basin
*Hannah E. Birge, Craig R. Allen, Robin Kundis Craig, Ahjond S. Garmestani, Joseph A. Hamm, UNL
More than Winning: Exploring Community Value Innovation of a Minor-league Sport Team in Rural Community  *Young Do Kim, Hyun-Woo Lee, Nita Unruh, UNK


Voices for Food: Utilizing Food Policy Councils to Bridge the Gap Between Food Security and Healthy Food Choices  Lisa Franzen-Castle, Jean Ann Fischer, *Vanessa Wielenga, Brenda Sale, Michelle Kroupa, Joyce Reich, Nebraska Extension

Ecotourism and Agritourism Development in Nebraska: A Pilot Service Learning Course at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln  *Lisa Pennisi, Nicole Wall, *Nancy Q. Lackey, UNL

Civic Health In Nebraska: Strengths and Action Steps  *Kelsey Arends, Adam Morfeld, Kent Day, Robert McEntarffer, Randal M. Ernst, Karl Shaddock, Jeff Yost, Lisa Pytlik Zillig, Mitchel N. Herian, Linda Major, Julie Dierberger, Doris J. Huffman, Harris C. Payne, Nebraskans for Civic Reform

Harvesting the Past: The Nebraska Natural Resources Districts Oral History Project  *Jesse Starita, Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute at the University of Nebraska

Creating Hope and Inspiring Vision in Communities through the Entrepreneurial Communities Activation Process (ECAP)  *Carroll Welte, Jessica Jones, Randy Cantrell, Charlotte Narjes, Nebraska Extension

Marketing Hometown America: As Social Capital Explosion and Measuring Impacts Using Ripple Effect Mapping and the Community Capitals Framework  *Kenneth Sherin, David Olson, Mary Emery, SDSU Extension

Greater Minnesota Rising—Researching the Landscape for Emerging Leaders in North and West Central Minnesota  *David Milavetz, Raising The Bar, LLC

Youth Redefining Rural Through the Arts  *Cathy Johnston, Connie Hancock, Linda Dannehl, Sue Pearman, Angela Abts, Jill Walahoski, Nebraska Extension

Rural Futures Training in Academic Service-Learning: Building Partnerships Between Higher Education Institutions and Communities to Enrich Student Education and Strengthen Rural Area Communities  *Gerry Stirtz, Jean C. Karlen, Wendy McCarty, Anita Lorentzen, UNK
Coffeeshop Discussions are designed to allow conference participants to bring topics or questions to the table. These informal discussions help conference attendees share knowledge and experiences while networking with others. During the conference, you will have the opportunity to share your thoughts, experiences, and passions with others through round-table discussions during the coffeeshop discussion session. In a peer-learning setting, we encourage you to listen to other viewpoints and think about all the possible opportunities and challenges that exist around the topic at your table.

All attendees interested in discussing a specific question "vote with their feet" by joining the discussion of most interest. Each conference participant is invited to partake in two of these transdisciplinary discussions during the designated ‘Coffeeshop Discussion’ time on Friday, October 23.

These discussions are designed to showcase the vast array of topics, questions and ideas that the Rural Futures Institute and others have identified.

*How were the topics chosen?*

Prior to the conference, attendees submitted questions and topics, and through a selection process, the questions were chosen for the event.
Registrant information for registrations received after October 12 are not included in this list.

**PARTICIPANTS**

**ABBREVIATION KEY**

**NBDC:** Nebraska Business Development Center  
**NCTA:** Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture  
**UNK:** University of Nebraska at Kearney  
**UNL:** University of Nebraska–Lincoln  
**UNMC:** University of Nebraska Medical Center  
**UNO:** University of Nebraska at Omaha  
**USDA:** United States Department of Agriculture

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