

Students prepare for cutting-edge ag industry

Agriculture has been in a technological revolution since mankind was ejected from the Garden of Eden. In the beginning, agricultural innovation progressed slowly, but recent developments in biotechnology, geospatial science and computer engineering have thrust the industry onto the cutting edge of technological and scientific advance.

About a century ago, half the U.S. population was actively engaged in farming. Today, less than 2 percent of Americans make their living directly from agricultural production, with another 13 percent employed in agricultural processing and marketing industries. Although human investment in agriculture has dramatically decreased, productivity has grown exponentially. The self-cleaning steel plow that revolutionized farming in the 1800s has given way to auto-steer equipment. Traditional row crops, such as corn and soybeans, are being supplemented with bioenergy and biopharmaceutical crops. Those actively engaged in agriculture are entrusted with the monumental task of sustainably producing environmentally conscious products that promote human health, economic stability and national security. Keeping abreast of such constant advancements is an immense challenge faced by producers and educators alike.

Northwest agriculture department faculty are working diligently to prepare students as future industry leaders. We are currently in the planning

stages of improving classroom and laboratory facilities on campus and at the R.T. Wright Farm. Our collaboration with agricultural businesses brings cutting-edge technologies into the classroom and increases student internship opportunities nationwide. We are actively engaged in interdisciplinary endeavors to increase undergraduate research and study abroad activities. Generous time and monetary donations from alumni and friends are improving student access to educational resources. With every challenge comes opportunity, and we are working hard to prepare students for the dynamic and fast-paced world of agriculture. We are optimistic about the agriculture industry and the important role our students will play in our nation's future.

We welcome you to stop by our department sometime and visit our museum, our facilities and our students: the past, present and future of agriculture.

Sincerely,



Dr. J. Arley Larson

Chair and Associate Professor of Agriculture



Dr. Arley Larson, chair of Northwest's Department of Agriculture, appreciates the hands-on opportunities provided by the University's R.T. Wright Farm, but also recognizes there's much more that goes into training today's students for successful careers in agriculture.

“I know of no pursuits in which more real and important services can be rendered to any country than by improving its agriculture...”

George Washington

The mission of the *Northwest Alumni Magazine* is to foster connections between alumni, friends and Northwest Missouri State University. The offices of University Advancement and University Relations strive to inform readers of the accomplishments of Northwest's alumni, friends, faculty, students and administration and to positively position the University in the hearts of its many constituents to increase public and private support.

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