

NACTA Yesterday

NACTA-50 Years of Teaching Excellence¹



The National Association of College Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) was officially born March 12, 1955, at Central Missouri State College in Warrensburg, Missouri. The first president of NACTA was Edward B. Knight from the Tennessee Polytechnic Institute. He stated:

“It is our responsibility as educators to prepare our students for the kind of life they will enter upon graduation—big, rough, demanding and fast moving.” Sound familiar?

The 1957 conference was held at Stephen F. Austin College in Nacogdoches, Texas, and at that conference G. Carl Schowengerdt presented a small gavel to conduct business. It was felt that a small gavel in Texas was totally out of place and downright embarrassing. So a Texas gavel was constructed with a mallet 12 inches long, 7 inches in diameter, with a handle 3 feet long. That gavel was resurrected to conduct business at the 50th celebration for NACTA. A perspective on the financial requirements for membership in NACTA is gained from the 1959 Executive Committee, which set NACTA dues at \$3. This included a subscription to the *NACTA Journal*, a peer reviewed journal dedicated to teaching improvement. The annual conference registration fee for that year was \$5, but this fee was waived for the host school staff members.

A constitution and bylaws were put in place, and the early years set the foundation for the organization in many ways. The first meetings of representatives from non-land-grant colleges involved discussions to define the purpose and function of NACTA, as well as how NACTA should relate to the land-grant institutions. After many lengthy and heated discussions over the early years of NACTA, the constitution was modified in 1967 to allow total integration of junior colleges, colleges, and universities into NACTA.

The name of the organization was changed in 1963 to The National Association of Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture. As the organization grew in scope and included representatives from Canada, it was decided to once again change the name. History records a third name change in 2002, to North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture. From the start, the acronym has been and remains NACTA.

The first 25 years of the history of NACTA was summarized by G. Carl Schowengerdt, professor of agriculture emeritus, Southeast Missouri State University. Dr. Schowengerdt was a charter member

of NACTA and served as its president and in many other roles, including historian. He was one of several individuals that gave unselfishly of their time to an organization that has been and continues to be dedicated to the improvement of college teaching of agriculture. The detailed history in the publication entitled, *1955 to 1979 History of the National Association of Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA): 25 Years Dedicated to the Improvement of College Teaching of Agriculture*, will not be repeated here but provides an interesting review of where we have come from.

Murray A. Brown, NACTA secretary-treasurer compiled a publication entitled, *Forty Years in NACTA*, in 1994 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of NACTA. A key role in keeping the NACTA organization viable financially and respected professionally has been not only leadership from outstanding presidents but also the dedication and leadership of the offices of secretary, treasurer, and editors.

While adequate credit can never be expressed to all that have filled the offices of NACTA, there are those like Murray Brown, who served as secretary-treasurer from 1972 to 1999, and Jack Everly, who was editor from 1975 to 1996, who deserve a “medal of honor.” Rick Parker (editor) and his wife Marilyn (secretary-treasurer) are moving NACTA forward in very positive ways at the present time.

This organization now welcomes membership from all aspects of the food, fiber, and natural resources areas. It is dedicated solely to the improvement of teaching. Annual meetings rotate between two-year and

four-year institutions. Many, many individuals continue to give of their time, talents, and resources to make NACTA viable.

The NACTA foundation was formed in 1985 to establish an endowment to fund NACTA awards. The foundation continues to grow and serves an important base for supporting awards to recognize outstanding educators.

As we celebrate our 56th year, it is important to review the benefits of NACTA. They include the *NACTA Journal*, where peer-reviewed articles on improving and promoting excellence in college teaching of agriculture and related disciplines are published. Articles cover topics that treat all aspects of teaching, such as methods, problems, philosophy, materials, evaluations, assessments, and rewards at the college level. Also included are reviews of textbooks, videos, and other instructional media. The

¹Source: NACTA -- 50 Years of Teaching Excellence, available online at <http://nacta.fp.expressacademic.net/article.php?autoID=1732&issueID=262>. This publication details each of the presidents of NACTA, lists the conference sites, themes and awards through 2004.

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Annual NACTA Conference in mid-June provides and encourages colleagues to strive for excellence in the classroom. This conference includes presentations and discussions on topics of vital interest to college teachers. Outstanding teachers receive

national recognition at the awards banquet. NACTA also fosters undergraduate student excellence through its liaison with the Honor Society of Delta Tau Alpha and with the NACTA Judging Conference.



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