

Developing the Annual Judging Conference and Experiential Learning as Priorities for NACTA

Kevin J. Donnelly

Department of Agronomy

KANSAS STATE

U N I V E R S I T Y

Background



- I have been heavily involved in “out-of-classroom” teaching and learning opportunities for students for over 40 years
- This led to my first connection with NACTA in 1987 through the NACTA Judging Conference
- Thus, as incoming NACTA President at the Utah State conference in 2008, I challenged NACTA to provide greater recognition for faculty involved in student activities and increase our focus on experiential learning



- **During that presentation I asked, “By show of hands, how many have:**
 - **coached a judging/competition team,**
 - **advised a student organization,**
 - **directed a service learning project, or**
 - **led an international study trip?”**
- **The response was nearly 100%**

- **My reply was, “I would challenge us to begin an effort to develop an award to recognize such out-of-classroom efforts as a primary criterion for a new NACTA award.”
NACTA Journal, 52:3:65-66, Sept. 2008**
- **I also challenged NACTA to make the annual NACTA Judging Conference a more integral part of NACTA and improve the connections between the judging conference and the NACTA parent organization**
- **Much progress has been made since, not only with the Judging Conference, but in the overall focus of NACTA on experiential learning, including a new Experiential Learning Committee to lead us in the future**
- **This presentation analyzes the steps NACTA has made to address these challenges, and offers ideas for continuing our efforts for the future**

The NACTA Judging Conference

- Started as part of NACTA annual meetings in 1959
- Officially named the NACTA Judging Conference in 1970
- Held continuously for all but two years since
- Contests generally offered in 10-14 content areas
- Six required contests: livestock, dairy, soils, crops, agribusiness and knowledge bowl



The NACTA Judging Conference

- Hosted by a different college each April
- Separate 2-year and 4-year divisions (about equal numbers)
- Sweepstakes awards for top overall schools



- A NACTA Judging Conference constitution provides general rules and eligibility criteria
- Coaches serve as elected officers of the Judging Conference to recruit host schools and guide conference administration

The NACTA Judging Conference

- Typical participation includes over 500 student contestants from about 40 different schools, plus faculty coaches



Past Connections with NACTA



- **By 2008, the Judging Conference was already established as an excellent experiential learning experience for students**
- **However, it had previously operated almost independently of the NACTA parent organization**
 - **Only received a small donation from NACTA for the sweepstakes award**
 - **Minimal effort to insure competing schools were NACTA members as required in the Judging Conference constitution**
 - **Limited interaction with NACTA for promotion of the event and posting results**
 - **An annual report was provided to the NACTA Executive Board by the NACTA Judging Conference Liaison**

Progress Toward Enhancing Connections

- Our first objective was making the Judging Conference a more integral part of NACTA
- Due to efforts by the NACTA Executive Committee and Judging Conference coaches and officers, outcomes have included:
 - Raising nearly \$10,000 to create the NACTA Judging and Student Service Award (first given in 2014)
 - A NACTA executive officer attending and speaking at the Judging Conference
 - Promotion and presentations about the Judging Conference at the NACTA Annual Conference
 - More promotion, photos, history, and results posted on the NACTA website



Progress Toward Enhancing Connections

- Insuring that competing colleges are paid NACTA institutional members (100% for first time in 2017 = 48 schools)
- Increased financial support from NACTA for the sweepstakes award, and more recently for other contest expenses through the CHS grant to NACTA
- Proposed constitutional change elevating the appointed NACTA Judging Conference Liaison to an elected Director with full voting privileges on the NACTA Executive Committee (to be voted on at this meeting)



Related Outcomes

- **Increased overall focus on experiential learning for NACTA**
- **An Experiential Learning Committee was established in 2016**

Responsibilities:

- (a) collaborate with the Judging Conference Director to intentionally extend the purposes of NACTA through the Judging Conference*
- (b) explore creative opportunities for NACTA to enhance undergraduate experiential learning*
- (c) develop stronger career preparation and skill development opportunities through enhanced relationships with agricultural and environmental business leaders and companies*
- (d) recommend programs for the annual conference focused on the implementation and assessment of experiential learning activities*

Experiential Learning Committee

- **At the first committee meeting, participants listed experiential learning experiences that could be considered***

Judging Teams

Internships

International Experience

Service Learning

Co-ops

Undergraduate Research

Clubs/Organizations

Practicums

Ambassador Programs

Career Development

Study Away

Field Experiences

Skill Development

Student Teaching

Capstone Courses

Community Development

Global Learning

Leadership Studies

- **Discussed curricular vs. extracurricular components, assessment of the experiences, and assessment of learning by students***
- **Posed questions that could be addressed through workshops, publications, and resource identification in the future***

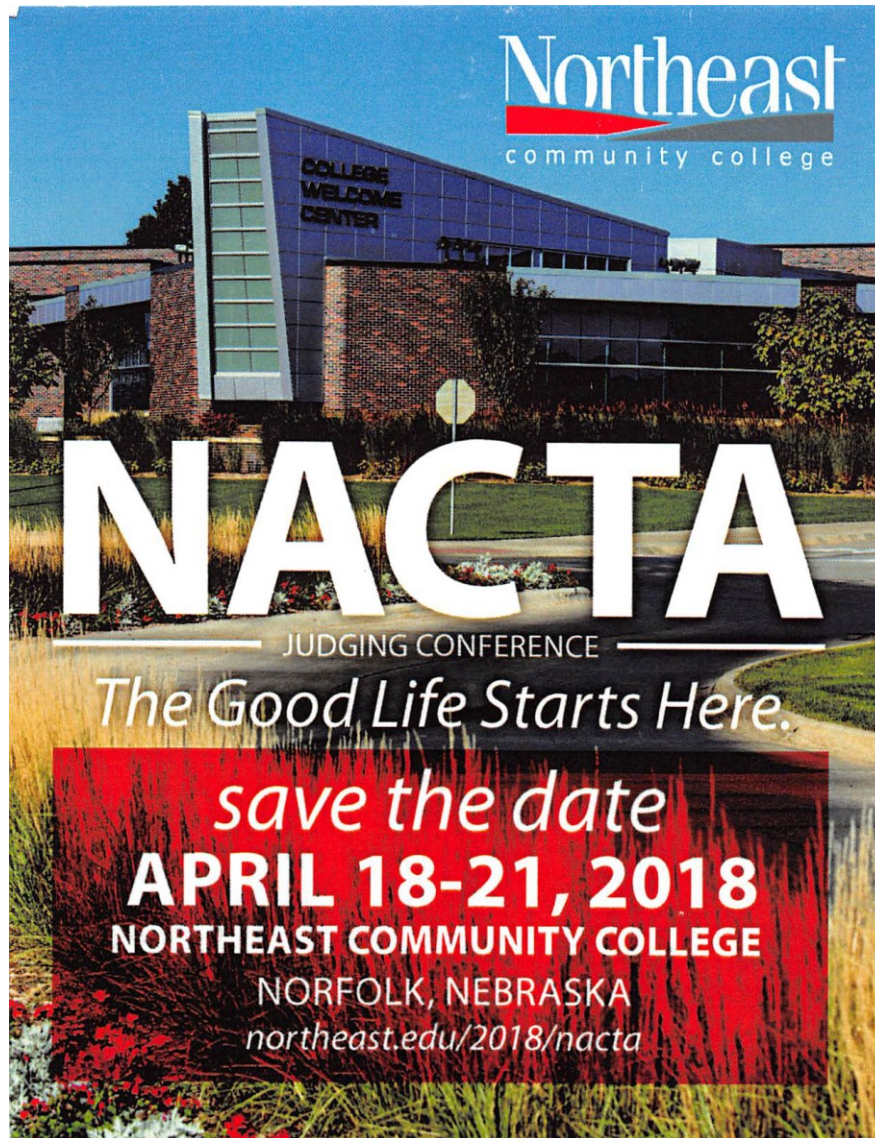
* From: NACTA Experiential Learning Committee minutes, June, 2016,
Dana Ladner and Tracy Rutherford, Co-Chairs

Experiential Learning Committee

- **Sponsoring a workshop at 2017 conference: “Can you see me learn? Using the photo narrative process to evaluate student experiential learning” led by Gary Wingenbach, Texas A&M**
- **Have provided five recommendations for improving website communication and better promoting the benefits of Judging Conference participation**
- **Co-chair Dana Ladner and President-elect Mark Russell attended the Judging Conference business meeting at K-State to discuss enhanced connections and support from NACTA**
- **Co-chairs Dana Ladner and Tracy Rutherford contacted all 2017 judging coaches thanking them for participating and provided information on the 2017 conference at Purdue**

Future Directions and Challenges

- **Continued development of the experiential learning focus for NACTA led by the Experiential Learning Committee**
- **Explore the need for an additional faculty award focused on excellence in experiential learning**
- **Continue the efforts to connect and strengthen the NACTA Judging Conference:**
 - **Better use of the NACTA website for Judging Conference promotion, rules, registration, documents, history**
 - **Earlier posting of rules and registration information**
 - **Getting more colleges involved**
 - **Securing future host sites**
 - **Identifying candidates for the elected NACTA Judging Conference Director position every two years**
 - **Greater participation of faculty involved with judging in other NACTA activities, especially 2-year college faculty**



<http://northeast.edu/2018/nacta/>

Contact: Mike Roeber, 402-844-7183, mikesr@northeast.edu

Thank You For Attending



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