

News Release

U of M Crookston Teams Claim Sweepstakes at 2008 NACTA National Judging Competition in Stephenville, Texas, in April

By Lyle Westrom, Elizabeth Tollefson on Wednesday, April 23, 2008

Crookston, Minn. (April 24, 2008) – For University of Minnesota Crookston Associate Professor Charles Habstritt, it was a sweet ending to his last National Association of Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) competition before retirement. Crookston's NACTA team, continuing their long-standing reputation for success at NACTA, placed first in the annual National Judging Competition held in Stephenville, Texas, in mid-April. The team won both the four-year college division competition and the overall Sweepstakes competition between the top two- and four-year college teams. The last time the Crookston teams won the Sweepstakes was in 2003.

Thirty six students, representing a cross section of majors from across the campus, participated in the ten contests making up the competition:

Agricultural Computers, Crops, Dairy, Horse, Horticulture, Poultry, Meats, Ag Knowledge Bowl, General Livestock and Soils. Also at the competition were coaches Associate Professor Lyle Westrom, Ph.D.; and Christo Robberts, Ph.D., from the Agriculture Department joined by Crookston campus admissions counselor Justin Reed, who was the general livestock coach and a former NACTA competitor for the U of M Crookston. Westrom, who has served president of the NACTA Coaches Association for ten years, stepped down and Derek Dick from Coffeyville Community College in Coffeyville, Kan., became the association's new president.



A number of students took first place finishes in the competition but one of the most exciting and highly competitive contests was in crops judging. The U of M Crookston Crops Team took first place led by the first place individual finish of Senior Eric Proulx, Red Lake Falls, Minn. Other members of the team included: Justin McMechan, Pierson, Manitoba, Canada; Stephen Roerick, Upsala, Minn.; and Jade Estling, Roosevelt, Minn.

Seniors Amy Jo Schwartz, Monticello, Minn., along with Desiree Carrlson, New York Mills, Minn., planned and organized the team's trip. "This trip was huge for us and we are so proud of our accomplishments," said Schwartz. "We owe a great deal to our faculty and especially our coaches."

Other first place finishes along with the Crops team include:

Dairy team: Emily Ulland, Fargo, N.D.; Carolyn Paulson Thief River Falls, Minn.; and BillieJo Armbrust, Thompson, N.D.

Meats team: Casey Jo Wilde, Oklee, Minn.; Cathy Balsiger, Lake Park, Minn., Craig Roerick, Upsala, Minn.; and Crystal Starr, Bisbee, N.D.

Poultry team: Dani Harris, Rochester, Minn.; Melanie Meyer, Fort Ripley, Minn.; Danielle Hannon, Champlin, Minn.; and Josh Kieke, Kimball, Minn.

Agriculture Knowledge Bowl: Estling, Proulx, Stephen Roerick, Upsala, Minn.; and Wilde

Horticulture team: Tim Caillier, Crookston, Minn.; Sarah Christenson, Appleton, Wis.; Desiree Carrlson, New York Mills, Minn.; and Brent Huebner, Elbow Lake, Minn.

The Agriculture Computers team finished second. Members included: Andrew Shae, Ulen, Minn.; Virginia Carrlson, New York Mills, Minn.; Tom Barrett, East Grand Forks, Minn.; and Schwartz. Other results were fourth place finishes by the Horse team of Caitlin Rose, Burns, Oregon; Kristin Isch, Becky Rhodus, Parkville, Missouri; and Kristin Fjosee, Olympia, Wash.; who were coached by Melanie Regan, Crookston, Minn.; and in General Livestock including Casey Wollangk, Reynolds, N.D.; Sam Westby, Erhard, Minn.; Heather Schroeder, Nevis, Minn.; and Tom Haarstick, Vergas, Minn. The seventh place finish by the Soils team of Kari Hendrickx, New York Mills, Minn.; Jenny Gillespie, Hitterdahl, Minn.; Heather Cuypers, Litchville, Minn.; and Kyle Severance, Waterbury Center, Vermont, rounded out the placings.

NACTA is dedicated to advancing the scholarship of teaching and learning in the agricultural, environmental, natural, and life sciences. NACTA competitions have been held since 1957 and involve knowledge and skills contests covering various agricultural topics. The competition is rigorous, including college and university students from all across the nation. This year's event was hosted by Tarleton State/Abilene Christian universities and Ohio State Wooster is slated to host in 2009.

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