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## Continuing education and ag credit partnership

A partnership between the Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) continuing education department in Calmar and faculty who teach credit courses in agriculture is expanding learning experiences for ag students of all ages. Collaboration to deliver non-credit and credit coursework jointly to community members with the partnership has also generated new opportunities via the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) for students statewide. The successful agriculture education partnership is in its third year.

"Farm families and agribusinesses benefit because of the partnerships that the NICC continuing education division and the credit side of the college have fostered," states Mary Steen, NICC continuing education program manager.

Dave Lawstuen, NICC dairy science instructor, views the teamwork as beneficial for students because many students have direct farming experiences that enhance classroom learning. "One of the best educational experiences for our credit students is to have older adult students in their classes. I've seen this first-hand when teaching the Farm Business Management class. The credit students become very engaged while listening to the experiences of adults who have lived what we are discussing in class," Lawstuen said.

The NICC credit and non-credit divisions enjoy a

long history of collaboration in agricultural education. Continuing education's work with the USDA Farm Service Agency and ag faculty who teach credit courses helped to offer a class via the ICN for direct borrowers. The flexibility of the ICN also makes the class available to all Iowa community colleges. This class meets the requirement for repeat Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct borrowers. Continuing education divisions across Iowa benefit from this course offering and its availability to meet the needs

of their communities.

The Continuing Education department registers many NICC graduates of credit programs of study who are returning for licensure, relicensure, to learn updates in their professional fields and to engage in valuable life-long learning opportunities. "Bringing graduates back to NICC for continuing education strengthens both the students' knowledge and our programs," Steen said.

Steen and Lawstuen hope to offer more joint programming between the credit and non-credit sides of the college because "all attendees leave with a positive impression of NICC and everyone gains from the experience," said Steen.

For more information on programs of study and continuing education opportunities at NICC, visit [www.nicc.edu](http://www.nicc.edu).