

A new award program in the UNL College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources will enable a student interested in agricultural policy to intern in Washington, D.C. The first recipient will be selected in January 2012.

The Keith R. Olsen Agricultural Policy Internship Award was established in November by Nebraska Farm Bureau to honor Olsen's service to Nebraska, agriculture and Farm Bureau. Olsen, who is from Grant, retired as Farm Bureau president on Dec. 6. He previously served as vice president and has been a member of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Board of Directors for nearly 20 years.

The award program established with the NU Foundation will provide \$3,000 to \$4,000 annually for a CASNR student to work as an intern in a Nebraska Congressional office or for a Congressional Committee or approved ag organization.

The amount of the award depends on the length of the internship. Most internships in Washington, D.C., are not paid positions, so the Olsen award will support the student's living expenses in one of the country's most expensive cities. The student may enroll for academic credit for the internship.

"Internships are the convergence of academic preparation and practical experience that clarify and often define the career paths of our students," CASNR Dean Steve Waller said Dec. 1, in expressing appreciation for the new program. "The students who are fortunate to receive a Keith R. Olsen Agricultural Policy Internship have the added prestige of the Olsen name, as well as the responsibility to continue the legacy of public service that defined Keith's career."

The internship award will enable a junior or senior student to gain experience in Washington and better understand agricultural policy issues and the process by which ag policy is made, said Brad Lubben, Agricultural Economics public policy specialist. Lubben is the faculty sponsor for the program and will serve as a member of the student selection committee.

"That experience is extremely valuable as the student finishes a degree and starts a career in agriculture, whether engaged in agricultural production or agribusiness or working for ag organizations or policymakers," Lubben said. "The ag policy internship provides a foundation from which the student can grow and contribute substantially to the ag policy process in their community, their organization, and even state and national elected offices."

Keith Olsen said he was both surprised and delighted when the internship award was announced to him on Nov. 17.

"I believe it's critically important for young people to have the opportunity for careers in agriculture, whether it's on the farm or ranch, in business, or in public policy. I know being in Washington and seeing how policy is made, how ideas develop into legislation and how interests come together to achieve their goals, will be invaluable to the students who receive this award."

Applications for the internship award are due Dec. 20; the 2012 recipient will be announced on Jan. 31. More information is available from Brad Lubben at 402/472-2235 or blubben2@unl.edu