



• A G R I C U L T U R E C E N T E R O F E X C E L L E N C E •

A Collaboration for the Future

A Partnership Between
Dairyland State Academy
and **Northcentral Technical College**

Dear Friends

While agriculture is one of the oldest professions known to man, it has developed into one of the most complex and demanding occupations in the twenty-first century. No longer can a farmer succeed with just hard work and commitment. Today, a dairy farmer must be a master of animal husbandry, crop production, machinery maintenance and repair, marketing strategies and business management.

Thanks to a unique collaboration of partners in the agriculture industry, government and education, the Agriculture Center of Excellence (Center) will provide the knowledge and skills needed to excel in the management of the herd, nutrition, crops, equipment, buildings and business. Students, agricultural producers, and communities will have learning opportunities that expand the understanding of the honorable profession of farming, increase agriculture awareness, enhance agricultural-related skills, and promote responsible and sustainable farming practices.

Dairyland State Academy (DSA), a group of agricultural leaders in Marathon County Wisconsin, created a vision of revitalizing the dairy industry by educating its future generation of leaders and producers at a state-of-the-art operational farm and education site. This was brought to reality by a \$1 million grant from Marathon County for the purchase of a farm and construction of necessary buildings and other upgrades. DSA in turn will deed the facility to Northcentral Technical College (NTC) which will assume responsibility for management of the Center.

NTC has developed an associate degree Dairy Science program unique within the Wisconsin Technical College System. The comprehensive curriculum developed by NTC will improve entrepreneurial skills through experiential learning, involving students in the process of making decisions based upon sound management strategies. No matter the students' backgrounds, whether planning for the transition of the family farm or preparing to work with a dairy operation for the first time, the program gives the wide background of information required to successfully manage an entrepreneurial endeavor or be a strong leader in a local dairy operation.

In addition to being a farm of the future, the Agriculture Center of Excellence will also be a rural renewable energy center of excellence featuring renewable technologies in both farm operations and educational programs. Solar, geothermal and wind energy sources, equipment powered by biodiesel fuel and energy efficient building systems are but a few of the renewable technologies that will be incorporated into the facility. People throughout central Wisconsin, the state and even internationally have indicated their enthusiastic support of the Center. However we will need the support and involvement of the entire community to make this dream an operational reality. We invite you to become a part of this unique effort that will keep agricultural jobs and production agriculture growing in central Wisconsin.

Dale Heise

President
Dairyland State Academy

Lori Weyers

President
Northcentral Technical College

It's more than just the cows...

More than \$1.2 billion of Marathon County's \$8.2 billion economy is attributed to agriculture, with \$953 million directly related to the dairy industry. Marathon County is the largest milk producing county in Wisconsin and ranks second for the number of cows. The ten counties that comprise the Northcentral Technical College district employ 43,000 men and women in agri-business (almost 15% of the total workforce) who generate \$5.2 billion or 20% of the total economy.



Photo Provided by the Wisconsin Milk Board

Agricultural careers offer unlimited opportunities both on and off the farm. Jobs ranging from landscape architects to veterinarians to hydrologists and biochemists, food scientists and wildlife managers, recycling engineers and pest control managers are all rooted in agriculture.

Today's farmer can no longer succeed with just hard work and commitment. In this day and age of rapid competition, a farmer must be a master of animal husbandry, machinery maintenance and repair, marketing strategies, and sound business management.

The Agriculture Center of Excellence will provide learning opportunities for students, agricultural producers, and communities to expand the understanding of the honorable profession of farming, increase agriculture awareness, enhance agricultural-related skills, and promote responsible and sustainable farming practices.

A Farm for the Future



The Agriculture Center of Excellence is located just north of Wausau and the NTC campus on County Road K. The 110 acre site encompasses not only crop land and pasture land for grazing, but also woodlands and wetlands that will provide the appropriate settings for additional programming in natural resources and environmental stewardship.

The herd will include 50 lactating cows, 30 in confinement and 20 grazers. The total herd, including calves and heifers, will number approximately 120 head.

The facilities will include:

- Cow barn for lactating and dry cows, and winter housing for the grazing herd.
- Calf/heifer barn, housing new born calves up to breeding age. Capacity will be up to 40 head.
- Parlor incorporating the latest facilities to milk the herd and provide hands-on learning experiences.
- “Green” Classroom, including kitchen area, showers and bathroom facilities.

The farm will also provide a showcase for education in biological grazing systems, renewable energy, natural resources conservation and environmental stewardship.

Center facilities will be accessible by the community for workshops and seminars, field days sponsored by UW Extension, pasture walks, agriculture health and safety programs for youth, beginning and established farmers, product and equipment demonstrations.



Partnering on the Education Path

The Agriculture Center of Excellence is a product of collaboration between a number of educational institutions. Each is a key component in providing the comprehensive curriculum and life-long learning opportunities that are essential to the Center.

High Schools – More than 17 area K-12 districts are partnering with NTC to offer transcribed agricultural courses to students, enabling them to earn both high school and college credit at no cost to the student. Students at all grade levels will have opportunity to learn about agriculture through field trips and workshops. 4-H clubs and FFA students will be able to hold judging demonstrations and other contests at the Center. Tractor and animal safety programs will also be available.

UW-Marathon County – Located just minutes from the Center, UWMC provides general education courses to compliment the NTC Dairy Science degree.

UW-River Falls – The College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) at UW-River Falls provides a broad spectrum of undergraduate degrees in agriculture, food, fiber and the environment. UWRF has partnered with NTC and the Center to optimize the transfer of credits from the NTC Dairy Science programs to UWRF's Bachelor of Science degree in Dairy Science.

UW-Extension – The Center facilities will be used by UW-Extension for on-going learning opportunities for producers in the form of seminars and workshops, demonstrations and emerging trends in agriculture.

This collaborative effort will allow students interested in agriculture to remain in central Wisconsin as they attend classes, foster community relationships, and provide leadership in the local economy.



Investment for the Future

Agriculture, and specifically dairy, plays a significant role in virtually every facet of our lives. From job creation and taxable income, from milk sales to secondary impact activities such as cheese production and other food processing, agriculture serves people. The diminishing number of family farms is having economic repercussions throughout the nation and in Wisconsin particularly.

The goal of the Agriculture Center of Excellence is to reverse this trend by growing a new generation of dairy farmers, revitalizing existing farms, and raising public awareness about the importance of Wisconsin dairy-farming and agriculture in general. It is a model that has proven to be successful in Calmar, Iowa, where collaboration between business leaders, agri-business owners, and Northeast Iowa Community College has resulted in reversing the alarming trend of dairy farm closures in that area. They report that 32% of agriculture graduates have returned to own and operate dairy farms and 67% work in the dairy industry.

An investment in the Agriculture Center of Excellence will foster the next generation of farmers and agri-business leaders who will keep agricultural jobs and production agriculture growing in central Wisconsin.

