

College official urges students to 'come home'

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Only seven in a group of roughly 20 Gothenburg High School students admitted last week that they want to come back home after going to college.

That percentage is too small for Weldon Sleight, dean of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis.

"Our state's greatest export is our children," Sleight said. "We need to find a way to convince you to come home."

Sleight gave a presentation during the Gothenburg Chamber of Commerce ag committee's ag career showcase at the high school on April 20.

"The longer you're away from home, the more I hope you'll want to come back," Sleight told the students.

From 2000 to 2009, the state of Nebraska's population grew approximately 85,000 people. Most of that growth, Sleight said, was in the eastern part of the state.

"It's the smaller towns that are losing more people," he said. "And it's those small towns that are supporting agriculture."

Sleight encouraged the students to learn about their family legacy, especially if it involves agriculture, and consider returning home to carry on.

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If they determine agriculture isn't their life's dream, then they should make connections with professionals in their desired areas.

“As older folks, we have to learn to put our arms around the young people and ask them to come home,” Sleight said.

Often high school students look at small communities and see there is no room for another physician or attorney or businessman in their chosen field.

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