

ROLLING OUT THE WELCOME MAT

KIRKWOOD AND IOWA STATE ENSURE SMOOTH TRANSITION FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS

By Darcy Mauslby

Agriculture degrees are hot, and enrollment in community colleges' agriculture programs has soared in recent years. For students like Katie Yule, who start at Kirkwood Community College and want to earn a four-year degree at Iowa State University, the collaborative spirit among student services staff at both institutions makes the transfer process as seamless as possible.

"My Kirkwood adviser helped lay out all my options and explained what classes would transfer," says Yule, a senior from Packwood who is majoring in agricultural studies at Iowa State. "It was a very smooth transition."

Transfer students have always been important to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. They comprised nearly 27 percent of the college's enrollment in 2011. "As soon as students tell us they are thinking about transferring, we get them lined up with an ISU adviser so they can develop that relationship," says Scott Ermer, dean of agricultural sciences at Kirkwood, who noted that approximately 40 percent of Kirkwood's ag students transfer to four-year schools.

Communication is the key, says Barb Osborn, an academic adviser and program coordinator in the Iowa State University Department of Horticulture. "Both ISU and Kirkwood share the common goal of student success, and we know each other's academic programs very well. By developing a transfer process that's economical and timely, we can match each student with the best options available."

Osborn has seen the partnership benefit students first hand, as three of her own children attended Kirkwood and transferred

to Iowa State in agricultural programs.

Today's ag students come from diverse backgrounds, says Ermer, who noted a growing number of young people want to return to the family farm or work in production agriculture. In addition, more non-traditional students in their 30s, 40s and early 50s are enrolling in ag programs at Kirkwood to train for a new career. While transferring to Iowa State may not be part of some Kirkwood students' initial plans, Ermer says a sizeable percentage discover a four-year degree is achievable and make it part of their career goals.

Iowa State offers a number of resources to simplify the transition for transfers, says Yule, who coordinates campus visits, manages the College of



Photo: Bob Elbert

Katie Yule (right), a senior in agricultural studies, leads a tour group of prospective transfer students and their parents as part of her role as an Ag Ambassador. In 2011, nearly 27 percent of the college's enrollment transferred credits from another institution.

Agriculture and Life Sciences' Facebook group for transfer students and highlights the various ag clubs on campus. "I've had an awesome experience at ISU, and I encourage transfer students to get as involved as possible."

The faculty and staff at Iowa State and Kirkwood are always willing to go the extra mile for students, Ermer says. "The partnership with Iowa State continues to strengthen, and it has been a successful model not only for Kirkwood, but for other community colleges across Iowa and beyond." ■