LINCOLN—The Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources continues to build relationships in China, with recent developments on several fronts aimed at building an important foothold for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the state itself in one of the fastest growing economic powers in the world.

A team of IANR officials, led by Vice Chancellor Ronnie Green, recently returned from the country. Green was making his third visit to China in 18 months, joined this time by Mark Doyle, IANR director of global engagement, and Rolando Flores, head of the Department of Food Science and Technology.

Green noted that IANR's university efforts in China are wide-ranging and well-supported by UNL Chancellor Harvey Perlman and NU President J.B. Milliken. Green added that IANR's international efforts in China are part of a larger effort at the University of Nebraska to engage in a select number of countries which also include India and Brazil.

"We have made the strategic decision to rapidly grow our efforts in these three key countries," he said. "When one considers the challenges ahead over the next four decades with global food and natural resource security, these three countries are at the center of addressing these issues."

"These collective efforts have placed us into a real leadership position in agriculture and natural resources collaborations in China moving forward," Green said.

Doyle said, "China is in a period of unprecedented growth and development. They're building research facilities and research capacity at a record pace. It is important that we stay engaged or we may fall behind."

However, China still has research needs in areas like food and water that create some key opportunities for engagement with IANR faculty, staff and students.

Currently, China sends more students to U.S. universities than any other country.

Increasing collaboration with UNL among universities in China also opens up opportunities for American students.

“We really owe it to our students to give them opportunities in China, to learn the language, the culture,” Doyle said. More and more employers are seeking people with experience in countries such as China, so such opportunities will open new doors for our students.

On its recent visit to China, the team:

Began planning a forum of leading Chinese universities in the area of grain quality and safety with the State Administration of Grain. IANR and the Nebraska Department of Agriculture established a joint office with that Chinese agency last year. That forum, in May, will feature key faculty discussing how both countries can work together to improve grain quality and safety. Doyle said IANR’s partnership with NDA is key in this collaboration.

Implemented new agreements with the Academy of the State Administration for Grain (the research arm of the SAG) for joint research; with the China Agricultural University in Beijing to facilitate research and student collaborations in food science and food engineering; and with the Institute for Water Resources and Hydropower Research to collaborate with the University of Nebraska’s Daugherty Water for Food Institute on irrigation development in northeastern China.

Furthered its relationship with Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University in Yangling, Shaanxi province. NWAFU is one of China’s top universities and is widely considered, along with CAU, to be the leading agriculture and natural resources university in China. Like IANR, the university has strengths in plant and animal biotechnology, water resources management and irrigation technology, food science and engineering, and agricultural economics and business. Previously, UNL and NWAFU established a 2+2 program and a research undergraduate experience program, the first class of which arrived in UNL last summer.

Green said the IANR delegation met with many of these students while in China last week, “and

we were pleased to learn that a number of them have applied for graduate work at UNL for the coming year."

Green said more than 100 students applied for 25 slots in the 2013 class that will arrive at UNL in July.

"It is imperative for global food and natural resource security that we invest in these programs," Green said. "Even more importantly, it is imperative that our UNL students are engaged with their counterparts in these areas of the world so that they can work together to create a healthy future for our planet and people. We are well on our way to making that happen."