Welcome back. I trust all SNR faculty, staff, and students had a wonderful holiday break and the opportunity to enjoy family and friends. The weather certainly continues to cooperate, with an unusually warm and snow-free winter. Only two months until spring!

With the changes in the eARFA submission date and the resultant shift in the evaluation period to January and February, the next two months will be busy ones for me. I believe all faculty welcomed these changes but this time around will be a bit of a transition as we work through the new timetable for faculty evaluations and the mentoring meetings that follow in March, April and May. Staff evaluation time will also be upon us very soon. Instructions on that process should follow in the near future.

International Organizing Committee on National Drought Policy

I was pleased to attend and chair the first meeting of the International Organizing Committee (IOC) on National Drought Policy, organized by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The meeting was held in Geneva, Switzerland, Dec. 13-14, 2011. In addition to representatives of WMO and UNCCD, IOC members include experts from various international organizations, such as the U.N.’s Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), the World Bank, the U.N.’s International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, and the U.N.’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as well as country experts from China, South Africa, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Brazil, and the U.S. The official opening of the IOC meeting was given by Michel Jarraud, WMO secretary-general, and Luc Gnacadja, executive secretary of UNCCD.
The WMO and UNCCD initiative on national drought policy is in response to growing worldwide concern about climate change exacerbating drought and its impacts. Climate change is increasing the frequency, intensity, and duration of droughts, with corresponding increases in impacts on many sectors, particularly food, water, and energy. Addressing this concern has become a major thrust of programs currently administered by the IOC member organizations and by many countries around the world. This concern is heightened by the lack of drought preparedness and appropriate drought management policies in virtually all nations. The United Nations organizations believe that the time is ripe for nations to move forward with the development of proactive, risk-based national drought policies. Nations will continue to respond to drought in a reactive, crisis management mode unless they implement coordinated national drought policies. A good national drought policy includes effective monitoring and early warning systems to deliver timely information to decision makers, effective impact assessment procedures, proactive risk management measures, preparedness plans aimed at increasing coping capacity, and effective emergency response programs directed at reducing the impacts of drought. Lack of a clear national drought policy implies that governments at the national, state, and community levels will continue with the status quo, namely, reacting to the impacts of drought with little coordination between agencies and levels of government. It is the position of U.N. agencies and other development organizations that national governments must adopt policies that engender cooperation and coordination at all levels of government in order to increase their capacity to cope with extended periods of water shortages due to drought. The ultimate goal is to create more drought-resilient societies.

This initiative, which has been evolving under the leadership of WMO and UNCCD for the past year, will culminate in a High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy in Geneva in March 2013. The task of the IOC is to draft a compendium of practical approaches and best management practices related to drought, for nations throughout the world to consider at the 2013 meeting. There is much work to be done and I am honored to be associated with this important initiative.

**Spring Water Lecture Series**

I have been working with Bruce Dvorak and Lorrie Benson for some time to organize the spring Water Lecture Series, with an emphasis on surface and ground water modeling. Bruce and Lorrie have lined up excellent speakers for a series beginning on January 11. Noted national and international experts on modeling will be part of this series. The goal of this lecture series is to build a greater understanding of current modeling capability and to better define future needs for UNL, in association with the Daugherty Water for Food
Institute. Most of the seminars will be held on Wednesdays at 3:30 in Hardin Hall, with a few at the Scott Engineering Center or in Bessey Hall.

The first three seminars will be held in the Hardin Hall Auditorium at 3:30 p.m. Please plan to attend these seminars and others in the lecture series.


Kudos to SNR Students Receiving Larrick Student Travel Awards

Congratulations to Maitham Al-Sammak, Sonisa Sharma, and Valerie Schoepfer for receiving David and Anna Larrick Student Travel Awards. Maitham will be attending the 8th National Water Quality Monitoring Council Conference in Portland, Ore., April 30-May 4. Sonisa will be attending the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers in New York City, Feb. 24-28. Valerie will be attending the International Association of Ecology’s 9th International Wetlands Conference in Orlando, Fla., June 3-8.

These awardees were selected by the Agricultural Research Division Advisory Council’s Selection Committee.

SNR’s Coats for Clinton Program a Success in 2011

Each fall the SNR Outreach Committee organizes the SNR Coats for Clinton drive. Coats, hats, gloves, scarves and other warm clothing items were collected in the lobby of the Hardin Hall tower and given to students and their families at Clinton Elementary School. Around 95 percent of the Clinton Elementary students are below the poverty line and qualify for reduced or free lunches.

Clare Nelson accepts the Coats for Clinton donations from Ken Dewey, Sue Ellen Pegg and Deanna Ebbeke.

Thanks to all of SNR’s faculty and staff for their contributions to this excellent outreach program. I am proud of the SNR community for its recognition of the needs of the Clinton Elementary families. It was a cold day when the clothing and monetary donations were delivered to the school. Clare Nelson, Clinton Elementary School family care coordinator, commented that several of the students arrived at school that morning without a warm coat and that our donations would be put to immediate use.
Kudos to Raina Keel, SNR Undergraduate

Raina Keel, an undergraduate student in SNR, has received the prestigious Gilman Scholarship for study abroad in the amount of $5,000. Raina will be studying in the International Study Abroad Language, Culture and Economics program in Brazil. She is a junior, with a double major in Fisheries and Wildlife in CASNR and Spanish in the College of Arts & Sciences.

The Gilman Scholarship Program seeks to diversify the student population that studies abroad by supporting undergraduates who might not otherwise participate due to financial constraints. With more than 2,700 applications received, just under 900 were awarded to students this year, four of which were to UNL students. A total of 18 UNL students applied for the Gilman Scholarship.

The Gilman Scholarship Program offers awards for undergraduate study abroad and was established by the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000. This scholarship provides awards that enable U.S. undergraduates who are receiving Federal Pell Grant funding at a two-year or four-year college or university to study abroad. This congressionally funded program is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State and is administered by the Institute of International Education through its Southern Regional Center in Houston, Texas.

SNR’s Fall 2011 Outreach Seminar Series

Congratulations to Ken Dewey and other members of SNR’s Outreach Committee for organizing an excellent series of evening public outreach seminars during the fall semester. The theme of this series of seminars was “People Interacting with Nature.” Four seminars were held during the semester with excellent attendance for each one, particularly the September 29 seminar with nearly 300 people crowding into the auditorium, including many children, who are potential SNR students.

The four seminars included:

- September 29: Dennis Ferraro and Kip and Stacy Smith “Wildlife Encounters”
- October 8: Greg Wagner, Nebraska Game and Parks “The Wild Life of Interacting with the Media”
- October 18: David Pearson, Omaha National Weather Service “The Missouri River Flood of 2011: Its Causes and Impacts”
- November 29: W. Don Nelson, Prairie Fire Newspaper “Civil Discourse: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly”

Proposals Submitted and Grants Awarded
Congratulations to SNR faculty and staff for grants awarded during December. Total funding received during the month was $1,139,045. The majority of funding received this past month was from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Those faculty and staff awarded funding included Russane Low, Tsegaye Tadesse, Scott Hygnstrom, Cody Knutson, Tonya Haigh, Donna Woudenberg, Mike Hayes, Deborah Bathke, Mark Svoboda, Paul Hanson, Dave Gosselin, Martha Shulski, Ken Hubbard, and Jinsheng You.

Proposals submitted during December 2011 were for funds totaling $1,224,009. SNR faculty and staff submitting proposals included Amy Burgin, Xun-Hong Chen, Paul Hanson, Craig Allen, T.J. Fontaine, and Steve Comfort. These proposals were mainly directed to federal agencies, namely the Department of Defense, USDA, and the National Science Foundation.

The total funding requested so far this fiscal year, July through December, was $11,554,524. The total amount of grants awarded to SNR faculty and staff this fiscal year is $4,577,316. Funding awards are broken down by agency in the chart below. NOAA, NSF, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and USDA have been the primary sources of funding this fiscal year.