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The Director's Report, March 2008

School of Natural Resources
From Earth to Sky and Everything in Between

Faculty Evaluations

February was a very busy month for the School of Natural Resources. After completing faculty evaluations in December, I began meeting individually with faculty in late January and will continue into April. With 75+ faculty, this is time consuming yet rewarding. It provides us with the opportunity to discuss accomplishments and programmatic impacts, and to focus on goals for next year and beyond. It's still fairly early in the process, and I am finding the experience to be a positive one. Mark Kuzila's assistance has helped ensure a smooth leadership transition for the School.

Visitors to SNR

Rosina Bierbaum

After several months of planning, I was pleased to host the first speaker to SNR as part of the Director’s Seminar Series. Dr. Rosina Bierbaum, Dean of the School of Natural Resources and...
Environment at the University of Michigan, was on campus for a couple of days in mid-February. There were two main reasons for her visit. One was to discuss with SNR faculty the challenges, opportunities, and experiences of her School in fundraising, research, and graduate and undergraduate programs. Another was to provide insight from her uniquely well-informed perspective on the issue of climate change. Before returning to the academic world in 2001, she provided 20 years of science policy leadership in Washington, D.C., including serving as Acting Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy during the Clinton Administration. Rosina presented an excellent overview at a very well-attended seminar of the complex issues associated with climate change, highlighting its impacts, policy implications, and the research needs it raises. During informal discussions with faculty on the experiences of her School, Rosina provided many interesting and contrasting experiences that will be invaluable to SNR as our programs evolve. Rosina’s School was formally established in 1950, building on a foundation of environment-related programs that had been in place since the early 1900s. The success of dual-degree graduate programs at the University of Michigan between her School and Business Administration and Engineering provides SNR a model that we may choose to follow. We’ll be revisiting our undergraduate majors and graduate specializations in the months ahead in preparation for drafting SNR’s unit strategic plan. Should we reach out to other colleges to propose similar collaborations to make our students more valuable in the eyes of their future employers? How would an improved understanding of natural resources and the environment make students in other colleges more marketable upon graduation? We are already considering these types of collaborations with the Department of Statistics.

*Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA) in Costa Rica*

During February, SNR co-hosted several representatives from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA)
in Costa Rica. Under the leadership of Dr. Jim French, these representatives were on campus to discuss possible partnerships with various departments in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, including SNR. We had extremely fruitful discussions with the IICA staff and they indicated a strong interest in working with SNR faculty on topics such as carbon sequestration, climate change, biodiversity, natural hazards risk assessment, agro-forestry, monitoring, and natural resources and environmental policy questions, especially those related to biofuels. More formal relationships are expected to develop in the near future. I appreciate the assistance of Dr. Susan Fritz, IANR Associate Vice-Chancellor, and Dr. John Owens, IANR Harlan Vice-Chancellor, in facilitating this visit.

**SNR’s 2007 Successes and Goals for 2008**

This past month I met with the IANR Deans and VC John Owens as part of the annual SNR Unit Planning Session. There are many quantitative and qualitative measures of SNR’s successes over the past year. Our external support increased to more than $8.2 million. SNR faculty had 99 peer-reviewed journal articles published with another 64 accepted and in press. We now have 207 undergraduate majors and 90 graduate students. SNR faculty also advise an additional 24 graduate students in other departments. SNR awarded more than $20,000 in scholarships to undergraduate students. Our School is providing an excellent education for both undergraduate and graduate students. SNR faculty, staff, and students are engaged in cutting-edge basic and applied research and are working at the state, regional, national, and international levels. We are posing and answering questions that are critical to our society’s ability to address ongoing and emerging natural resources and environmental issues. We should all be very proud of our accomplishments! SNR’s future looks very bright.

My goals for 2008 broadly focus on:
• providing fiscal and administrative leadership for SNR's research, teaching, and extension programs;
• augmenting the unit's physical facilities;
• reviewing and modifying, as appropriate, SNR's undergraduate majors and graduate specializations to reflect current and emerging issues in natural resources and environmental science, with the goal of enhancing recruitment, retention, and career placement;
• enhancing the accomplishments and impacts of SNR's programs by promoting multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary activities within SNR and with UNL departments, state and federal agencies, and other universities and organizations.

Funds Established at the University of Nebraska Foundation for SNR Programs

In recent months several new funds have been established at the NU Foundation in support of SNR programs:

• The Warren 'Bud' Viessman, Jr., Water Science Foundation Fund was established to support one or more scholarships for undergraduate students in SNR.
• The Wayne and Wanda Nielsen Fund was established, with 50% of the spendable net income from this fund to be used for the benefit and support of the Grassland Ecology and Management Program in SNR.
• Many contributions have also been received in memory of Tim Wagner and added to the Meteorology Development Fund at the request of his family. These funds are to be used in support of SNR's Applied Climate Sciences program.

Spring is Still Coming

Our attention is now turning to spring and warmer temperatures.
We experienced a bit of a spring teaser this past weekend but the reminder that it’s still winter was thrust upon us this week. There is always a sense of excitement as we enter a new season of growth. In keeping with the seasons, plans are being finalized for some major upgrades in Hardin Hall landscaping this spring. We are also working on a plan to “green up” the interior of Hardin Hall with a new recycling program and other additions. Hopefully, we will be ready to launch these programs by Earth Day. Details to follow.