April is always one of the busiest months for faculty, staff, and students. It seems difficult, if not impossible, to squeeze everything into this final month of the semester. Even with the end-of-semester pressures, the dedication of faculty and staff to the mission of SNR, including the success of our students, is remarkable. The positive work environment that exists in SNR makes coming to work something to look forward to each day for me.

Future of Water for Food Conference

I have been serving as a member of the planning committee for the Future of Water for Food Conference that will be held in Hardin Hall on May 4-5. Shashi Verma and Kyle Hoagland have also been serving on this committee. The conference will promote dialogue among experts from around the world to identify key issues in the use of water for agriculture and to explore how a new Global Water Institute could promote world-wide collaboration to address these issues. The GWI is committed to helping Nebraska and the world efficiently use its limited freshwater resources to ensure the food supply for present and future generations. I expect SNR faculty and staff to play a major role in the Institute when it is formed. It will also provide tremendous opportunities to our students.

Preparations for Visitors from the East (Spain) and West (Vietnam)

During April, I had requests from two foreign delegations to visit SNR to discuss future collaborations and training opportunities.

The United Nations will be hosting a meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-17) in New York City the week of May 11. In conjunction with that meeting, the Spanish
Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs will be hosting a sidebar conference on Water Scarcity and Drought on May 14. They have invited me to participate in that meeting to present information on recent U.S. experiences with drought management. In advance of that conference, a delegation from the Ministry will be visiting SNR and the National Drought Mitigation Center on May 12 to discuss future collaboration. A Memorandum of Understanding is likely to be the outcome of that meeting. Members of the delegation will include Ms. Marta Moren, General Director for Water, Mr. Luis Babiano, Assistant Director for Water, and Dr. Miguel Antolin, Head of International Affairs. I have known Ms. Moren for several years through other meetings that I have attended with her in the U.S. and in Europe. I look forward to these discussions and the future collaborations that will likely emerge.

SNR will be hosting a delegation of scientists from Vietnam, May 16-26. Members of the delegation include Ngo Sy Giai, Deputy Director of the Center for Agricultural Meteorology; Nguyen Van Liem, Deputy Director of the Center for Agricultural Meteorology; Nguyen Dinh Luong, Deputy Director of the Center for Hydro-Meteorological and Environmental Station Network; Duong Van Kham, Chief of the Remote Sensing and GIS Division; and Ngo Tien Giang, Chief of the Agro-Meteorology and Agro-Climatology Division. I previously met Ngo Sy Giai in 1997 at a drought training workshop sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization in Israel. The purpose of their visit to SNR is to receive training on agricultural meteorological principles and remote sensing. I greatly appreciate the willingness of SNR faculty and staff in the Applied Climate Science, GIScience and other areas to participate in this training activity. The training sessions will be rather intense during this 10-day period, including one day at the Agricultural Research Development Center at Mead. This is another great opportunity to spread the word internationally about the scientific expertise of SNR faculty and staff.

**SNR Faculty Positions: Update**

We are in the final stages of hiring a GIScientist to the faculty of SNR. The letter of offer should be forthcoming this week and we expect the faculty member to join the unit in August. I will be making an announcement as soon as we have confirmation on acceptance of our offer.

Interviews have also been completed for the Applied Climate Scientist/High Plains Regional Climate Center Director position. I expect to be making an offer to one of these candidates within the week. Thanks to faculty, staff, and students who participated in the interview process. Special thanks also to all members of the search committee. Al Weiss chaired this committee. Other members of the committee included Mike Hayes, Bob Oglesby, Tsegaye Tadesse, Bill Sorensen, and Natalie Umphlett.
Kudos to SNR Graduate Students

Saadia Bihmidine was the first-place winner in the Department of Agronomy & Horticulture Graduate Student Poster Symposium. Saadia is co-advised by Tala Awada and Tom Clemente. The theme of her poster was “Expression of a viral aquaglyceroporin gene (AQPV1) from Chlorella virus MT325s in tobacco and its effect in mitigating drought.”

Congratulations also to Thomas Heatherly II, Brenda Pracheil, John Quinn, and Baburao Kamble. They were each awarded an UNL Graduate Fellowship for the 2009-2010 academic year in recognition of their outstanding academic performance and scholarly potential. These four students are representative of the outstanding students that we have in the unit. Thanks are also due to Brenda for her work this past year as president of the UNL Graduate Student Association. According to one of her colleagues, “She did amazing work. She put in many hours and was a great leader.”

Eric Hunt has been elected as the new UNL Graduate Student Association Vice Chair for Legislative Affairs. Eric’s role will be to serve as the chief custodian of the UNL GSA constitution over the next year. Congratulations, Eric!

Courtney Quinn has also been honored for her contributions to the UNL Graduate Student Association for her work on the Academic Affairs Committee and chair of the Quality of Life Committee over the past year. Congratulations, Courtney!

Space Pressures in Hardin Hall
Last summer we processed a lot of space reallocations in Hardin Hall in response to the growth in unit personnel, the merger of the Geography program into SNR, and the need to reassess space utilization in light of SNR’s changing needs. This summer promises to be another year with some significant space reallocations, given the recent funding of several large grants and an associated significant increase in staff and graduate students. With the growth in SNR programs and personnel, we are under increasing pressure to use our limited space as efficiently as possible, including sharing lab space wherever possible. I ask for your patience as we assess our needs over the next month or two and adopt new policies and enforce existing policies more judiciously.

**Grants Awarded and Proposals Submitted**

SNR faculty and staff were awarded grants totaling $724,415 in April. Congratulations to Jim Merchant, Scott Hygnstrom, Annabelle Major, Ken Hubbard, Kyle Hoagland, Song Feng, and Mary Brown. The total for grants awarded in 2009 to date is $4,386,785.

Faculty and staff submitting proposals in March included Song Feng, Mark Pegg, John Holz, Aris Holz, Jim Merchant, Erkan Istanbulluoglu, Dan Snow, Dave Wedin, Bob Oglesby, Scott Hygnstrom, and Stephen Vantassel. The total amount for grant proposals submitted in April was $1,550,026. The total for grant proposals submitted by SNR faculty from January through April 2009 was $6,159,907.