Faculty, staff, and students are now preparing to close out the spring semester. Congratulations to those undergraduate students who will be graduating and moving on to new jobs, entering graduate school, and beginning the next phase of their careers. Congratulations also to our graduate students who have successfully defended their theses and dissertations. In all cases, we hope that you stay in close touch with SNR and those faculty and staff who have guided you along the way. We will all miss your presence this summer and in the coming academic year.

**Participation in WMO meeting with Diplomatic Missions on National Drought Policy**

I have been working closely with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) on launching a new international initiative on national drought policy. This initiative is in response to the widespread occurrence of drought in most countries, the wide-ranging and significant impacts of these events on the economy, the environment, and society at large, including the resulting human suffering. Drought is increasing in frequency, severity, and duration in many parts of the world, particularly as a result of increased vulnerability in association with changes in climate and climate variability.

The first step in the development of this initiative was the preparation of a concept paper on the need for a global initiative on drought policy. I provided significant input to the development of this concept paper, which was completed about a year ago. The second step was the organization of an international workshop, with the goal of deriving the first draft of a compendium of best practices associated with a national drought policy. This workshop was held in July 2011 at George Mason University. The third step was the organization of an international symposium on integrated drought monitoring and early warning systems. This symposium was held in November 2011 in Casablanca, Morocco. This step was followed by a meeting of the International Organizing Committee (IOC) for a High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy (HMNDP). The IOC meeting was held in Geneva in December 2011, and I had the honor of chairing this meeting, which was held at WMO headquarters. The HMNDP is scheduled for March 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland.

We are now in the process of engaging countries and potential donors in support of this initiative. Last week, I attended a briefing for representatives of diplomatic missions based in Geneva. The participants included ambassadors and their representatives. In total, 40 missions were represented at this meeting. Michel Jarraud, secretary-general of WMO, Luc Gnacadjia, executive secretary of the UNCCD, and I made presentations on the rationale for the development of a global initiative on national drought policy. This meeting was highly successful and we received a full endorsement of this activity by the representatives in attendance.
The organization of the HMNDP is moving forward rapidly. I have agreed to chair the program committee for the scientific portion of this week-long meeting. The conceptual framework for this portion of the program will be developed over the next two months. This program will then be discussed at the next meeting of the IOC in Brasilia in June of this year. Between June and August, the program will be finalized and posted on the WMO website.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) is scheduled for Rio de Janeiro following our IOC meeting. Representatives of WMO and UNCCD and I will conduct a sidebar briefing in association with the Rio +20 meeting. Some of you may remember the first conference of this type, the so-called Earth Summit, which was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. From this meeting came a major thrust from the United Nations and other organizations on issues such as sustainable development, climate change, biodiversity, water management, and desertification.

The HMNDP in March 2013 will be comprised of three separate components. First, there will be a half-day plenary session to launch the meeting, including a number of keynote presentations from high-level officials. Second, there will be three days of science-based discussions. Finally, the meeting will conclude with one and a half days of policy discussions with ministers and their representatives. We expect numerous recommendations to be forthcoming from this session, which the IOC will work on in the follow-up and implementation phase of this initiative.

**Participation in the Global Drought Information System Workshop**

I was invited to participate in and give a dinner talk at the Global Drought Information System Workshop held in Frascati, Italy, April 11-13. This meeting was sponsored by the World Climate Research Program of WMO and others. Key scientists from around the world participated in this meeting, including three of our own scientists from the National Drought Mitigation Center. Those participating from the NDMC included Mike Hayes, who was a member of the organizing committee, Mark Svoboda, and Brian Fuchs.
Don Wilhite made a presentation at the Global Drought Information System Workshop held in Frascati, Italy, April 11-13.

I took advantage of being near the headquarters of the U.N.’s Food and Agriculture Organization to meet with Pasquale Steduto and Mohamed Bazza regarding issues associated with the MoU that is currently being discussed and finalized with the Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute, and other related activities and future collaborations with the NDMC and myself. We were able to finalize a strategy for the implementation of these collaborations in the months ahead. I believe President Milliken plans to visit FAO in July of this year.

**IANR’s Unit Planning Process—An Update on SNR Actions**

We have recently received feedback from IANR administration on the High Impact Program statements that were submitted in late March. Tala Awada attended the April 25 meeting of the Deans and Unit Heads in my absence. The challenge ahead is to reexamine and prioritize our submissions to no more than three. The next version of our submissions is due to IANR by May 17. Tala and I have been discussing our strategy for responding to the next step in the process and how to involve faculty.

**Status of Hydrogeophysicist Hiring Process**

In early April, we successfully completed the interviews for two candidates for the position of professor of hydrogeophysics, as part of the IANR Water for Food cluster hire. I am currently working with Ron Yoder, IANR associate vice chancellor, in negotiating the hiring of one of these candidates. This process may take some time, given the nature of the hire. Stay tuned for more information later this month.

**Michael Roberts and Tom Lovejoy Seminars**

Two special SNR seminars in April were highly successful in stimulating conversation. Michael Roberts discussed the relationships between food production and security in the future in response to projected changes in climate. Thomas Lovejoy discussed the ecological impacts of climate change. SNR jointly sponsored these seminars with the Department of Agricultural Economics and the School of Biological Sciences, respectively. I look forward to more jointly sponsored seminars with these and other units at UNL.

**SNR’s Fall Seminar Series**

Tala Awada has been working on the SNR Fall Seminar Series. The full program should be available in the next month. The emphasis of the fall program will be largely directed towards familiarizing SNR faculty, staff, and students with the research and outreach programs of some of SNR’s faculty, particularly those who have recently joined our unit.
Other highlights of this series will be a seminar by Jim Douglas, newly appointed director of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. We also plan to invite an external speaker for a seminar in the fall. This seminar speaker will be jointly sponsored with the Water for Food Institute.

**Proposals Submitted and Grants Awarded**

Congratulations to SNR faculty and staff for grants awarded during April. Total funding received during the month was $1,001,442. The majority of funds received this past month were from NOAA and the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. Those faculty and staff awarded funding included Martha Shulshi, Ken Hubbard, Jensheng You, Steve Thomas, Cody Knutson, Mark Svoboda, Dave Gosselin, Amy Burgin, Mark Pegg, Karina Schoengold, and Steve Ress.

Proposals submitted during April 2012 were for funds totaling $742,556. SNR faculty submitting proposals included Amy Burgin, Mark Pegg, Mark Kuzila, Larkin Powell, Martha Shulski, Ken Hubbard, Jinsheng You, Lisa Pennisi, Dan Snow, and John Quinn. The total funding requested so far this fiscal year, July through April, is $16,634,058. The total funding awarded to SNR faculty and staff this fiscal year is $6,790,110. The distribution of this funding by source is included below.