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The Director's Report, July 2008

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

Our Immediate Environs

As you may have noticed, this spring has been one of the wettest on record for eastern Nebraska. You may have also noticed that the benches and picnic tables have yet to be installed around Hardin Hall. There is a connection. The picnic tables and the benches have been received by Landscape Services, however, weather conditions have disrupted the schedule for pouring the concrete pads that are necessary for installation. Bike loops have been installed outside the southwest entrance to Hardin Hall and seem to be fully utilized.

You will also be seeing other changes to the landscaping north of Hardin Hall. Many have commented on the appearance (not in a positive way) of the north lawn area. I met recently with Landscape Services to discuss this area and the intent of the landscape materials planted in 2006 and 2007. We all agreed that this area did not turn out the way it was intended, thus there will be changes. They have already begun mowing the buffalo

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Upcoming Events

See SNR July 2008 calendar.

Director's Upcoming Travel

July 8-11
Chicago to participate in an ACE
grass planted south of the parking lot. The area just to the north of the north entrance was intended to be a prairie landscape. Landscape services will be working to improve the appearance of this area and will also be adding wildflowers. The perennial rye grass planted adjacent to the building on the north side will be replaced with fescue and mowed. This will enhance the appearance of the area around the soon-to-be-installed picnic tables. Landscape services also plans to plant flowers in the flower boxes just outside the north entrance. In addition, we plan to establish a rock garden in the drain area between the flower boxes at the north entrance. Matt Joeckel and others will soon be hauling rocks to campus to place in this area.

I am looking forward to these improvements and appreciate the assistance of Landscape Services.

**New Administrators Workshop**

In early June, I had the opportunity to attend a new administrator’s workshop held in Lincoln. There were 20 participants representing universities from across the country. The information provided and the interaction with other newly appointed administrators was outstanding. The workshop format provided significant time for discussion between the participants and with the workshop facilitators. Case studies provided the opportunity to seek solutions to complex administrative issues and problems. This workshop was time well spent.

**Drought Management Conference**

I participated in an international drought management conference in Zaragoza, Spain, on June 12-13 and presented a paper that provided a global perspective on drought management plans and the conditions for their success. I served as a member of the scientific committee for this conference, which was sponsored by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza, Expo Zaragoza 2008, and the Spanish Ministry of the Environment.
Participants were largely from Europe and the Mediterranean region, including North Africa and the Near East.

One important outcome of this meeting is the likelihood that I will be participating in a discussion session to be organized by Pasquale Steduto of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) headquarters in Rome. The purpose of this session is to develop a new FAO program on water scarcity. Pasquale is a long-time friend and chief of FAO’s Water Development and Management Unit.

I will be returning to Zaragoza in late July to participate in a one-day workshop sponsored by the Spanish Ministry of the Environment to discuss the evolution of the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) at the University of Nebraska. Spain is currently establishing a national drought center, which may also be serving as a drought center for Europe. My participation in this meeting is a direct result of the Spanish delegation’s visit to SNR and the NDMC in May. It is hoped that a Memorandum of Understanding will be developed between this new center and the NDMC to provide a mechanism for future scientific exchanges.

**Hardin Hall Space Reallocations: Big Changes Ahead**

As SNR continues to grow as a result of our ongoing successes in attracting additional external funding and other new programs, there is more and more pressure on space in Hardin Hall. We have been in the building for two years and so it is important that we reevaluate the utilization of our space in the building. SNR adopted a space policy before allocating space in Hardin Hall originally but we have been flexible in the application of this policy since we had the luxury of ample space. Unfortunately, those days are quickly coming to an end. SNR must use the space that has been allocated to the unit in the most efficient manner possible. Therefore, quite a few changes in space
allocations will be occurring this summer before the beginning of
the new academic year. It is important for SNR employees to be
aware of these changes and to understand the increasing
pressure on space in the building. A summary of these changes
is provided below:

- 248 (North wing). The original intent for this room was
  that it would be used as a library for faculty journals that
  would be accessible to graduate students, staff, and
  others. Since moving into the building, it has been used
  primarily as a graduate student lounge. This room is
  being converted into a new student office area to
  accommodate an increased number of graduate students
  and the Geography Teaching Assistants. The room will
  add 11 new graduate student cubicles.
- 239 (North wing). This room has been used for vending
  and as a lounge. This room is being converted to a
  graduate student lounge to replace 248. A sink has been
  installed and the vending machines will be moved to the
  connecting hallway with the south wing on 2nd floor.
- 243a (GSA Office). This office will be relocated to 153b.
  243a will be converted to offices for three Ph.D. students
  that will be displaced from 228.
- National Agroforestry Center Headhouse (west end of the
  greenhouses, just northeast of the National Agroforestry
  Center). Work is progressing on acquiring this facility for
  SNR. This space will be assigned as laboratory
  space/fabrication shop for John Lenters, Mark Pegg and
  others.
- 228 is being reconfigured for a medium sized classroom.
  A/V with chairs, computer/projector/screen, white boards,
  carpeting, and electric lecturer table will be added. This
  classroom will hold 32 students.
- 209 has been reconfigured as a small conference
  room/classroom. New conference room tables are being
  added, A/V will be reconfigured. This room will seat up to
  16 people. A new electric lecturer table will be added.
• 3rd floor tower offices (CALMIT/Remote Sensing/GIS). Several employees will be relocating to create space for Geography's 4 faculty, 1 staff, and 5 lecturers. The faculty and lecturers are all academic-year appointees. Lecturers will share inner offices, 2 per office.
• Welcome Center (1st floor, main lobby) has been painted Husker Red and will have new lettering installed. This area will house the Recruitment and Advising Coordinators and clerical staff to create a Student Services area. Jacki Loomis is moving to an office west of the Maps and More Store.
• Many offices in the tower are being reallocated to support additional faculty, staff, and visiting scientists.

We are very fortunate to have such excellent facilities available to support SNR programs and activities. I appreciate the willingness of SNR faculty, staff, and students to be flexible as we strive to achieve our vision for the unit.

External Advisory Committee Meeting

My first meeting of SNR's newly reconstituted External Advisory Committee was held on June 30. The committee is currently composed of 11 members but I expect to add additional members in the next month or so. The purpose of this meeting was to get acquainted, inform committee members of new SNR program initiatives, discuss the five-year review process, and solicit their input on future directions for the unit. I expect to meet with this group semi-annually, although the frequency of meetings may increase as we move through our five-year review process. This committee and other external groups will be used for stakeholder feedback on our five-year review document.

Prioritizing SNR Faculty Positions

During the past three months SNR has gone through an extensive process to prioritize future faculty positions. Faculty in
all program areas participated in this process. This process was initiated in response to the possible release of new positions by IANR in the months ahead if the budget situation permits. Those faculty positions that were identified as the highest priority for SNR were (not listed in priority order): Wetlands Ecologist, Advanced GIS scientist, Climate Change Scientist, Environmental Microbiologist, and a Human Dimensions/Natural Resources Specialist. I expect to have the position descriptions for these positions finalized in the next few weeks. The criteria used in evaluating new positions were: (1) the potential to integrate across SNR program areas; (2) support of undergraduate and graduate teaching programs; (3) ability to attract external funding; and (4) promoting collaborative opportunities with other UNL and non-UNL units/organizations. I am hopeful that we may be able to initiate a search process for at least one of these positions in the next few months.

Grants Awarded and Proposals Submitted

SNR faculty were awarded grants totaling more than $270,000 during June. Kudos to Mike Hayes, Don Rundquist, Craig Allen, Mary Brown, and Larkin Powell for their achievements in grants awarded. Grant proposals were submitted in June by Anatoly Gitelson, Don Rundquist, Mark Svoboda, Mike Hayes, Tadd Barrow, Craig Allen, John Holz, Larkin Powell, Jim Merchant, and Mark Pegg. These grant proposals totaled nearly $2 million in funding requests.

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