Excitement is building for the beginning of another academic year! We are watching our enrollment numbers carefully as new and former students return to UNL and SNR. At this time, it appears that the number of new students this fall will be the same as in the fall of 2008 -- 57. We look forward to welcoming our new and returning students as well as several new faculty and staff members to our SNR family. This fall will also bring the added excitement of our unit’s Five-Year Review, the culmination of a planning process that has been ongoing for more than a year.

Status of Five-Year Review Document and Schedule

A draft version of SNR’s Five-Year Review document was delivered to IANR and College of Arts and Sciences administration in mid-July. While we are waiting for their comments, we are completing many of the appendices. We have also been working to update a few portions of the report and to standardize table formats. I have been receiving comments from the administration and we are incorporating them in the document. We will be printing a limited number of copies of the review document. It will be available to faculty, staff and students on the SNR website and on Sharepoint. Our intent is to send the document to the review team in mid-August to give them plenty of time to absorb the information.

We are also producing two short videos on SNR’s programs and facilities that will be available on the SNR website for members of the review team and others.

In late July, I met with members of the SNR External Advisory Committee to get feedback on
various sections of the report. I found this meeting to be very helpful and the committee’s suggestions have been incorporated into the report.

I will provide all faculty, staff, and students with a final version of the review schedule soon. It hasn’t changed significantly from the previous version. I will be meeting with faculty who will be making presentations to the review team to discuss the focus and content of their presentations. On September 8, we will have a preparatory meeting for the Five-Year Review in the Hardin Hall auditorium, when we will discuss final details for the review and answer any questions that faculty, staff and students may have.

If you have not already done so, please put the review dates on your calendar. You should also note those specific meetings that you plan to attend. Although the review will begin the evening of September 21 when the team meets with IANR and CAS administration, SNR faculty, staff and students will not be engaged until the morning of September 22, when we’ll have a kick-off meeting in the auditorium for all SNR employees. Another very important event will be the review team’s exit report on the morning of September 25.

It is important for all SNR employees to become familiar with external members of our review team. These members are:

Louie Tupas, Team Leader
USDA/CSREES

Dan Brown
University of Michigan

Kathy Jacobs
University of Arizona

Kudos to Students
Grants Awarded and Proposals Submitted

Upcoming Events
See SNR August 2009 calendar.

Director’s Upcoming Travel

October 9-22
Amman, Jordan, and Cairo, Egypt
To participate in an International Conference on Food Security and Climate Change (Amman) as a member of the Scientific Organizing Committee and to meet with U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization officials on future program collaborations (Cairo).

February 8-13
Madrid, Spain
To participate in the International Conference on Droughts and Water Scarcity (2010).
Internal members of our review team include Ron Yoder (Head, Department of Biological Systems Engineering), Shelley Fuller (Department of Art and Art History and Academic Program Committee representative), John Quinn (graduate student representative), and Laura Snell (undergraduate student representative).

**SNR’s Fall Retreat**

On August 20 we will be holding the annual SNR Fall Retreat in the Hardin Hall auditorium. Refreshments will be available at 8 a.m. and the retreat will begin at 8:30 a.m. The purpose of the retreat is to update all SNR employees on the unit’s activities for the coming year, new policies, and the activities of SNR’s centers, faculty areas, and graduate student organizations. I will also introduce employees who have joined SNR since May. This meeting will not be focused on the Five-Year Review. Your attendance is strongly encouraged.

**SNR’s New Website Launched**

In early July we launched the new version of the SNR website. Given the size of our unit and the hundreds of pages associated with our programs and activities, the development of a new website was a significant undertaking. Thanks to Mark Mesarch and Jeff Nothwehr for keeping this development process on time. Thanks also to the many SNR faculty and staff who provided content and feedback during the development process. We are still updating some parts. Please review your profile and program information for accuracy. If you find...
Information related to your programs that needs to be updated, please contact either Mark or Jeff.

UNL is moving to a new web template this fall so we will be adapting our new site to this new template by the end of the year. We hope this will be relatively seamless.

**SNR and NDMC to Host a United Nations Workshop in December: An Update**

Plans have been finalized for SNR and the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) to host the United Nations workshop, *An Inter-regional Workshop on Indices and Early Warning Systems for Drought*, December 8-11, 2009. U.N. sponsors are the World Meteorological Organization and the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification. Additional sponsors include the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Integrated Drought Information System office of NOAA. The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn-Downtown. I expect 30-35 international participants to attend this workshop and 20 or more participants from the U.S. If you are interested in more information, please contact me or Mike Hayes, NDMC Director.

**International Science and Policy Initiatives**

As a member of the International Scientific Technical Committee for the forthcoming *International Conference on Food Security and Climate Change*, I have been reviewing abstracts from potential speakers. The conference will be held in Amman, Jordan, October 12-15, 2009. I will present one of several keynote talks during the conference, focusing on the linkages between climate change, drought, and food security. Following this meeting, I will be traveling to Cairo, Egypt, for continued discussions with the U.N.’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on issues related to drought, climate change, and water. We’ll also continue discussions on the development of the Global Water for Food Institute at UNL. In May, SNR was the venue for a conference to begin exploring the creation of such an institute. Mohammed Bazza of FAO in Cairo was one of the participants at the May conference in Lincoln. I have worked with Mohammed for several years on drought mitigation issues in the Near East and North Africa regions.

Plans are also moving forward on planning for the *International Conference on Droughts and Water Scarcity: The Way Towards Adaptation to Climate Change*. I am working with the Spanish Ministry of Environment on the organization of this meeting, scheduled for mid-February 2010 in Madrid. Another conference, *Economics of Drought and Drought*
Preparedness is also being planned for Istanbul, Turkey, March 4-6, 2010. This conference is the second in a series of international drought conferences organized by the Mediterranean Institute of Agronomy in Spain and various partners. For the conference in Turkey, I have agreed to serve as a member of the Scientific Committee. Other sponsors for the meeting in Istanbul are the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas, FAO, and the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

SNR to Hire Extension Educator on Climate Variability and Change

I have received final approval to hire an Extension Educator in Climate Variability and Change. This position will be supported by Dean Elbert Dickey for at least four years. The position is currently being advertised and we hope to hire someone who can begin program development this fall. This new faculty member will significantly increase our educational programs in climate variability and change. Thanks to Mike Hayes, Ken Hubbard, and Steve Hu for assistance in the development of the position description. Once hired, this person will begin working with extension educators and extension audiences throughout the state, including K-12 and 4-H groups, on programs.

SNR Facilities: More Improvements on the Way

Discussions continue on the renovation of the Hardin Hall auditorium. As many of you know, the Hardin Hall renovations included only limited improvements to the auditorium. In July, I submitted a list of proposed improvements to Barry Shull, IANR Facilities Manager, Chad Lea, and Paul Couture (both with UNL Facilities Management). I also provided past auditorium usage information to Facilities Management so they would better understand the diversity of activities held in the auditorium. I will be meeting with architects from Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture in Omaha in early August to discuss my suggested improvements and start on a formal proposal to UNL administration. Our auditorium is a significant campus resource. I look forward to these updates to this facility.

We are also in the process of converting a workroom on the second floor of Hardin Hall (room 231) to offices for post-doctoral research associates and other faculty. Because of the configuration of the room, this space has not been used effectively since we moved into the building in 2006. Funding for this renovation process is being provided by Ayse Irmak and SNR. Most or all of the people to be housed in this office will be individuals supporting her research program.
Bulletin boards and photographs will also be mounted during August. The bulletin boards will be located mainly near labs and classrooms to better describe the functions of those rooms. Photographs taken by faculty and staff will be mounted along hallways on the first, second, and ninth floors.

Building Sustainable Partnerships Forum: Next Steps

We are currently planning the next Building Sustainable Partnerships Forum, building on the success of the first event in early February. Sponsors for the second forum will be SNR, the Mayor’s Environmental Task Force, and the Nebraska Rural Initiative. The next event will be held in late October or early November. The second Forum will be more action oriented with invited speakers from communities, industry, and universities, followed by breakout group discussions. Thanks to Donna Woudenberg, members of SNR’s Sustainability Committee, and the organizing committee for planning this event. More details to follow soon.

Kudos to Students

Several SNR graduate students have received travel awards over the summer to attend conferences.

Receiving the David and Annie Larrick/William Whitmore Memorial travel award through the Agricultural Research Division were:

Ingrid Barcelo, to attend the American Ornithologists’ Union’s annual meeting in Philadelphia in August.

Cheng Cheng, to attend the American Geophysical Union’s fall meeting in San Francisco in December.

Luis Enrique Ramirez, to attend the Society of Ecological Restoration International World Conference in Perth, Australia, in August.

Graduate fellowships were awarded to Jessica Milby and Adam Yarina by the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources to complement existing assistantships. Funding for this one-year award is provided by the William J. Curtis Endowed Fellowship Fund.

Grants Awarded and Proposals Submitted
SNR faculty and staff were awarded grants totaling $1,252,695 in July. Congratulations to Dave Gosselin, Donna Woudenberg, Cindy Larson-Miller, Paul Hanson, Tala Awada, Aris Holz, Kyle Hoagland, Tadd Barrow, Larkin Powell, Craig Allen, Scott Hygnstrom, Annabel Major, and Mark Pegg. The total for grants awarded in 2009 (January through July) is $7,206,267. We have already had several major grants awarded in August. These will be reported in my September report. If the current trend in awards continues, I expect SNR faculty and staff will be awarded in excess of $12 million in 2009. I believe this will be a new record for SNR. Congratulations to all faculty and staff. Keep up the excellent work!

Faculty and staff submitting proposals in July included Shashi Verma, Larkin Powell, Craig Allen, Trish Freeman, Dave Wedin, Dan Snow, Kyle Hoagland, Mark Burbach, Matt Marxsen, Paul Hanson, Steve Comfort, Jesse Korus, and Matt Joeckel. The total amount for grant proposals submitted in July was $26,841,806. The total for grant proposals submitted by SNR faculty from January through July 2009 was $38,272,785.