The beginning of the new academic year is drawing near. We will soon be welcoming our returning undergraduate and graduate students as well as our incoming freshman, transfer students, and new graduate students. Although the sidewalks and parking lots become considerably more crowded, August is an exciting time for all.

UNL and U.S. Agency for International Development: Partnership Opportunities

I was invited by Prem Paul’s office to participate in a discussion with USAID on topics related to water, climate, and food, with specific regional emphasis in North Africa and the Middle East regions. John Wilson, director, Office of Technical Support for Asia and Middle East Bureaus, and Scott Christiansen, a senior agricultural development advisor from that office, were on campus to discuss partnership opportunities with UNL. USAID is currently in the process of defining centers of excellence in science and technology in response to President Obama’s speech in Cairo, Egypt, last year. These centers of excellence are a multi-agency effort in the Obama Administration. During my presentation I emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of SNR and our ability to cross-cut many of the development issues in this region of interest to USAID. More specifically, I discussed the long history of relationships between the National Drought Mitigation Center and countries in the region on the topics of drought risk, mitigation, planning and policy. Of particular concern in the region is the relationship between drought vulnerability, climate change, water scarcity, and food security. Other UNL faculty and staff who participated in this discussion included Ron Yoder, John Gates, Ken Cassman, Bruce Dvorak, Mehmet Can Vuran, and Ian Cottingham.

We expect that from these conversations, USAID will identify some key institutions with an interest in being prominent players in these centers of excellence. This process obviously feeds into the development of the Water for Food Institute but also emphasizes key programmatic areas at UNL where there has been a strong record of achievement.

Water for Food Institute

The advisory committee for the Water for Food Institute (WFI) met in July to discuss the status of the institute and the committee’s likely role in the coming year. Several items of note to SNR faculty, staff, and students include:

- The search for an executive director for WFI is underway and is expected to conclude in summer 2011.
- WFI is a University of Nebraska initiative engaging all four campuses.
- The WFI office will be located in the Whittier Research Center, and is expected to be complete October 1, 2010.
- The 2011 Water for Food Conference is scheduled for May 1-4, 2011.
- Meetings are being scheduled to promote faculty engagement in the WFI. These will be held on each of the university’s four campuses and will, initially, be brainstorming sessions to identify primary themes or focus areas for WFI, to be followed by breakout sessions. Several of these meetings will be held in Hardin Hall.

The initial meeting of the advisory committee was followed with a meeting including key water faculty from across the UNL campus to discuss issues related to academic programs, faculty engagement meetings, and faculty affiliation with and participation in WFI.
An SNR faculty meeting was held on July 20 to discuss the WFI. Additional information was provided to faculty in advance of this meeting as background for discussion. I will provide an update to staff at a meeting this fall.

The WFI advisory committee includes John Anderson, Charlie Bicak (UNK), Mohammed Dahab, Bruce Dvorak, Sheri Fritz, Lilyan Fulginiti, John Gates, Steve Goddard, Mark Gustafson, Mark Lagrimini, Harmon Maher (UNO), Donald Wilhite, Ronald Yoder, Sandra Zellmer, and a UNMC rep (TBD).

**SNR Bylaws: Changes in Progress**

As many will recall, there have been a number of suggested changes to the SNR bylaws over the past year or so in response to our five-year comprehensive review process and as a result of administrative changes in the unit. Christine Steggs and I have been working on these revisions and, with specific input from several faculty, have completed a draft of these proposed changes. The revised bylaws will be the topic of discussion at the next faculty meeting, scheduled for August 25. I plan to distribute both the draft of the bylaws, with comments for discussion, and the existing version of the bylaws to faculty the first week in August. I would hope to conclude these discussions following the September faculty meeting. I will also review the suggested changes with staff at a forthcoming staff meeting. We will then vote on the bylaws by electronic ballot. The number of changes in the bylaws is quite significant, because we have been accumulating the proposed changes for some time.

Following the discussion and approval of the bylaws, we will revisit and update SNR’s operating procedures. Stayed tuned!

**Water Center Director Search – Update**

As most of you are aware, the search for a new Water Center director has been put on hold while the university tries to better define how the Center will fit with the Water for Food Institute. I am hopeful that this hold will be released in the near future.

Bruce Dvorak has been serving as the interim director of the Water Center since last September. His term will expire near the end of August and Bruce will be leaving for Prague, Czech Republic, soon thereafter for his sabbatical. Bruce has done a superb job in this interim role and I wish him a productive sabbatical. With input from IANR, I will be appointing another interim director for the Water Center to serve at least through the end of 2010.

**Status of Faculty Searches**

Our continuing effort to attract a new faculty member to the aquatic ecologist/limnologist position has been unsuccessful. The two remaining potential candidates in our pool are no longer available. I have decided to reopen the search for this position and, with the help of the search committee, to expedite the search process. The search committee will remain the same and Steve Thomas will continue as chair.

**Renovation Plans for Hardin Hall Auditorium: An Update**

It appears that the renovation of the auditorium will be completed by August 9, at the latest. The power outlets and rails along the aisles have been installed and the stage walls and ceiling have been painted. The final step in the renovation process is refinishing the stage floor. Thanks to all SNR staff who have helped with various aspects of the renovation process. We could not have finished this process on time without your assistance.

**SNR’s Fall Faculty, Staff, and Student Assembly: Agenda**

The agenda for the fall faculty, staff, and student assembly is now complete and will be distributed in the near future. Following refreshments at 8 a.m., IANR Vice-Chancellor and UNL Vice President Ronnie Green will discuss his vision of IANR and the role of natural resources in that vision. Monica Norby, assistant vice-chancellor for research, will discuss the Water for Food Initiative. Both Ronnie and Monica will take questions following their presentations. Leading up to the break, I will discuss some of the opportunities and challenges for the forthcoming year, and Mark Mesarch will provide an overview of the new employee information section of the SNR website. Before turning over the floor to Mike...
Forsberg, Lisa Gustafson of Telecommunications will provide an overview of some information on phone etiquette and phone services.

**SNR's Fall Seminar Series**

The program for SNR’s fall seminar series is nearly complete. Given the large number of seminars held in SNR and across both east and city campuses, I decided to schedule our unit’s seminars on alternate weeks. All of our seminars will be held on Wednesdays at 3:30 p.m. in the auditorium. When defining this fall’s program, suggestions for speakers were requested from each of SNR’s faculty areas. The schedule is:

**September 8**
Eric Freyfogle from the College of Law at the University of Illinois will talk about the *Good Use of Water.*

**September 22**
Susan Hubbard, Staff Scientist and Program Leader for Environmental Remediation and Water Resources at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory will discuss *Waves and Wine: Geophysical Characterization to Guide Precision Viticulture.* Susan is visiting UNL in 2010 as the Birdsall Dreiss Distinguished Lecturer, which is awarded annually by the Hydrogeology Division of the Geological Society of America.

**October 6**
SNR's Drew Tyre along with Jennifer Klein (Public Policy Center), Sara Michaels (Political Science), and Richard Rebarber (Mathematics) will discuss *Risk and Uncertainty* as part of a project funded through the College of Arts and Sciences.

**November 3**
Paul Cox, Executive Director of the Institute for Ethnomedicine, will present a seminar, *Linking Environmental Health to Human Health.*

**November 17**
May Yuan, director of the Center for Spatial Analysis at the University of Oklahoma, will discuss *GIScience Approaches to Understanding Geographic Dynamics.* May’s visit to campus is also a part of Geography Awareness Week.

Two dates, **October 20** and **December 1**, have not yet been confirmed.

**Proposals Awarded and Submitted**

Faculty and staff were awarded grants totaling $976,597 in July. Congratulations to Tadd Barrow, Mike Hayes, Mark Svoboda, Deborah Bathke, Cody Knutson, T.J. Fontaine, Larkin Powell, Xinhua Zhou, Craig Allen, and Jim Merchant. The total funding awarded January through July 2010 is $4,425,887.

Faculty and staff submitting grant proposals in July were Karina Schoengold, Ya Ding, Wayne Woldt, Tadd Barrow, Steve Thomas, Tala Awada, Ed Harvey, Mike Hayes, Bob Oglesby, Tapan Pathak, Ken Hubbard, Mary Spalding, Steve Comfort, Dave Wedin, Paul Hanson, Dave Gosselin, Cindy Larson-Miller, Craig Allen, Scott Hygnstrom, Tsegaye Tadesse, Shashi Verma, Andy Suyker, Gene Guan, Cody Knutson, Martha Shulski, Jim Merchant, Betty Walter-Shea, Steve Hu, Jean Knops, and Ayse Irmak. Almost all of these proposals were submitted by multiple principal investigators and the majority of the proposals included collaborations with faculty from other UNL departments. As an interdisciplinary unit, it is of critical importance that our faculty and staff collaborate internally.
and externally to address complex natural resource and environmental issues. These submissions in July represented funding requests for $22,512,502. Good luck with your proposals! The total requests for proposals submitted from January through July was $62,245,010.

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