Launching Another Academic Year

August was a busy month. We finalized many changes in Hardin Hall facilities, moved new faculty and staff into the building, and undertook a round of "musical chairs" to make room for them. The Geography program has moved from Oldfather Hall on City Campus, where it was part of the Department of Anthropology and Geography, to its new location in the School of Natural Resources. The four faculty members joining SNR are David Wishart, Steve Lavin, Douglas Amedeo, and Clark Archer. In addition, five temporary lecturers and 10 teaching assistants have joined SNR. Geography also brings many undergraduates and around 35 graduate students into SNR. Sunil Narumalani is serving as the Geography program coordinator within SNR.

SNR’s new Student Services area has been completed and is at the south end of the first-floor lobby. This area houses Sara Winn, advising coordinator, Susan Vosler, academic secretary, and Sue Ellen Pegg, recruitment coordinator (in the photo from left to right). This area also contains the Welcome Center and a conference room for our
student services staff to meet with prospective and current students and their parents. Come visit our Student Services area with a Husker Red wall and the big N. It's hard to miss!

We added new chairs to the Auditorium. They are more comfortable and create a more welcoming environment in one of our most prominent public spaces. The Auditorium is increasingly in demand for classes, seminars, lectures, conferences, and workshops. We were fortunate to be able to donate the chairs that were previously in the auditorium to the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, Nebraska.

We have added bike loops, picnic tables, and benches to the Hardin Hall exterior. More benches will be added on the north side of the building in September. I have also been working with Landscape Services to enhance the space north of the building. Areas have been reseeded, interseeded and sodded in an effort to improve the appearance. Plans are also moving forward under the leadership and inspiration of Ed Harvey to create an Outdoor Classroom north of the building. He met with UNL’s Senior Administrative Team and received their blessing.

This month we hope to install the new television monitors to promote the programs and activities of SNR and UNL to students, faculty, and visitors to Hardin Hall. These will be placed in the first floor lobby area in the tower and in the north wing. There will also be a monitor added to the Nebraska Maps & More Store to promote SNR and the store’s products.

The next issue we will be dealing with is related to interior signage in Hardin Hall to make it easier for students and visitors to find their way around this huge complex. Students are still getting lost in the building and those temporary signs need to be replaced.

International Visitors to SNR

SNR was pleased to host two
international groups this past month. First, we had the opportunity to welcome Dr. Isaac Maldonado, an agronomic engineer with the Instituto de Investigaciones Agropecuarias in Chile and Dr. Juan Alberto Barrera, a soil science professor who works with GIS and Remote Sensing at the Universidad de Concepción. Their primary interest in visiting SNR was to learn more about automated weather data networks and data quality issues associated with that network. As shown above, they visited a typical automated weather data network (AWDN) system near Firth, with explanation and photography provided by Glen Roebke. From left are Bill Sorensen, HPRCC software developer; Maldonado; Octavio Lagos, a graduate student in Biological Systems Engineering; Barrera; and Natalie Umphlett, High Plains Regional Climate Center (HPRCC) service climatologist.

The primary focal point for their visit was the HPRCC, which operates an automated weather data network in Nebraska and also collects data from automated weather stations in the surrounding states. The HPRCC’s acting director, Dr. Dennis Todey, and staff hosted the Chilean visitors. They were also interested in the drought monitoring methods currently being used by the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) and various web-based decision support tools. I have prepared a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between SNR and Chile to facilitate future collaborative activities, including the possible exchange of scientists and students. Pictured above, from left, are Todey, Maldonado, Barrera, and me.

We were also one of the hosts for two scientists from Iraq. Dr. Ahmad Mhaimeed is a professor at the College of Agriculture at
the University of Baghdad. He has been involved in the development of a soil survey in Iraq and is interested in remote sensing techniques to develop the soil survey. He has an M.S. degree in soil survey and classification from UNL and a Ph.D. in soil science from Colorado State University. Dr. Salloum Salim is a specialist in unsaturated soil hydraulic properties and teaches at the University of Baghdad. He is interested in irrigation efficiencies and the impact of irrigation on the physical properties of soil systems in Iraq. These two scientists visited the U.S. under a USDA Fellowship Program, the Normal Borlaug International Agricultural Science and Technology Fellows Program. I am the principal investigator for this project. While in the U.S., they also visited the University of California-Riverside to learn more about soil salinity issues. SNR will be developing an MOU with the University of Baghdad to further develop these collaborative opportunities. While at UNL, they visited with Don Rundquist and others in CALMIT, the NDMC, the HPRCC, the Water Center, Biological Systems Engineering, USDA's National Soil Survey Center, Valmont Industries, and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.

**SNR Launches 5-year Review Planning Process**

On August 22, 2008, the SNR 5-year Review Planning Team held a half-day retreat to launch the planning process for our next 5-year external review. The retreat was to familiarize faculty, staff, and students with the purpose of the review process, the outcomes and recommendations from the 2003 review, accomplishments since the 2003 review, the goals of the intensive series of listening sessions scheduled for this fall, and our expectations of faculty, staff, and students during this planning process. The dates for the external review team visit are September 22-25, 2009. Following the listening sessions this fall, chapters organized around the themes represented in our list of Current and Emerging Issues in Natural Resources
and Environmental Science will be written in early 2009 and reviewed by faculty, staff, and students in the spring. The final review document will be distributed to review team members in August 2009. We have a lot of work to do between now and then. Let the fun begin!

Review team members have been selected by the SNR Administrative Team and faculty. Our list has been approved by IANR administration and the review team leader, Dr. Louis Tupas with USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). I will be contacting these potential reviewers in early September to invite them to be part of the team. I will keep you updated on the progress towards our preparation for this event in subsequent newsletters.

In addition to the external review team members, the team will also include an IANR unit administrator, a representative of UNL's Academic Program Committee, a representative of one of SNR's stakeholder groups, an SNR graduate student, and an SNR undergraduate student.

**SNR's Sustainability Committee**

SNR's Sustainability Committee has been actively pursuing critical questions associated with how to make Hardin Hall a greener building. A wide range of activities will help us achieve this goal, including shutting down computers in the evening and new and improved recycling. I assume you have noticed the new recycling containers located around the building. We also met with Midland Recycling regarding the launch of a full-scale recycling program for Hardin Hall, which would include many more recycling containers being placed strategically in the building.

The Sustainability Committee and the Safety and Facilities Committee also met with Jim Hines (not our Jim Hines) and Matt Stamm from Facilities Management regarding a new test
program they are establishing to reduce energy consumption in association with lab fume hoods in the building. Because of our interest in this program, Hardin Hall has been included in Facilities’ plan to implement this new system. They have made a request to Christine Jackson, Vice Chancellor for Business and Finance, to fund installation of laboratory sensors in Hardin and Hamilton Hall in labs that have fume hoods. Jim Hines and Matt Stamm were very excited about the interest of UNL faculty, staff, and students in pursuing other possible energy conservation innovations in Hardin, including the installation of occupancy sensors that would be tied to the HVAC system. Of course, the success of any recycling and energy conservation program in Hardin Hall can only occur with your full cooperation and participation. We are, after all, the School of Natural Resources! Our goal is to make your participation in these recycling and conservation programs effortless.

Kudos to Ed Harvey

Ed Harvey is the recipient of the 2008 Distinguished Service Award from the Hydrogeology Division of the Geological Society of America because of his extraordinary contributions to the Division. Ed recently served as editor of the Division’s newsletter. He will receive the award at the Hydrogeology Division’s luncheon in Houston in early October. Congratulations, Ed!

Grants Awarded and Proposals Submitted

SNR faculty and staff were awarded grants totaling nearly $2.7 million in August. Congratulations to Mark Svoboda, Jae Ryu, Cody Knutson, Meghan Sittler, Kelly Smith, Brian Wardlow and Donna Woudenberg (all from the NDMC), Ken Hubbard, Jim Merchant, Dan Snow, Mark Pegg, Ya Ding, Kevin Pope, Ed Harvey, Sue Lackey, Matt Joeckel, Paul Hanson, Tadd Barrow, John Holz, Anatoly Gitelson, and Shannon Bartlett-Hunt. In
addition, grant proposals submitted for funding exceeded $2 million. Keep up the great work and good luck with the pending proposals.