Thanks to the NRBC for Their Huge Role in Our Success

I want to take this opportunity to personally thank the employees of the Natural Resources Business Center for their commitment to the success of SNR. As you have noted each month in the Proposals Awarded and Submitted section of my Director’s Report, SNR has been remarkably successful in recent years in attracting significant resources to UNL in support of our research, teaching, extension, and survey missions. In 2009, we attracted more than $13 million to the unit. In 2010, we have submitted proposal requests in excess of $74 million, with nearly $9 million being awarded to date. While SNR’s faculty and staff are to be commended for their success in attracting these resources and for their creativity in formulating ideas that are competitive with proposals submitted by their peers, our ability to process these proposals on time and to administer these projects once awarded is largely due to the efforts of the NRBC staff.

As an example, in response to a recent request for proposals from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), SNR faculty responded with 13 proposals—all due on the same date.

The stated goal of NRBC is “to provide customers with accurate, timely business services in a customer-friendly environment.” I commend all of the NRBC staff for a job well done. This commitment begins with their outstanding manager, Carol Cartwright. Her staff includes Sherrie Bacon (grants specialist), Pat DeStefano (purchasing specialist), Lois Erickson (accounting specialist), Jolene Foster (time entry, travel, and deposit specialist), Leo Masek (personnel specialist), Barbara Pike (administrative assistant), Julie Stuckenschmidt (accounting specialist), and Jerry Schluckebier (fiscal specialist). In addition to their services to SNR, they also provide these same services to Environmental Studies, the Nebraska Forest Service, the Nebraska LEAD program, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, and the Department of Statistics.

I encourage you to show each of them your appreciation for their hard work and diligence. The services they provide to SNR are outstanding. Without this group of excellent employees, we would be less successful in our endeavors.

Drought, Water and Climate Workshop

I attended a meeting on Drought, Water, and Climate: Using today’s information to design tomorrow’s services, in Washington, D.C., September 14-15. This meeting was organized by the Western Governors’ Association (WGA) and the Western States Water Council. It was the last of a series of three meetings organized in conjunction with a National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) project that is currently being implemented by NOAA and the NIDIS program office in Boulder, Colorado.

The primary goals of the meeting were 1) to coordinate and strengthen drought services across government and the water management sector; 2) to position drought information and early warning systems within the emerging suite of climate services; and 3) to revisit prospects for a comprehensive, integrated, national response to drought impacts. I was asked to provide the critical context with respect to a comprehensive national policy, progress to date, and some international perspectives on drought policy and planning.

There has been somewhat of a lull in the push to pass national legislation on drought policy since the NIDIS bill was passed in December 2006. There were three previous attempts to pass national legislation on drought policy and preparedness, largely due to WGA efforts, with assistance from the National Drought Mitigation Center. The WGA has been very
aggressive in their support for improved drought monitoring, mitigation, preparedness, and
policy over the past two decades. I have worked with them on numerous occasions on
workshops, congressional briefings, and drafting legislation in support of these initiatives.
Attendees hope that one of the important outcomes of this meeting will be a renewed focus
by WGA, as well as the National Governors' Association, on improving this nation's
preparedness to future drought events, especially given current and projected changes in
climate.

In addition to a series of informative talks by noted scientists and representatives of federal
agencies, Jane Lubchenco, NOAA administrator, presented an excellent overview of
NOAA's climate services and its plans to launch a new National Climate Service. Legislation
is currently pending in Congress in support of such an initiative.

Executive Council Meeting – National Integrated Drought Information System

The next day was the first Executive Council meeting of NIDIS. I am co-chairing the NIDIS
Executive Council with Chet Koblinsky, director of NOAA's Climate Program Office. The
purpose of this meeting was to provide overviews of progress to date in the development of
the NIDIS program, in particular the implementation of a U.S. drought portal, of drought
research funding opportunities through NOAA, and of regional drought early warning
system projects currently funded as NIDIS test beds. The initial pilots are in the Upper
Colorado River Basin and the Southeastern U.S., and lessons learned will later be
expanded to other regions. Members of the Executive Council include representatives from
many federal agencies that are partners with NOAA in the implementation of this program.

The National Drought Mitigation Center continues to be heavily involved in NIDIS through
the implementation team and with other components of the program.

All-SNR Event in the Planning Stages

I have been working with Dee Ebbeka, Sue Ellen Pegg, and Jacki Loomis to plan an all-
SNR photo event for mid-October. All SNR faculty and staff will be invited to participate.
Details will follow but you will all be getting a free t-shirt to commemorate the occasion.

BASF Meeting on Sustainability and Eco-efficiency

I was invited by Ryan Anderson of Vice Chancellor Prem Paul's office to represent UNL at a
meeting in Chicago that was organized by BASF. BASF, which describes itself as the
world's leading chemical company, is working in many areas of sustainability that are of
interest to SNR, including water use efficiency, climate protection, and the wise use of
natural resources. Recently, a team of German-based researchers from BASF have been
working on development of a model, AgBalance. The purpose of the meeting was to gather
input from the small group of participants on inputs to the model. In addition to
representatives of BASF, others in attendance were from the World Resources Institute, the
Environmental Defense Fund, the World Wildlife Fund, the University of Arkansas and the
University of North Carolina. It was a great opportunity to showcase the University of
Nebraska and discuss the Water for Food Institute. I expect there to be some follow-up in
the near future from BASF, probably in the form of a webinar on the AgBalance model.

SNR's Outreach Seminar Series

This fall's Tuesday evening public outreach seminar series is underway and its popularity is
continuing to grow. This fall represents our largest program to date with seven speakers
making up the series of talks that began on September 14. Larkin and Kelly Powell
presented on September 14 to discuss Larkin's recent sabbatical in Namibia. On
September 21, Chris Helzer, program director for the Nature Conservancy, discussed
ecology and management of prairies. Attendance has been good for the first two seminars,
70 and 45 respectively.

Other seminars scheduled for the semester are:

- **October 5**, Jim Goeke, A Conversation about Nebraska Water
- **October 12**, Dennis Ferraro, Meet Nebraska's Turtles, Lizards and Snakes
- **November 2**, Paul Cox, Indigenous People and Island Conservation
- **November 9**, Dan Fogell, Amphibians and Reptiles of Nebraska
- **December 7**, Matt Joeckel, Mineral Resources and Civilization: The Arrogance of
  Ignorance
Thanks to Matt Joeckel and the entire SNR Outreach Committee for their excellent work in assembling such an outstanding schedule of speakers this fall.

**SNR Hosts Northeast China Delegation**

SNR was host to a delegation of high-level officials from Northeast China. Their visit to UNL was organized by Valmont Industries and was focused on an overview of agriculture and irrigation topics. Members of the delegation were from the Counsel of the Department for the Revitalizing of Northeast China, the Heilongjiang Development and Reform Commission, the Agriculture Business Committee of Heilongjiang Province, and the Baoyuan Runhe Ecological Technology Company. Several representatives from Valmont Industries accompanied the delegation on their visit to IANR and Hardin Hall.

**SNR Bylaws: Changes in Progress**

The process to revise SNR bylaws is now in its final stages. The proposed changes and updates were discussed with faculty at two meetings, August 25 and September 21. The proposed changes were also presented at the September 23 staff meeting. A near final version of the bylaws is now being drafted and will be distributed to faculty in early October. This version of the bylaws will be discussed at the October faculty meeting. I hope we will be able to vote to approve the bylaws in late October or early November.

SNR also has operating procedures that are out of date. These will be revised in the near future.

**Kudos to Steve Thomas**

Congratulations to Steve Thomas for his selection as one of two recipients of the Recognition of Junior Faculty for Excellence in Research award presented by the Agricultural Research Division. Steve has excelled in the development of his research program since joining the School in 2006. He has a strong publication and grant record and is involved in numerous collaborative research projects with colleagues both at UNL and at other institutions. Please congratulate Steve when you see him, give him a call, or send an email his way. ARD is organizing a reception to honor the recipients of this award.

**Kudos to John Quinn**

Congratulations to John Quinn for being selected to receive the National Association of Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Graduate Student Award of Merit Certificate. John graduated with his Ph.D. from UNL in May and is currently serving in a post-doctoral research associate position with Jim Brandle. Please congratulate John when you see him.

**Kudos to Jerry Schluckebier**

Congratulations to Jerry Schluckebier for receiving the Outstanding Employee Award for Managerial/Professional Staff in IANR. Jerry is a financial specialist in the Natural Resources Business Center and has been doing an exemplary job in grant management and other aspects of her position. We are all very fortunate to have Jerry in NRBC.

**Proposals Awarded and Submitted**

Faculty and staff were awarded grants totaling $574,074 in September. Congratulations to Mark Kuzila, Matt Joeckel, Mark Svoboda, Craig Allen, Drew Tyre, and T.J. Fontaine. The total funding awarded January through September 2010 is $8,871,414.

Faculty and staff submitting grant proposals in September were Dan Snow, Ayse Irmak, Shashi Verma, Wayne Woldt, Rachael Herpel, Leon Higley, Karie Decker, Craig Allen, Steve Hu, Ken Hubbard, Steve Thomas, Sunil Narumalani, John Quinn, Cody Knutson, Dave Gosselin, Rusty Low, Cindy Larson-Miller, Mark Svoboda, Kelly Smith, Diego Riveros, Bob Oglesby, Martha Shulski, Jinsheng You, Mike Hayes, Melissa Widhalm, and Donna Woudenberg. Many of these faculty and staff submitted multiple proposals. I am impressed not only with the number of proposals submitted but with the diversity of disciplinary areas.
represented and the number of staff involved in the proposals. It’s great to see staff involvement in the development of proposals because they are critical to the success of the research. These submissions in September represented funding requests for $6,920,208. The total for funding requests submitted from January through September is $74,700,772.