A Successful Visit to Xi’an Jiaotong University

The week of October 12, a delegation of administrators and faculty from UNL visited Xi’an, China, to meet with representatives of Xi’an Jiaotong University (XJTU) to discuss collaborative research and teaching programs and opportunities. XJTU is one of the best engineering universities in China. During our time on campus, the delegation visited many labs to learn more about their principal areas of engineering research.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln delegation to Xi'an Jiaotong University (XJTU) included, from left, David Lou, Director of UNL’s Confucius Institute; Marjorie Lou, Professor of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences; Larry Rilett, Director of the Nebraska Center for Transportation; Prem Paul, UNL Vice Chancellor for Research; Harvey Perlman, Chancellor of UNL; Don Wilhite, Director of the School of Natural Resources; Barbara Couture, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; David Sellmyer, Director of the Nebraska Center for Materials and Nanoscience; and Namas Chandra, Associate Dean of Engineering. This photo was taken in a
Following formal opening ceremonies on Tuesday, October 14, and our tour of labs, our joint research workshop began on Wednesday, October 15, with overviews of XJTU and UNL research programs by T.J. Lu, Vice President of XJTU, and Prem Paul, respectively. We followed with sessions on materials sciences, transportation sciences, climate change science, and biosciences. Each included presentations by a UNL and an XJTU faculty member. In my session, I discussed UNL's research program in climate change and variability, providing a broad background on the scientific focus of climate-related faculty at UNL with examples of specific research projects. Dr. Zhenxing Shen, Associate Professor in the Department of Environmental Science and Engineering, provided an overview of research projects underway in his department that related to the broad field of climate, natural resources, and environment. Their research is mainly focused on issues related to urban air pollution and the atmospheric composition and deposition of various chemicals.

The opening ceremony for the delegation's visit was in an elegant meeting room on the top floor of the XJTU administration building. The UNL delegation is on the left, and the XJTU group is on the right. Perlman and his counterpart are in the middle.

The importance of this visit to Xi'an is the potential collaboration with UNL and, hopefully, SNR. Given the strong engineering focus of the university,
the most obvious joint endeavors will likely be in the engineering sciences. There is strong interest in developing expertise in agricultural engineering, given the priority the Chinese government is placing on agricultural modernization, and there is significant interest in climate change and variability issues. Student and faculty exchanges are a possibility, as are short courses. Vice President Lu was very enthusiastic about the idea of SNR and UNL offering two- to three-week short courses on a variety of subjects, most likely during summer. His goal is to globalize the experiences of faculty and students at XJTU and he feels that short courses would be an excellent way to achieve that goal. Dr. Lu received his Ph.D. from Harvard University and recently returned to China after 17 years in the U.S.

The next step in this process is for a delegation of administrators and faculty from XJTU to visit UNL. Our delegation formally invited them and they accepted. It is expected that Dr. Lu will lead this delegation. I hope that SNR faculty, staff and students will be able to participate in this event.

Of course, this visit was not all business. We had numerous formal dinners hosted by XJTU officials and one dinner hosted by Chancellor Perlman. We also had opportunities to shop and visit the Terra Cotta Warriors museum located near Xi’an. Some of us also took advantage of the opportunity to bike around the old city of Xi’an on top of the City Wall. It is a distance of about eight miles and was extremely enjoyable. Namas Chandra and I were the two UNL participants who made it around the entire route. You may recall hearing about air pollution in Beijing before and during the Olympics. The situation in Xi’an is similar. Another highlight of the visit was the ping-pong match between Chancellor Perlman and his XJTU counterparts. The Chancellor did UNL proud in holding up the Husker tradition of competitiveness.
Progress on the “Greening” of Hardin Hall

With the assistance of the SNR Sustainability Committee, we are in the process of implementing a “full-service” recycling program in Hardin Hall. We are currently waiting for recycling containers to be delivered, and then Midland Recycling will begin regular pick-ups at Hardin. I appreciate the leadership of Aris Holz and other members of the committee. We continue to test our computer shut-down pilot program for evenings and weekends. So far, there have been no complications. I hope we will be able to implement this program School-wide in the near future.

I have also received very exciting news that our request to have occupancy sensors installed in the tower in Hardin Hall has received funding through Facilities Management. These sensors will be tied in with both the HVAC system and the lighting in offices. When this project is completed, it should lead to a significant reduction in the building’s energy consumption. My goal is for SNR’s energy conservation in Hardin Hall to make us a leader in energy conservation on campus and a role model for our students.
Five-Year Review Listening Sessions
Progressing Well

The semester-long series of listening sessions on the five current and emerging issues in natural resources and environmental science, and on physical infrastructure, SNR administration, and SNR community, have been progressing well. Thanks to SNR faculty, staff, and students who have attended these sessions. This is your opportunity to be engaged in our strategic planning process! This semester’s sessions will conclude in mid-November and we hope to have extracted enough information to begin preparing chapters for our review document in January or February. The SNR administrative team will be meeting in November and December to discuss the format for additional (but not as many) listening sessions for the spring semester. We will also be preparing an outline of the report in the near future. I will be discussing that outline and other review-related issues with Dr. Louie Tupas (review team leader from USDA) in Washington, D.C., in early December. My hope is to prepare a document that covers all of the intended bases while keeping the size manageable for the review team.

This past week I have been involved in the Academic Program Review of UNL’s Department of Geosciences. SNR has several areas of collaboration with Geosciences and we also have seven faculty with joint appointments in this department. It has been a very good learning experience to hear the charge to the committee from UNL administration and to engage with the external review team’s discussion on collaborative programs with SNR. This experience will be of benefit to SNR as we move forward with our unit review.

Faculty Evaluation Process to Begin Soon

All faculty are required to complete and submit their annual eARFAs (Annual Report of Faculty Accomplishments). The due date this year is November 3. Several faculty submitted their eARFAs a week or so early. Thanks. I provided faculty with a document on Writing Effective Goals to
assist in the preparation of their goals and objectives for 2009. Advice is also included on reporting accomplishments and impacts, as well as the expected format and length of the curriculum vitae, which is also required. Faculty must link their goals to the new priorities in the IANR Strategic Plan. I have also asked them to develop their goals around the five current and emerging issues in natural resources and environmental science that were identified by SNR faculty and that are the organizational basis for our external review document.

**CASNR’s Celebration of Success**

Each fall IANR hosts a Celebration of Success for the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources to recognize their progress in increasing undergraduate enrollment. Last year, SNR received recognition for increased enrollments in a number of our majors. For 2009, the Fisheries and Wildlife major and the Environmental Studies major received awards for being two of the top five majors with the largest percentage growth. The Fisheries and Wildlife major also received an award for being one of the top five majors with the greatest student increase. I want to express my thanks to Jennifer Aerni, Sue Ellen Pegg, and Sara Winn and to SNR faculty and staff for helping to make this another significant year for student recruitment and retention.

**Grants Awarded and Proposals Submitted**

SNR faculty and staff were awarded grants totaling more than $400,000 in October. Congratulations to Sunil Narumalani, Xun-Hong Chen, Jim Merchant, Scott Hygnstrom, and Shashi Verma. In addition, grant proposals submitted for funding exceeded $3.6 million. Faculty submitting proposals were Matt Joeckel, Steve Hu, Craig Allen, Sue Lackey, Dave Gosselin, Kyle Hoagland, Bob Oglesby, Song Feng, Drew Tyre, Donna Woudenberg, Cindy Larson-Miller, and Jim Goeke. Good luck with the review process! The total amount of grant funds awarded to SNR faculty during the period January through October 2008 was $5,184,966. During the same period, we applied for $17,583,936 in grant funds.