November 1 always represents a time of reflection and stress for faculty as they prepare their annual report of accomplishments (affectionately referred to as the eARFA). As a faculty member, I always dreaded the process but, when the document was completed, I found looking back on my accomplishments and the impacts of my program over the previous year to have been a rewarding exercise. Goal setting is also an important part of the process, as we look to the year ahead and anticipate a new year of challenging our students, conducting our research and extension programs, and following through on university service opportunities. Although goal setting is an important part of the process, I never let an established goal stand in the way of an opportunity to advance my program.

Evaluation Time is Here – Let the Fun Begin!

The month of November is a challenging time for me as I evaluate more than 75 SNR faculty. This process is complicated by the substantial number of SNR faculty who are in faculty equivalent positions and supervised by other faculty. This includes approximately 25 faculty who are research assistant or associate professors, geoscientists, and post-doctoral research associates. Coordinating my evaluation with their supervisor’s assessment of their performance requires considerable communication and scheduling. In addition, we have about 10 faculty with joint appointments in other units. Their evaluations must be coordinated with the department chair, head, or director responsible for the other portion of their appointment. This entire process is dependent on the attention to detail that is provided by Sharon Kelly. Thanks to her, it seems to go smoothly each fall.

SNR’s Promotion and Tenure Committee is also an important part of this process as well. They must assess progress towards promotion and tenure for all faculty in promotable and/or tenure leading lines. While their evaluation process is independent of the evaluation that I complete, both are integral in providing constructive comments to faculty. In addition, the committee and I must each make independent recommendations for those faculty applying for promotion and tenure, following the time clock established by IANR and UNL. We all take this process very seriously.

Workshop – Social Capacity Building for Natural Hazards, Barcelona, Spain

I was invited to participate in this social capacity building workshop that had as its goal to build societies more resilient to natural hazards. The workshop was held in Barcelona, Spain, a beautiful city with impressive architecture. The project, funded by the European Commission, was the first one based in social science to be supported by the Commission. This workshop was one in a series of workshops organized by the principal investigators, based mainly in Germany. The workshop was focused on heat-related hazards—droughts, forest fires, and heat waves. I was invited to make the keynote presentation on drought risk management as a means of building institutional capacity to reduce societal vulnerability. Other keynotes were given by Xavier Basagana of the Epidemiology Research Center in Barcelona and John Handmer of the Center for Risk and Community Safety at the University of Melbourne in Australia. This was a very interactive workshop with an extended question and answer period following the three keynote presentations, with further opportunities for interactions during breakout sessions on both days of the conference. As this project continues, it is likely that I will have further involvement.
La Sagrada Familia cathedral in Barcelona is perhaps the most outstanding of the city’s many examples of architecture by Antoni Gaudí.

Equally important was the opportunity to meet Louis Lemkow, director of the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. The mission of the Institute is to “promote and carry out research and to train researchers who can contribute to our understanding of the environment and meet the challenges posed by the interaction between society and the environment.” Their goal is to become one of Europe’s “leading centers in environmental studies, distinguished by its international focus, multi-disciplinary base and cooperation between the various stakeholders within the framework of sustainability based on social civil responsibility.” The composition of the Institute is quite similar to SNR, except they have more social scientists, as well as faculty in law and engineering. Louis and I discussed opportunities for further collaboration between his Institute and SNR with the goal of eventually establishing a Memorandum of Agreement.

I will be returning to Barcelona in March to participate in a workshop on drought predictability organized by the World Meteorological Organization’s World Climate Research Program. During my visit to Barcelona, I will present a seminar at the Institute to explore collaborative opportunities. If further collaborations are appropriate, I intend to look for opportunities to involve several SNR faculty in follow-up meetings in Barcelona.

**Meeting with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome, Italy**

On my way to the meeting in Barcelona, I took advantage of the opportunity to stop at FAO headquarters in Rome. I have worked with FAO for more than 10 years on drought risk management issues, especially in the Mediterranean and Mid-East regions. I met with my colleague and long-time friend, Pasquale Steduto, Principal Officer of FAO’s Water Unit. He also recently served as Chair of UN-Water from 2007 to 2009. The purpose of my visit with Pasquale was to discuss the Water for Food Institute initiative at the University of Nebraska and next year’s conference. Pasquale has been invited to previous conferences but has been unable to attend because of other commitments. We hope to see him at next May’s Water for Food Conference. Pasquale and I also discussed opportunities to work together in association with planning for the next World Water Forum, scheduled for March 2012 in Marseilles, France. The goal is for UNL and the WFI to have a considerable presence at the next Forum. The next planning meeting for the Forum will be in Paris, France, in January 2011.
While in Rome, Don met with John Owens, former IANR vice chancellor, and Pasquale Steduto, principal officer of FAO’s Water Unit. Owens, left, and Steduto are pictured outside the offices of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome.

In addition to these discussions, Pasquale also requested my involvement and that of the National Drought Mitigation Center in a proposed global early warning system for food security. This project is in the early development stage and the expectation is that plans will be finalized soon to implement this program once the “white paper” is completed. This project complements the water scarcity project currently being finalized by FAO. In December 2009, I attended an expert meeting in Rome organized by Pasquale to discuss this water scarcity program and its implementation.

As many of you know, our former Vice Chancellor, John Owens, is currently on sabbatical at FAO. During my visit, I spent quite a bit of time with John and his wife, Virginia, discussing opportunities for collaboration with FAO. John was able to join my meeting with Pasquale to discuss collaborations between UNL and FAO.

SNR Photo Shoot and Ice Cream Social

After a postponement to October 29 because of weather conditions, we held our photo shoot of SNR faculty, staff, and students forming the letters “SNR” on the lawn outside Hardin Hall. The event was great fun and the photo will be used in recruitment and other public relations efforts. Thanks to Dee Ebbeka, Sue Ellen Pegg and Jacki Loomis for all of their assistance in planning this event. All participants received an SNR T-shirt.

SNR Bylaws: Faculty and Staff Voting Soon
SNR's bylaws have been redrafted and the procedure to bring this issue to a vote by faculty and staff is underway. I expect the revised bylaws to be presented in early November. Please cast your vote after reading the bylaws carefully. The primary changes are in our standing committees, the administrative structure with the addition of the faculty areas and faculty area leaders, and various SNR procedures.

UNL Hosts Fulbright Scholars’ Food Security Seminar

The University of Nebraska was host to 77 Fulbright scholars from 50 countries during the week of October 18. These scholars are attending universities throughout the U.S. The event was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and organized by the Institute of International Education. The students attending the event were mainly from the agricultural and environmental sciences, biology, and biomedical medicine. I moderated a panel discussion on Sustainability in Food Production and Management and gave a presentation on climate change. Other participants in my panel were Steve Mason, Department of Agronomy; Barb Bierman Batie, Board Chair of the Nebraska Environmental Trust; and Steph Larsen, Center for Rural Affairs. The students were very engaged in this seminar throughout the week and UNL was a great host for this event.

Conversations Conferences on Nebraska Environment and Sustainability

SNR is currently in partnership with the Joslyn Institute for Sustainable Communities to host a conference on environment and sustainability on East Campus on February 11. These conferences are intended to foster energetic conversations about Nebraska’s critical resources, including land, water, energy, food and materials. I invited the Chancellor’s Commission on Sustainability to join forces with SNR to host this important conference. The conference will be highly interactive and is part of a series of similar conferences being held across the state. Mark Kuzila, Jim Goeke, and Dan Snow are involved in the conversations conference being held at Creighton University on November 2. Please mark your calendar and plan to participate in our meeting on February 11 at the East Campus Union. This conference builds on the previous Building Sustainable Partnership Forums held in Hardin Hall in February and October 2009. In advance of this event, SNR will be hosting a lunch for partners at Hardin Hall on December 3.

Kudos to UNL’s Wildlife Club

Congratulations to the UNL Wildlife Club, recipient of the Nebraska Wildlife Federation’s 2010 Conservation Organization award. This award was presented at the federation’s annual banquet at Mahoney State Park on October 14. The Wildlife Club is an organization that brings together students who are interested in wildlife. The club is linked historically to the Fisheries and Wildlife major in SNR but membership is open to all students.

Proposals Awarded and Submitted

Faculty and staff were awarded grants totaling $1,450,440 in October. Congratulations to Ken Hubbard, Paul Hanson, Steve Hu, Shashi Verma, Song Feng, Bob Oglesby, Scott Hygnstrom, Steve Thomas, Jim Merchant, and Leon Higley. The total funding awarded January through October 2010 was $10,321,854.

Sunil Narumalani, Mary Spalding, Song Feng, Bob Oglesby, Steve Hu, John Lenters, Paul Hanson, Matt Joeckel, Mark Kuzila and Ken Hubbard submitted grant proposals in October totaling $1,518,708. The total for funding requests submitted from January through October is $76,081,968.