

## The Director's Report, December 2009

### [School of Natural Resources](#)

*From Earth to Sky and Everything in Between*

### [Director's Report Archive](#)

The end of the semester is rapidly approaching, which generally means that faculty and staff are incredibly busy with all that is associated with this time of the year. We will hold our annual Holiday Potluck this Friday, December 4, 11:30-1:30, in the second floor lobby of Hardin Hall. I hope all SNR faculty and staff are able to attend. The senior faculty will also be hosting a reception for junior faculty on December 3, 4:00-5:30, in 901 Hardin Hall. Thanks to Mark Kuzila for planning this reception as a way for senior faculty to show their appreciation to the future leaders of SNR.



### **Completing the Faculty Evaluation Process**

Most faculty evaluations have been completed and distributed for comment. Evaluations will be delivered to IANR administration before the Holiday Break. This process is extremely time-consuming but it provides each faculty member with an assessment of their progress toward promotion and tenure, for those in promotable and/or tenure-leading positions. As cumbersome as we find the eARFA each fall, it serves as an important measure of performance and productivity. As I read through each of these documents, I look for indicators of productivity, energy, and excellence in each person's program. I look forward to meeting with each faculty member in early 2010 to discuss their performance during 2009.

I also appreciate the efforts of SNR's Promotion and Tenure Committee for the long hours that they contribute to the evaluation process. Their investment of time and their diligence in evaluating each faculty member's progress towards promotion and tenure is a tremendous service to these faculty, the unit, and the institution. All members of this

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committee deserve a standing ovation.

Next up will be the evaluation of staff. This process will begin in January and culminate in early March. I know both staff and their supervisors appreciate this opportunity for constructive communication.

### ***Responding to the SNR Review Team Report: Next Steps***

I hope you have all taken the opportunity to read through the review team report that I distributed to you about a month ago. At the November 18 faculty meeting I outlined the process for responding to that report and a tentative timetable. Ed Harvey provided that information to staff at their monthly staff meeting the same week. I am now in the process of analyzing the recommendations of that report and I will then develop a matrix of recommendations or comments that I feel require a response. The next step in this process will be to discuss these elements of the review document with the SNR Administrative Team and Faculty Area Leaders before meeting with the IANR deans and the Arts and Sciences dean to get their concurrence. Given that the holiday season is nearly upon us, and to ensure adequate time to receive input from faculty and staff, my expectation is that we will complete our response by the end of February. The deans will then have an opportunity to comment on our response before it is finalized and sent to IANR Vice Chancellor John Owens and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

### ***Trip Report: Washington, D.C.***

On November 12, I travelled to Washington, D.C., to meet with officials in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and to attend the annual meeting of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU), formerly known as the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC). (The association's name change is most welcome, as NASULGC has been one of the least favorite acronyms of most university administrators.)

Mike Hayes and I visited USDA's Chief Meteorologist, Ray Motha, to discuss the upcoming December workshop on drought indices and early warning systems (see my November report for more details) sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization, the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification, USDA, and NOAA. Ray and his staff will play an

## **Events**

See SNR [December 2009](#) calendar.

## **Director's Upcoming Travel**

December 11-18

### **Rome, Italy**

To participate in an expert meeting on water scarcity in preparation for a new international program by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

January 29-

February 11, 2010

### **Amman, Jordan, and Cairo, Egypt**

To participate in an International Conference on Food Security and Climate Change (Amman) as a member of the Scientific Organizing Committee and to meet with U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization officials on future program collaborations (Cairo).

February 16-19, 2010

### **Madrid, Spain**

To participate in the International Conference on Droughts and Water

important role in this workshop. We also met with Jerry Bange, chair of the World Agricultural Outlook Board, and Ann Mills, recently appointed Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, both with USDA. During each of these meetings, we discussed the important role the NDMC's research and outreach programs play in USDA's policy decisions. We also met with Chet Koblinski, director of the National Climate Program Office in NOAA, about the status and opportunities associated with the National Climate Services Act when it passes Congress. These opportunities are very exciting for the NDMC, all six regional climate centers, and state climatologists across the country.

Mike and I also had the opportunity to reconnect with a good friend, Shaun McGrath, recently appointed by President Obama to be Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs in the White House. Shaun formerly worked with the Western Governors' Association and was heavily engaged in water and drought activities in the western states. He was then elected mayor of Boulder, Colorado, before taking on his recent assignment as a liaison between the White House and governors.

While attending the APLU meeting, I was fortunate to hear an excellent presentation on climate change and the opportunities for universities to engage in addressing this issue, including new funding opportunities. The presentation was given by Phillip Mote, the new director of the Climate Change Research Institute at Oregon State University. This institute was recently established and funded by the Oregon State Legislature amid concerns about the impact of climate change on the state. The Climate Change Initiative proposal that I submitted to UNL administration last spring proposed the establishment of a Climate Change Research and Education Center, potentially modeling centers like the one in Oregon. Phillip was previously the Washington state climatologist, where I worked with him on several drought or climate-related programs. He was a principal author of one of the chapters of the 2007 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

### ***Kudos to Joyce Hurst, Geography Program Secretary***

Congratulations to Joyce Hurst for winning the Applause Award from the College of Arts and Sciences, which honors college employees who perform their jobs extraordinarily well. It will be presented at a reception at 2:15, Thursday, December 3, in the second floor lobby of Hardin Hall. I have enjoyed getting to know Joyce over the past year or so since the Geography program moved to Hardin Hall. She is a very deserving recipient of this prestigious award. Please congratulate Joyce when you see her,



Scarcity organized by the Spanish Ministry of Environment.

and attend the reception if possible.

### ***Extension Educator in Climate Variability and Change: Status***

Thanks to all who participated in the interview for the new Extension Educator in climate variability and change. I appreciate the feedback that I have received from both faculty and staff on the candidate, Tapan Pathak. I will be discussing the outcomes of this interview process with Dean Elbert Dickey and Assistant Dean Rick Koelsch. This new position is a critically important one for SNR and IANR as we try to find new and innovative ways of communicating climate risk information to the diverse clientele served by Extension in Nebraska. I hope we can come to some resolution on the outcome of this interview process this week.

### ***Potential Collaborations with the College of Public Health, UNMC***

I organized a meeting for a number of SNR faculty with the newly appointed dean of the College of Public Health (CoPH) at UNMC, Dr. Ayman El-Mohandes. This meeting was prompted by a get-acquainted meeting between the new dean and selected IANR administrators in October. Given his interests in pursuing new opportunities related to linkages between health and water and climate, a few SNR faculty met with Dr. El-Mohandes to further discuss these opportunities. Faculty who participated in this meeting along with me included Bruce Dvorak, Bob Oglesby, Scott Hygnstrom, Mike Hayes, and Pat Shea. There are significant opportunities ahead for increased collaboration between SNR and CoPH. We are tentatively planning to meet with Dr. El-Mohandes and some of his faculty in February to further explore these collaborations.

### ***Graduate Student Association Travel Grants Awarded***

Congratulations to Brenda Pracheil and David Owens. They are each the recipient of a \$250 travel grant award from the SNR Graduate Student Association.

### ***Grants Awarded and Proposals Submitted***

SNR faculty and staff were awarded grants totaling \$155,193 in November. The total for grants awarded in 2009 (January through November) is \$12,838,116. Congratulations to

Sunil Narumalani, Shashi Verma, Kyle Hoagland, Ken Hubbard, and Andy Suyker as the recipients of these grants.

Faculty, staff and students submitting proposals in November included Martha Shulski, Paul Hanson, Matt Joeckel, Mark Kuzila, Paul Merani, Don Rundquist, Mark Svoboda, Brian Wardlow, Drew Tyre, Dan Snow, Rachael Herpel, T.J. Fontaine, and Pat Shea. The total amount for grant proposals submitted in November was \$928,130. The total for grant proposals submitted by SNR faculty from January through November 2009 was \$54,981,870.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized letter 'S' followed by a series of loops and a final flourish.

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