

End of summer, already?

Summer is over, which means it's the start of a new, academic year. This is the favorite time of the year for me – a sort of spring-like re-awakening that occurs on campus, with the return of our students, the lifeblood of our college and the 'land grant' reason for our being. During the summer, our current students are off, working at jobs or on the farm, internships, taking classes, involved in study abroad, or participating in research projects.

Leaving aside all of the budget challenges and college restructuring conversations, planning, and execution, 2010 has been a strange year, meteorologically speaking. Winter was relatively warm, dry, and sunny, with seriously below-normal rainfall in some parts of the state. In contrast, spring was prolonged, wet and relatively cool, and the drought was mitigated, in part. Summer was relatively cool, except for a few days of above-90 degrees in Corvallis. Across much of the state, the agricultural enterprise was affected, to the extent that harvests have been delayed by two to, and in some cases, maybe four weeks. I even overheard some folks asking, what climate change! I hope this does not bode poorly on the harvests, hurting our producers and, thus, the state's economy.

Last year we saw a significant increase in student enrollment – almost 12% over the year before. This is a phenomenon being seen throughout our nation – not the result of any baby boomlets, but rather the result of the severe economic downturn, which historically has contributed to increased college enrollments. We also are seeing significant increases in international students, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

The challenge continues to be the greater and greater reliance on some form of financial aid – scholarships, part time jobs, loans – that students need, to be able to continue their studies.

What awaits us, in terms of student numbers for this upcoming academic year, we will not know until mid-October, when the counts are undertaken. If the projections are borne out, then we are in for yet another record-breaking year.

The pressure to make available financial aid is going to be even greater. While we have had significant success in fundraising during the current Campaign, which helps in offering scholarships to students, we will need to rely even more on the generosity of our alumni, friends, and other donors. Additionally, the record-breaking \$55 million in grants and contracts this year is also another avenue to engage students to work on research projects and other such endeavors, which pay stipends.

This year we will be initiating some new opportunities for our undergraduate students, including: more coordinated approaches for offering experiential learning, internships, externships, and research experiences; study abroad, along

with opportunities to participate in research and engagement efforts overseas; and enhancement of leadership skills. We are becoming more intentional and purposeful in offering these sorts of “extra-classroom” experiences, which makes a huge difference in enabling students to succeed.

Incoming students will also hear of or see execution of the planned restructuring during this upcoming year, in particular the merger of the departments of animal science and range ecology and management and the departments of horticulture and crop and soil science. Our, promise, however, is that returning students will be able to finish out in the major they had; new students might be availed new opportunities that are possible as a result of the mergers. I hope students will volunteer, if opportunities arise, to help with and participate in the execution of these mergers.

This past year, a small committee of alumni and staff has been working on a plan to revitalize our special group of friends, called E. R. Jackman, which over the years has played a critical role in providing funding and scholarships to students and student groups. Our vision is for the E. R. Jackman group to continue and expand their focus on developing and supporting relationships that promote the mission of the College of Agricultural Sciences. The role of this organization has been and will continue to be of significant importance to our College. I have approved the report submitted by the committee early this Fall that outlines their intent to expand on opportunities to involve more friends and alumni into the fabric of our College.

This is also the time of the year when we are preparing for Homecoming. We hope to see our alumni, not only at the football game or other events that are part of the university-wide festivities, but also our college’s signature event for Homecoming – Celebrating Success, scheduled for October 29 – and a tailgate before the game. Details for these events are forthcoming.

To all of our students, we say: Welcome and Good Luck, Willkommen and Glück, Huānyíng and Hǎo yùn, Swagatam and Saubhagya, Bienvenue and Bonne Chance, Bienvenido and Buena Suerte, Aloha Mai and Pomaika`i, Merhaba and Haz jaid - be al tawfeeq.

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