

## Vandal Parents Newsletter

December 16, 2008

Final exams began yesterday. Last week was “dead week” which is the week that no tests are to be given but term papers, final projects and capstone presentations are completed. Fall semester will soon end and students will flee the discipline of the academic schedule for a few weeks.

The holiday lights and decorations give campus a festive look but the faces show fatigue and other realities of the calendar. The body language indicates resolve to complete final exams and leave to be with families for a few weeks. Students fall asleep in soft chairs where they are trying to study and take short naps with heads on hard desks. Some walk across campus with note cards as they memorize factoids and desperately hope that information will stick in their brains for another hour...until the test is finished.

Winter assaulted the region this weekend. We have 3-4 inches of snow and day time temperatures will hover in the single digits and at night will drift to single digits below zero for much of the week. We are also going to get a little more snow during the latter part of the week.

Winter Commencement was the highlight of last weekend. More than 600 students participated in the formal ceremonies and will receive their degrees...if they pay parking tickets and finish final exams. A special feature of Commencement was the commissioning of ROTC students to be new officers in the Arm Forces.....several will be reporting for active duty as soon as January 11<sup>th</sup>! The Kibbie Dome was warmed by the smiles and hugs of proud parents, family members and friends.

At the end of the semester, many students present major class projects in public settings. Some presentations are powerful examples of learning that also yield direct benefit to the state of Idaho. One major presentation described how 70 students have been developing proposals to change the face of Cascade, Idaho. These students have formed powerful community partnerships with Cascade community leaders to develop proposals to strengthen the economic future of that community. Several community leaders came to campus for the presentations and praised the quality of our students' work. Some of their research will give these community leaders important information to write grants and create concepts for innovative uses for land. This is a rich example of “transformational learning” for our students. The Cascade project is described in more detail on the UI website.

Last week, President Steve Dailey Larson, Provost Doug Baker and I hosted nine Hispanic/Latino student leaders for dinner to seek their perspectives on their experiences at the University of Idaho. The number of Hispanic/Latino students at the UI has doubled in the last 7 years and now totals more than 500. They love their Vandal home and shared powerful personal stories. They also gave us important advice. One

important discussion topic was about family traditions, transitions and challenges. Most of their parents cannot speak English and thus cannot read these Vandal Parents Newsletters and other materials that would help them support their sons and daughters. I will create a Spanish version of this newsletter next semester.....with the help of these bright students.

The University will be closed on December 25<sup>th</sup> and will remain closed until January 5<sup>th</sup>.

Spring semester starts on Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup> and our residence halls will open on Monday, January 12<sup>th</sup>. I suspect that many of you expected or "hoped" that we would be opening a bit sooner.....like on a Monday.

Fall semester grades will be posted on your daughter's/son's electronic transcript as grades are submitted by faculty to the Registrar's Office. All grades should be available by January 6<sup>th</sup>.

A message for FRESHMEN PARENTS. We will start spring semester with a new academic success program for freshmen who struggled fall semester and who will find themselves on academic probation. The program will be called the Student Options Advising Retreat (SOAR). The workshop will begin at 8:30am, Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup> in the Idaho Commons. Some freshmen struggle during the first semester as they try to adjust to a challenging academic or living environment. We want to help them make changes so that they will be more successful during spring semester. We will talk with them about their choice of majors, time management, and have them create personal plans to have more successful spring semester. If your son or daughter goes on probation, we will urge them to participate. They will receive an e-mail and possibly a phone call from us. If your freshman Vandal goes on probation, please encourage them to participate.

A message for graduating SENIOR PARENTS. Congratulations to you and your family! I hope that you will continue to consider the University of Idaho to be YOUR University. Return to Moscow when you are able and wear your Vandal gear whenever possible.

Parents of graduating seniors will probably find that the next phase of the parenting business to be filled with many more variables and fewer safety nets. Moving them to their first job location can feel even more challenging...than when you left them at the UI their first year. You may find one pressing issue to be health insurance. Through UI Alumni Association, there is a company that provides short term health insurance to serve as a bridge to coverage that will hopefully be included as part of a new employment arrange. You can learn more from their website at [www.GradMed.com](http://www.GradMed.com). I hope that you will find this to be helpful.

I wish you a joyful holiday season and safe travels. It has been a very good semester and now it is time for a rest and preparation for spring semester.

Sincerely,

Bruce Pitman  
Vice Provost for Student Affairs