

October 14, 2008

## Vandal Parents Newsletter

The trees on the Administration Lawn are showing bright colors and there is a chill in the air. We have heard rumors of snow in some parts of southern Idaho. We still cling to the fantasy of a long warm sunny autumn but the tomatoes are gone for the season. Autumn is here and winter weather is around the corner.

Our campus climate is getting pretty serious; adjustments are being made as the result of grades that were earned during the first round of tests. The routine has become a life style and friendships have been formed. Roommates have sorted out differences....or have found new roommates. The next few weeks include mid-term exams, academic advising for spring semester and for students crucial decisions about whether to drop a class that may not be going well.

October 31<sup>st</sup> is the last day to drop a class without going through any special appeal process. Most course content is cumulative in that the later portions of the class are built on the mastery of materials presented early in the semester. I generally suggest dropping a "D or F class" after midterms in part because students often don't have a foundation to succeed in the later part of the semester. Students incorrectly think that if they only work harder that they will improve their grades during the later portion of the semester. I am all for hard work and trying harder..... but there is a reality about building a house on a badly built foundation. You may want to do some coaching on this issue.

Faculty and staff are meeting with new students to talk about their impressions of the first weeks at the University of Idaho. We are going into living groups each evening to meet with freshmen in small groups. These "freshman follow-up" meetings also give us an opportunity to talk about academic advising processes and support services. The most common challenge that freshman describe is time management ....learning to get up for morning classes and going to bed in some sustainable pattern. (valuable life lessons). We do care about their success and we try to show it by taking time to meet with them on their turf.

This weekend, a group of 15 freshman worked on a Habitat for Humanity Project in Spokane. They stayed overnight in a nearby camp in northern Idaho to talk about service and citizenship. It was a powerful experience.

We also have three groups of students preparing to do significant service during winter break. One group will be going to Peru to continue working on a small school in a remote village while another group will go to Romania to work in an orphanage. A third group will be going to Texas to assist with hurricane clean-up. These students will have an extraordinary education outside the classroom by learning about critical issues and themselves. They will be changed by the experience. More on this topic later.....

Preventative health care is available and important. Flu shots are available for \$30.00 at the Student Health Clinic. We also recommend that new students get vaccinated for meningitis. Meningitis shot are available for \$126. You may want to review materials concerning meningitis at [www.acha.org/meningitis](http://www.acha.org/meningitis) or [www.health.uidaho.edu/shs](http://www.health.uidaho.edu/shs).

Homecoming is on the near horizon and the theme is “Joe Vandal for President”. University of Idaho Homecoming is great fun and very traditional. The bonfire, parade, decorations and football game transform campus to an earlier more innocent time. Phi Delta Theta Fraternity will also celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a large alumni dinner. Homecoming is the weekend of October 24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> and it will be great fun.

It is time to reserve seats on the holiday break bus. Our holiday bus service offers safe and inexpensive transportation to southern Idaho and the Portland, Oregon area. You can make reservations online from [www.uidaho.edu/dos](http://www.uidaho.edu/dos) UI Marketplace or by calling 208-885-6757. Seattle area students can use the holiday bus service offered through Wheatland Express which provides this service for WSU students. The link is <http://www.wheatlandexpress.com/vacationbus.html>. Roads can be difficult around Thanksgiving and Christmas break; consider using the holiday bus service for your student's transportation home this season.

Here is a campus life story. Early this fall, the police responded to a noise complaint at an apartment off campus. The police had been there several times before and this time someone was going to get a citation. The student who answered the door swore that he was not responsible...this time. He blamed his roommate who then came to the door. The roommate didn't want the citation either..... and the police officer really didn't care who got the citation. *Someone* was going to get cited. So, the students resolved it by playing rock, paper or scissors.....and the loser paid \$400. I can't make this up. It was in the police report!

Best wishes,

Bruce M. Pitman  
Vice Provost for Student Affairs/Dean of Students