

November 20, 2008

Vandal Parents Newsletter

The Thanksgiving migration begins tomorrow. We are completing a long period of academic activity without a vacation. Everyone is tired and ready for some rest and home cooking. Travel conditions will likely be favorable this weekend with mild and clear weather on Friday; some rain is predicted for Saturday.

The holiday buses are full. Demand was high so we added another bus to the Boise area and our service to the Portland area is even heavily subscribed. Sleepy students will climb onto the buses with pillows, iPods, and snacks. Our buses will leave Moscow promptly at 8am on Saturday morning. Please go to our website www.uidaho.edu/dos to check on bus schedules and to find other information about this service.

Here is my annual advice concerning Thanksgiving vacation: lower your expectations of having high quality time with your Vandal. Many of your Vandals need sleep, food, and time to prepare for final exams while you would like to have time to get reacquainted. They may also want to spend time with high school friends which may conflict with your expectations of having time together. "Listen" for what they have to sayand also what they don't talk about. Beware of excessive complaints about roommates or a particular instructor...they may be preparing you for less than positive news about some disappointing academic activity.

After Thanksgiving, your Vandal will face three very challenging weeks. They will have one regular week of classes and then two weeks of intense evaluation. The week before final exams is the last week of regular classes and features deadlines for papers, speeches and special projects...and preparation for final exams. There are no regular classes held during finals week but simply time designated for the examinations.

The waning weeks of fall semester is also a time of celebration and farewells for more than 700 students who will graduate. Winter Commencement ceremonies will take place December 13th in the Kibbie Dome and will include the commissioning of a number of graduates into the Armed Forces from our ROTC programs. Winter Commencement is a major event and important moment for many families who might not otherwise be able to return for spring commencement activities. This weekend also features other major events such as the annual Winter Holiday concert and the Alumni Excellence Awards Banquet.

In the coming weeks, we will be introducing a multi-modal safety alert system. The system will improve our ability to communicate with faculty, staff, and students whenever there is a major safety concern or severe weather notice. Messages can be sent to cell phones via voice mail or text messaging and an e-mail service will also be an important feature. We will be asking students to participate by giving us their current cell phone number. At present, many students simply list their (your) home phone number in our directory so we will be aggressive at urging them to give us a current local or cell phone number. I will give you additional information about this service as the system is being established.

We are accepting applications for alternative service trips which will take place during spring break. We will sponsor multiple trips to locations throughout the United States to do service for others and to learn about issues elsewhere. A few groups will be going to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast to do hurricane restoration. Others will be working on Habitat for Humanity projects elsewhere. Students are asked to pay about a third of the cost of the trip so that they will value the experience more highly. These service and civic engagement trips are transformational educational experiences. I wish that every student would take one of these trips during their time at the University of Idaho.

Last weekend, we hosted Boise State for our annual rivalry football game. It was a good game....for the first half. The Broncos have a very good football team. It was a grand weekend with massive crowds in town for alumni reunions. The Pitman's hosted 10 of my daughter's recently graduated friends in our relatively small house. It was great fun to have that much energy under our roof for a brief time. We barely kept pace with the demand for hot water needed by 10 young women...I got up early and took my shower first. I think the house smelled better than if we had hosted 10 of my son's friends.

So here is one last bit of Thanksgiving holiday advice.....let sleeping Vandals lie. They need to get their rest and be healthy for the challenges that come with the last weeks of the semester.

I hope that you and your family have a joyful Thanksgiving and safe travels.

Sincerely,

Bruce M. Pitman
Vice Provost for Student Affairs