

February 1, 2010

Vandal Parents Newsletter

Last week, the “fog people” invaded campus for a day. A heavy cold fog settled onto campus and dark figures walked to class as street lights came on mid afternoon. It was briefly beautiful and very, very quiet. This fog was an interruption of an otherwise spring-like January. I am grateful that mild weather made student holiday travel much safer.

I hope that you had an excellent holiday and some quality time with your Vandal. It is also “ok” if you need to admit that it was time for them to return to campus.

The University of Idaho has enjoyed some major achievements since fall semester ended.

We are still basking in the glow of the December 30th Humanitarian Bowl. The Vandal football team’s victory in the Humanitarian Bowl was extraordinary! Our last second win over Bowling Green State University was one the best bowl games of the season. It was a fantastic finish that will be savored by Vandal fans for many years.

Also during the break, three groups of students traveled abroad to do service in remarkably challenging situations. Student groups completed service projects in Cambodia, Romania and the Dominican Republic and witnessed great need. Our team that worked in the Dominican Republic was only 30 miles from the Haiti border when the earthquake devastated Port au Prince. They felt the quake but were untouched by the horrific destruction. They did witness some of the initial aid efforts that moved through the Dominican Republic. We are eager to learn more about their experiences and the work that these teams accomplished.

Two and half weeks of classes have unfolded quietly. Spring semester begins calmly compared with the challenges of starting fall semester. The first round of tests will start within a week to 10 days and students will get some indication of their progress. It will be an excellent time to talk with your Vandal about their classes.

Here are some dates that may be of interest.

February 15, 2010	Presidents’ Day (no classes)
February 24-27, 2010	Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival
March 13-21, 2010	Spring Vacation (no classes)
March 26, 2010	Vandal Friday
April 2, 2010	Last Day to drop a class or withdraw
April 16-18, 2010	Mom’s Weekend
May 15, 2010	Commencement (Moscow campus)

When is Dad’s Weekend next fall? Answer....We don’t know. Dad’s Weekend will not be set until later in spring when the Vandal football schedule is announced by the Western Athletic Conference. We will announce that date along with the football schedule as soon as it is available.

The ASUI Volunteer Center has been accepting applications for alternative service break service trips for spring break. Our trips will include a few teams returning to the Gulf Coast to do more hurricane restoration and also several urban Habitat for Humanity projects in the southeastern United States. Encourage your Vandal to apply to do service and learn much about another part of our country. We will not send groups to Haiti until the situation becomes reasonably safe for untrained volunteers. We will provide other forms of assistance until conditions become more stable.

Here is a special announcement for families in the Tri-Cities and Portland, OR/ Vancouver, WA area. We will offer holiday bus service for this spring break. We have provided holiday bus service to your area at Fall and Winter breaks for the past several years but not during spring break when ridership tends to decline. We would like to offer this service to the Portland area and test demand. Please encourage your Vandal to use this service this spring break if you would like for us to regularly provide this service. Go to UI Marketplace from our website at www.uidaho.edu/dos to register. Call the Dean of Students Office for one way fares.

As we move deeper into the academic year, we will continue promoting academic success during spring semester. Our efforts to help first year students this fall yielded some positive results as the number of freshmen returning for spring semester increased and those who were placed on probation decreased. You were part of the effort by contacting us to ask us to contact your Vandal. A number of students responded positively while a few were predictably grumpy to get a call from our staff. Please contact us if we can be helpful.

This week, we will begin the student fee setting process for the coming academic year. It will conclude with a decision by the State Board of Education in April. A student panel will review requests and then make recommendations to President Nellis which will shape a proposal that is sent to the State Board of Education. All Idaho universities are facing difficult choices of cutting budgets and deciding what other ways to increase revenue so that programs will be available. The issue of student fees will get much attention in the next two months.

Later this week, we are hosting a conference about First Generation Students. Approximately 38% of our students are "first generation college students". These students are the higher education pioneers in their families. We are very pleased to be a place of opportunity and we want our faculty and staff to be particularly helpful to these students. Fortunately, a number of our faculty and staff were also first generation students and can relate to the challenges faced by new students who do not have family experience in higher education. This conference will help our faculty and staff to be better prepared to help these students. This is an important part of our mission.

Valentines' Day is coming soon. Consider sending some cookies to your Vandal....and the Dean of Students.

Sincerely,

Bruce Pitman
Vice Provost for Student Affairs/Dean of Students