

March 3, 2010

Vandal Parents Newsletter

Last week, the University of Idaho and Moscow community was swinging with the sound of jazz and crowded with fans from throughout the West. The 43rd Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival brought world class musicians together with students who came to play and learn at concerts, workshops and presentations. A huge fleet of buses moved festival participants around town to local schools, churches and theaters. At times, many UI students seemed to be a bit bewildered walking through familiar hallways that were filled with junior high and high schools students warming up with saxophones, trumpets and clarinets. Great fun!

Mid-term examinations have begun. Mid-term grades should be posted during the week of March 22nd. Please contact me if you feel that your Vandal might be helped from a contact from their academic advisor or someone in Student Affairs.

Spring break begins at the end of next week. Some students will travel home, others may stay in the Moscow area, while many will take spring break "road trips" to ski slopes or sunny beaches. Approximately 130 students and advisors will travel to 13 service sites throughout the Gulf Coast, the southeastern United States and Detroit to work on Habitat for Humanity building projects.

Seats are still available on for the Spring break bus. We particularly hope that families from northwestern Oregon, Portland and Vancouver, Washington will use this service as this is the first time we have offered transportation for spring break. For more information and to reserve a seat for your Vandal, go to our website at www.uidaho.edu/dos; the holiday break bus link and marketplace link are located on the left of the screen.

This weekend, Gamma Phi Beta sorority will celebrate their 100th year. Gamma Phi Beta was our first national sorority and its roots actually go back to 1903. In that year, a local sorority was formed and then seven years later that local sorority became Gamma Phi Beta. Members of Gamma Phi Beta have a distinguished record of leadership, scholarship and service. These alumnae have given much service to the University of Idaho and the state of Idaho. One such leader is Frances T. Ellsworth from Boise who is currently the chairman of the UI Foundation. Thank you, Gamma Phi Beta!

A UI residence hall will get a much needed makeover this summer. Wallace Residence Center will get new beds and mattresses in all rooms and two wings of the building will be re-carpeted. The entire building will get a new fire alarm system and ceiling tiles. These improvements are being funded through residence hall operations. No tax generated funds are being used for these much needed renovations.

Several food service venues will also be changed during the summer. A Denny's Restaurant will be added in the Living Learning Complex while the Idaho Commons "Common Grounds" coffee shop will be changed to an Einstein's Brothers Bagel shop to increase the variety of food available. A third new food concept called "J Street" will be added to the Commons Food Court. These improvements are being completed by Sodexo who is our contract food provider.

Dad's Weekend for fall 2010 will be announced once the fall 2010 football schedule is unveiled by the Western Athletic Conference in the next few weeks. I will send that information to you as soon as it is made public.

Olympic gold medalist Kristin Armstrong will be the 2010 Commencement speaker for our May ceremony in Moscow. Kristin is a 1995 UI alumna who won a gold medal in cycling at the 2008 summer Olympics were held in Beijing, China. She will add much to this important event.

Today, the UI announced that employees will take unpaid furlough days during the remainder of this fiscal year so that we can address budget reductions. This action will save approximately \$1.2 million and will partially address budget shortfalls caused by declining tax revenue. Many other state of Idaho agencies have also begun using this strategy to achieve short-term savings. We will take our unpaid days off in such a way to not impact students. It is our goal to take these actions without canceling classes.

The UI has reduced \$20 million of programs and services in the last year and declining tax revenues mean that our budget year that begins in July will be the most difficult in decades. Universities throughout the nation are limiting enrollment, eliminating programs and increasing tuition. We have proposed a 12% increase in registration fees for the 2010-11 academic year but that final decision will not be made until April 5th at a meeting with the State Board of Education. The University of Idaho is trying to manage these difficult issues with multiple strategies while continuing to provide high quality education at an affordable price.

The Dean of Students will have a spring break adventure. I will be an advisor to one of the Alternative Service Break trips. My group of 12 students will be traveling to Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, to work on hurricane reconstruction that is still needed in the aftermath of Katrina. We will get very dirty and learn about other social conditions and culture. Some students will run power tools for the first time and eat gumbo and frog legs for the first time. We will take time to listen to those people whose lives were changed by natural disaster. We will also take part of a day to tour the still broken parts of New Orleans. I will bring my sleeping bag and a few CDs of my own music. Traveling and living with college students for a week in very close quarters is a good refresher for the Dean of Students.

Thanks for the cookies!

Sincerely,

Bruce Pitman
Vice Provost for Student Affairs/Dean of Students