

October 31, 2008

Vandal Parents Newsletter

The Vandal family gathered for Homecoming under bright blue skies. It was a great weekend at the University of Idaho. An hour long Homecoming parade filled the streets of Moscow with marching bands, living group floats, community organizations and politicians seeking votes. Campus living groups were decorated to the weekend theme of Joe Vandal for President. The setting and activities seemed like a script from a 1950's TV show.....rich with tradition, reunions and simple fun.

Spirits were certainly lifted when we won the football game against New Mexico State University and volleyball matches against Boise State University. A humorous and humbling moment came at the end of the football game when our fans stormed the field. Coach Akey appreciated the fan support but later acknowledged that he hopes that conference wins will become common place enough that storming the field will be reserved for conference championships and bowl wins. On that day faithful Vandal fans deserved a good celebration at midfield!

Our campus is ablaze with color. Our beautiful fall weather is lasting a few weeks longer than normal.....perhaps the snow we endured on June 10th pushed seasonal cycle back a few weeks.

The middle weeks of the semester seem to be comfortable and smooth. This is the longest portion of the academic year without a break. Students will be soon looking forward towards Thanksgiving, a break in the routine and mom's cooking.

We are also in the midst of preparations for spring semester. This is our academic advising period and registration will take place during the week of November 10th.

Holiday bus service is very popular this fall. We are adding a bus for Thanksgiving break to meet demand for southern Idaho. Please make reservations soon if you want your daughter or son to ride the bus. We are eager to provide high quality service and we need time to order buses to meet needs to each destination. Be sure to reserve space for Thanksgiving and Winter break bus transportation as soon as possible through the UI marketplace which can be accessed from our website at www.uidaho.edu/dos.

Please do not make airline reservations or make major family vacation plans for winter break until your Vandal confirms their final exam schedule. Instructors are not obligated to give alternative tests for students who want to leave early. Your Vandal can find their final examination schedules on the Vandal Web or in their student planner. Many students will finish their final exams by mid week but the semester isn't over until December 19th.

Did you know that the UI has the highest graduation rate of all the universities affiliated with the Western Athletic Conference (WAC)?

A few years ago, a mother came to me during parent orientation and made a statement that touched the central challenge of parenting college age children. She said simply, “I know that my daughter is 18 and is legally an adult but now she needs to become ‘a grown-up’”.

It is sometimes confusing and often challenging to know how heavily to be involved in the lives of our adult children. We know that eventually they should not be living in our basement and that we want them to be independent adults who have jobs with health insurance coverage. We want them to be able to make decisions, solve problems, take responsibility for their own actionsand vote. Eventually they will be choosing our nursing home so we want them to be full of wisdom and good judgment.

The “advice literature” that has been published in the last few years seems inadequate. The advice is generally described as “learning to let go” when the major goal is really about empowering them to become independent and reasonably happy adults. I am not really “letting go”...instead, I am trying to equip them to be independent.

So how do we teach independence? In simple terms, they must practice, practice and get more practice. They need to have experience making decisions and living with the consequences. We can set financial limits and have them live with poor choices. Have them read and sign contracts that are about their responsibilities.....related to housing, financial aid, student insurance and credit card agreements. These are relatively low risk and high value opportunities to learn how to become more independent.

It is very tempting for me to offer solutions when my children call for advice. It is harder for me to push them to create their own solutions. I am trying to give them practice with a set of all purpose questions. Here are a few that you may want to keep near the phone.

- What do you feel are the best options?
- What other options have you considered?
- What do you think the consequences will be for this?
- Who else have you talk with and what advice have they given you?

We share this journey.

Have a good weekend.

Best wishes,

Bruce Pitman
Vice Provost for Student Affairs/Dean of Students