Dear Alumni and Friends:

I always look forward to informing you about the “State of the College” at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. As you recall, shortly after I became dean four years ago, we worked on a new strategic plan, identifying goals and priorities. I am pleased to report we have concrete evidence of success in all our targeted areas except one. Let me explain.

A real triumph for the college is approval of a Ph.D. in Agricultural Sciences. The program will help to attract new students, faculty, and research projects, all of which add to the regional and national stature of the College. Since the proposal had been in process for several years, when approval came in December 2007, we immediately made the decision to start the Ph.D. this fall semester. I am pleased to report that there are already seven applicants vying for an opportunity to begin pursuing a Ph.D.

A sustained increase in undergraduate enrollment is another success for the College and I am pleased to report enrollment in the College is up significantly for the second consecutive year. We employed a number of new strategies to stop the decline in enrollment and now with these strategies firmly in place we expect the numbers to continue to increase. These strategies include a new Coordinating Counselor Advising program, a new recruitment message and materials, more systematic and consistent contact of an increased number of prospective students and their parents, and we strengthened connections with alumni and industry supporters. This fall we have a floor in Steagall Hall on Thompson Lake reserved exclusively for students in the College. The floor was so popular it was booked early in the spring; consequently we will be adding additional floors in the coming years.

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A real challenge because of limited funds was to clean up and renovate our 2,000-acre research and teaching farm centers. Although it seemed like a slow process, we worked step-by-step and day-to-day to make the improvements. Although we still have projects to tackle, the changes are clearly evident. I invite you to see for yourself the next time you are on campus. I believe you will see improvements in both the use and appearance of our facilities and grounds.

During the past four years we have continually reviewed our teaching and research programs both internally and with our 100-member Industry Leadership Board. The result has been a focus in hiring faculty and staff who can add depth and breadth to what we have identified as critical issue areas. We have accomplished all of this while increasing our research productivity each year. To keep us forward thinking and cutting edge in teaching, outreach, and research, our department chairs and faculty committees have brought in 17 new hires over the past four years. You have been introduced to all of them in our newsletters.

Lastly, in terms of success we can point to our Agriculture Industry Day that we established in 2005 with U.S. Senator Barack Obama as our first keynote speaker followed by Dr. Glenn Poshard, President of SIU; Mr. Phil Nelson, President of the Illinois Farm Bureau; and Mr. Orion Samuelson, WGN Chicago farm broadcasting icon. The crowds were large and increased dramatically this year when we incorporated an expanded 4-H—FFA judging contest for over 600 prospective students. Please see pgs. 4-5 for photos and story.

As I mentioned, we have succeeded in all areas except one. In spite of the support of the Leadership Board and major industry commodity groups, it is disappointing we have not been able to get the Agriculture Building on the list of construction projects at the University. We desperately need and deserve new and improved facilities so we can continue to attract students and faculty. Agriculture, food, and forestry products, services and enterprises rank at the top in the state and nation in terms of receipts and career opportunities. We at Southern believe our facilities should reflect the statewide priorities. Because of our strong conviction, we will continue to work for a new Agriculture Building at SIUC.

As usual, we are looking forward to a busy fall semester and we hope you will come to campus for one or more of our events. We appreciate very much the strong bonds we are forming with our many industry clientele and alumni. Thank you for your continued guidance and support.

Sincerely,

Gary L. Minish, Dean
Research on Diabetes Prevention and Commodity Price Speculation

Dr. Peterson’s primary research focus, supported by the Illinois Soybean Association, is reducing risk factors for Type 2 Diabetes in “at-risk” children and adolescents. Type 2 Diabetes, formerly “adult-onset” diabetes, was very rare in children until about 15 years ago. Lifestyle trends, including sedentary lifestyles, eating habits and increased stress levels, have recently converged to create an epidemic of Type 2 Diabetes in children.

“R. U. A. Healthy Kid?” is Dr. Peterson’s community-based intervention program for children and adolescents who have been identified as “at-risk” for Type 2 Diabetes. Four main components of the program encourage family mealtimes, healthy snacks, regular physical activities, and “Unique U” (which targets self-esteem, body image, stress management, goal setting, and watches for emotional eating and other unhealthy dieting practices).

Results from 24 “at-risk” adolescents who completed the pilot study at Harrisburg, IL, showed significant decreases in percent body fat and pounds of fat and significant increases in pounds of muscle after the 6-month intervention. Dr. Peterson’s research will continue in six communities in Southern Illinois (Vienna, Highland, Cobden, Anna-Jonesboro, Gallatin County and Cairo). Ultimately, the “R. U. A. Healthy Kid?” program will be made available to school nurses, pediatricians, county extension offices and other interested health professionals via a website, CD-Rom, or boxed curriculum.

Dr. Dwight R. Sanders – Department of Agribusiness Economics displays his findings about the influence of speculation on commodity prices.

The impact of speculation on commodity prices is the current research topic for Dr. Sanders. In recent years, prices for energy and agricultural commodities have moved dramatically higher. The public perception—and that of politicians—is that the price increase has been in part due to speculative buying. As a result, legislators are considering a number of measures to limit speculative positions in commodity futures markets.

Dr. Sanders’ research shows that recent price increases are not related to futures market positions held by speculators. In fact, the relative level of speculation in commodity futures markets is no higher now than what other researchers documented from the 1950’s through the 1980’s. Attempts by politicians to curtail speculation in futures markets may limit the risk-sharing capacity of the marketplace, hurting elevators and farmers who rely on speculators to take the opposite side of their forward sales.

The current market environment in some ways mirrors the commodity price boom in the early 1970’s. During that episode, speculators were also blamed for escalating commodity prices. As a result, the government implemented a number of regulations to control prices—federal price ceilings and grain export embargoes—that were counterproductive. It is important that researchers document and highlight these previous errors to avoid similar mistakes in the current market environment.
How do you exceed expectations when you have had three very successful Ag Industry Day events -- especially when you have had three outstanding speakers and large crowds? You double the crowd to 1,300 by adding over 600 potential students and yet another outstanding speaker.

To achieve the results we invited the popular Orion Samuelson, host of “U.S. Farm Report” for WGN in Chicago as our keynote speaker and we moved the event to Friday. We kept our traditional barbecue and filled the tent with more exhibits. We again invited the Saluki dogs, the SIU mascot Gray Dawg, Smokey Bear, and student groups to demonstrate their activities.

The morning program featured Jenna Wicks, sophomore in Agriculture Education, who boldly suggested Agriculture Industry Day become a national holiday. The idea for such a designation shows how much our students value their education at Southern and their future careers in agriculture, food, and forestry. Lucas Maxwell, former Coordinator of Recruitment and Retention and currently a Ph.D. student at the University of Missouri, spoke about why SIUC was the right choice for his B.S. and M.S. degrees and why he established strong relationships with students, the faculty, and the industry, clearly making SIUC the right choice for both his degrees.

Orion Samuelson, our keynote speaker and broadcasting icon, outlined the major changes in agriculture and emphasized the importance of continuous change. The biggest change he has seen in American agriculture, he said, is the lead change. He challenged students saying, “You can’t dream big enough. You can’t imagine what’s waiting out there for you.”

In total, from start to finish, the 4th Annual Agriculture Industry Day exceeded expectations.
was the right choice for him for his B.S. and M.S. degrees. And what was his conclusion? The people and relationships and connections he established with the faculty, the alumni, and the industry made SIUC the right choice for both his degrees.

Orion Samuelson, our keynote speaker and broadcasting icon, outlined the major changes in agriculture and emphasized the importance and inevitability of change. The biggest change he has seen in American agriculture is globalization and producers stepping up to the challenge. Lastly, he challenged students saying, “You can’t dream big enough” and “You can’t imagine what’s waiting out there for you.”

For the afternoon workshops we tried two new approaches. First, current students in the College partnered with faculty members and industry reps to present the workshops. Secondly, we used a cafeteria approach allowing participants to go from workshop to workshop on their own schedule. Both approaches were deemed successful. Pictured here, (top left, continuing clockwise) Dr. David Lightfoot explores some of our research in “Researching the Future of Agriculture,” a student demonstrates horse care in “Stop Horsing Around!,” Mr. Terry Wyciskalla demonstrates GPS systems in “Over the River & Through the Woods,” Dr. Nancy Henry tells “The Truth about Cats and Dogs,” Dr. Brad Taylor explains the process of winemaking in “Shawnee Hills… Tourism at its Best!” and Russell McKeith and his father answer questions in “My Meat Comes from Where?!?!”.
The College of Agricultural Sciences News

Students and Clubs Receive Awards

Alyssa Rider, Human Nutrition and Dietetics major from Kewanee, received the Outstanding Senior Award at Honors Day 2008. Pictured with Rider are Dean Minish, Dr. Sara Long, and Dr. Todd Winters.

Russell McKeith, Animal Science major from Champaign, received the Outstanding Senior Runner-Up Award. Pictured with McKeith is Dr. Todd Winters.

Kathleen Carmack, Plant and Soil Science major from Villa Grove, was named our Outstanding Junior.

Amanda Lawson, Animal Science major from Sorento, received the Outstanding Junior Runner-Up Award.

The Horticulture Club won the Outstanding Club Award and the Equestrian Team received the Runner-Up Award. The team is proud to announce that this year they had several riders compete in regions and zones. Pictured here, Equestrian Team members Monica Shea, Animal Science; Erin Affrunti, Physiology; Leah Clark, Animal Science; Allison Corman; and Anna Ricker, Business, celebrate their victories at zones.

Reuniting the Cream of the Crop

The 2007-2008 Agbassador Team hosted a special reunion for Agassadors from 1986-2008. The current and former Agassadors enjoyed a reception and delicious dinner catered by 17th Street Bar & Grill at Field of Dreams. The program was filled with updates, recognitions, and encouraging remarks from those close to the heart of Agassadors. Amanda Barczewski, Assistant Coordinator of Recruitment, Retention and Placement, Graduate Agbassador Advisor, and former Agbassador herself, welcomed the group and gave special recognition to the team advisors. Dean Minish presented a State of the College address. The Agbassador team made a presentation based on the theme, “More than Meets the Eye,” and advisor and Coordinator of Recruitment, Retention and Placement Kristy Bender recognized outstanding team members. Dr. Donald Elkins, founder of SIUC Agassadors, spoke about the importance of the Agbassador Team. It was a very special evening that recognized and thanked the many who have contributed so much to the College through the Agbassador program.
Faculty and Staff Receive Awards

Dr. Jean Mangun, Associate Professor in the Department of Forestry, was awarded the 2008 Outstanding Teaching Award at the SIUC Excellence Through Commitment Awards Program. She also received the Outstanding Advisor Award in the College. Dr. Mangun has taught classes in research, societal aspects in forestry and resource management, environmental education, forest management, and forest recreation. In 2007 she completed Visions of Nature, an educational outreach project that brought students and members of the College into contact with local minority youth through participatory research. We congratulate Dr. Mangun and wish her the best on her recent retirement and thank her for her dedication and many contributions to the College and our students over the past 13 years. Dr. Mangun is pictured with Interim Chancellor Samuel Goldman.

Dr. Khalid Meksem, Associate Professor in the Department of Plant, Soil and Agricultural Systems, was awarded the 2008 Outstanding Scholarship Award at the SIUC Excellence Through Commitment Awards Program. Dr. Meksem has done extensive research in soybean genomics. Since 2000, Dr. Meksem has made much progress in developing disease resistant genes and increasing yield. Dr. Meksem attributes winning this award to the research he has done in soybean tilling which blocks targeted mutations in soybeans to allow for the identification of genes of economical importance. This spring, Wiley publishing company will release Dr. Meksem’s third book in his series on plant genomics, this time focusing on mutation screening. Dr. Meksem is pictured with Interim Chancellor Samuel Goldman.

New Faculty and Staff

We welcome Kristy Bender, Coordinator of Recruitment, Retention and Placement; Mary Dunmyer, Office Support Specialist; Dr. Stella Kantartzi, Plant, Soil and Agricultural Systems; and Dr. Sylvia Secchi, Agribusiness Economics to our team! We also welcome Jarrett Nehring as he replaces Paul Pinnon, retiring from his position as Director of Field Operations, SIUC Farms.

College Unveils Plans for Greenhouse

The College is excited to introduce this conceptual rendering of a new Greenhouse facility. This state-of-the-art complex will advance our students, our continuing education programs, and our service to industry. Students will gain the practical training needed to be competitive in the international job market and the facility will accommodate industry events, group tours, and continuing education programs. The College seeks the help of alumni, industry partners and friends of the College to build this core learning laboratory. To be a part of the new Greenhouse, contact Rebecca Stenhaug at stenhaug@siu.edu or (618) 453-1848.
Graduates say Goodbye to “Sultan”

Renee Riekena, Hospitality and Tourism Administration graduate from Canton, and Matthew Graczyk, Animal Science graduate from Darien, bid adieu to our very own saluki on commencement day. El Baz Sahara Sultan, Sultan for short, at only a year and a half is the youngest of six salukis belonging to Dr. Sara Long, Professor in Animal Science, Food and Nutrition. Sultan is different than the Longs’ other salukis in a few ways. First of all, he wasn’t rescued but is certified as a Generation 2 Country of Origin saluki meaning his dam and sire were born in Syria and Saudi Arabia. Sultan is their most outgoing saluki; there is no such thing as a stranger to Sultan, only friends he hasn’t met yet!