December 2006

Dear Colleagues,

As the end of another year approaches, I’d like to take a few minutes of your time to reflect on the past year. It is a timeworn saying, but the year has flown by. I suppose the apparent rapid passage of time should be expected in a College such as ours, where so much is going on. Our college is an exciting, vibrant place in which to work, and we are doing work that changes the world for the better.

Every year contains milestones, and 2006 was no different. The 2005-2006 academic year was the 85th for our Department of Sociology and Anthropology, while the JC Raulston Arboretum kicked off a celebration of its 30th anniversary in May at the Arboretum’s annual Gala In the Garden fund raiser. The celebration continued into late June, when an estimated 450 friends of the Arboretum spent a Saturday touring the facility during Arboretum Summerfest. The Arboretum is among our College’s and Raleigh’s most precious assets. We also celebrated the 50th anniversary for our Central Crops Research Station in Clayton back in September.

In April, Yates Mill Associates celebrated the restoration of Yates Mill, a historic grist mill adjacent to our Lake Wheeler Road Field Laboratory, along with the development of an educational center and county park. Dr. John Vandenbergh, zoology professor emeritus and former head of our Department of Zoology, worked tirelessly for 18 years to restore the mill. Coincidentally, 2006 was the mill’s 250th birthday.

The Lake Wheeler Road Field Laboratory was the site of considerable activity during the year as well. We made significant progress on a new Animal and Poultry Research and Teaching Complex. The part of this facility devoted to poultry work was finished, while the swine nutrition facility is nearing completion. We plan to break ground next summer on a new milking parlor that is part of the renovation for the Dairy Educational Unit. We also completed construction of a Waste and Pest Training Classroom building and a Structural Pest Training facility. We also made progress toward upfitting our Feed Mill at Lake Wheeler Road and expect this facility to be operational in 2007. If you haven’t been to the Lake Wheeler Road Field Lab recently, I urge you to drive by. The area has become an integral and active part of our teaching, research and outreach efforts.

The Center for Environmental Farming Systems in Goldsboro is a relative newcomer in comparison to a structure like Yates Mill, yet the Center also observed an anniversary in 2006. The Center, a partnership of our College, North Carolina A&T State University and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, is now 10 years old.

We also reopened a renovated Schaub Hall and completed renovation of David Clark Labs in the fall of 2005. Major renovations of South Gardner Hall, which houses Genetics, Microbiology, Plant Pathology and Entomology faculty, and Polk Hall, which houses Animal Science and Biochemistry faculty, are underway. The South Gardner project is scheduled for completion in the middle of 2007, while Polk should be finished late next year.
While these projects will do much to improve the facilities available to our faculty and students, I realize that many of you continue to work in less than ideal facilities. We will continue to work as hard as we can to provide first-class labs and classrooms throughout the college.

We took advantage of an opportunity last January to showcase some of our Cooperative Extension programs when our new UNC System President Erskine Bowles joined Chancellor Oblinger for a tour of Eastern North Carolina. The tour included the Cunningham Research Station, Center for Marine Sciences and Technology (CMAST) and the Duplin County Extension Center along with overviews of several Cooperative Extension programs. President Bowles also attended a reception hosted by Extension’s State Advisory Council.

Cooperative Extension’s change management and marketing initiative, an effort to define and focus Extension programs to better serve our clientele, continued to move forward in 2006. In March, Extension employees learned at seven district conferences held across the state how the initiative would impact programming efforts. In June, four committees from Extension’s administrative team were charged with developing plans for next steps related to programming, personnel evaluation, marketing and Extension’s strategic plan. Extension is also close to hiring a marketing director, a position created as part of the initiative. Extension also opened new county centers in Harnett and Camden Counties in May and broke ground for a new center in Currituck County.

Friends of our College continued to show their support for our programs in 2006 with their contributions. Our total endowment is now more than $125 million, while total private fund raising was $35 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2006. We have now raised more than $212 million toward our College’s $275 million goal for the university’s $1 billion Achieve! Campaign.

We also updated our academic offerings. We now offer a multi-disciplinary undergraduate minor in Agroecology through the Department of Crop Science. This program blends ecology, agronomy, soil science, entomology and natural resource management concepts. We also established new bachelor’s degree programs in Nutrition Science and Turfgrass Science. And we joined forces with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to offer a master of science degree in Human Development and Family Studies, with a concentration in family life and parent education. This degree program is offered jointly by our College’s Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Sciences and the Department of Human Development and Family Studies in UNC-G's School of Human Environmental Sciences.

That departmental designation – 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Sciences – may still sound a little odd to some of you. The departments of 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Sciences were merged in July to create the new department. We also changed the name of the Department of Botany to the Department of Plant Biology.

While organizational structure can free us to operate more efficiently, at the most basic level, the faculty and staff of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences are what make our College a great organization.

I am always somewhat hesitant to mention faculty who win awards or are singled out for their work because there are so many of you who do outstanding work, it’s impossible to mention everyone. But I would like to mention a few faculty members.
Dr. Trudy Mackay, William Neal Reynolds Professor of Genetics, was elected to the Royal Society, the British version of our National Academy of Sciences and was also named a Distinguished University Professor, while Dr. Ken Swartzel, William Neal Reynolds Professor of Food Science and Biological and Agricultural Engineering, won the Holladay Medal, the highest honor the North Carolina State University Board of Trustees bestows.

And late in 2005, the College named 12 faculty members William Neal Reynolds Professors. Our new Reynolds professors, in alphabetical order, are Dr. Charles S. Apperson, professor of entomology; Dr. Rebecca S. Boston, professor of plant biology; Dr. Marie Davidian, professor of statistics; Dr. Ralph A. Dean, professor of plant pathology; Dr. Gregory C. Gibson, professor of genetics; Dr. Barry K. Goodwin, professor of agricultural and resource economics; Dr. Linda K. Hanley-Bowdoin, professor of molecular and structural biochemistry; Dr. Jack Odle, professor of animal science; Dr. Gary A. Payne, professor of plant pathology; Dr. Michael D. Purugganan, professor of genetics; Dr. Craig V. Sullivan, professor of zoology; and Dr. Zhao-Bang Zeng, professor of statistics and genetics.

On a sad note, I would also like to mention the untimely and unexpected passing of three of our active on-campus faculty: Dr. Frank Humenik, professor of biological and agricultural engineering; Dr. Randy Rose, assistant professor of toxicology; and Dr. Doug Sanders, professor of horticultural science. All were valued members of our college, and they will be missed.

I think it is fair to say that the caliber of our faculty is one reason that what we have come to know as the “Dole Initiative” continued to move forward in 2006. Dole Food Company, the world’s largest producer and marketer of fresh fruit, vegetables and fresh-cut flowers, is building what has been called a research biopolis in Kannapolis. David Murdock, who owns Dole Food, envisions a state-of-the-art research campus that will focus on human health and nutrition. That vision is taking shape in bricks and mortar in Kannapolis, and our College and our faculty will play a major role. We anticipate locating 12 tenure-track faculty members and four extension associates along with support staff in Kannapolis. This program is being funded by new resources that would not have occurred without our college’s reputation.

Dr. Steve Leath, associate dean and director of the North Carolina Agricultural Research Service, is coordinating college involvement in the initiative. This project has tremendous potential for strengthening North Carolina’s agricultural economy for years to come. I am extremely proud that our college and our faculty are playing such a significant role.

I think that without question what is happening in Kannapolis will have a positive impact on North Carolina’s future, as will two other initiatives that got underway in 2006. We began during the year planning a new Center for Plant Breeding and Applied Plant Genomics. Dr. Charles Stuber, professor emeritus of Genetics, is leading this effort. We believe the development of a center will strengthen what is already arguably the strongest plant breeding program at a public institution in the nation.

And late in the year, the university announced an academic partnership with five top Chinese universities. Our college is expected to play a major role in this partnership, which should provide a wealth of research and academic opportunities to faculty and students in a part of the world that is becoming more important daily.

We are doing great things in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. As a result of your efforts, we are training our next generation of leaders. We are doing research that makes North Carolina and the world a better place in which to live. And through our extension programs, we are helping people across the state improve their lives.
I hope you will all take advantage of the holidays to spend time with friends and family and relax with the comfort of a job well done.

Thank you for all that you do for our students, our College, our University and our state!

Sincerely,

Johnny Wynne
Dean