Our students get it! I met recently with registered student organization leaders in CAST. The purpose of my meeting with these young leaders was for me to connect with our most important constituency, the students.

The results of our meeting far exceeded my expectations. I fully expected to engage the students in dialogue about things concerning them. Instead, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the notion of “college,” as a cohesive learning community, was important to them. We had a lively discussion about how the sense of “college” can be promoted among students throughout CAST and the faculty. Our students want to be engaged in very meaningful ways with you and they have great ideas about how that may be accomplished.

From our meeting came two other important things...that the group of CAST student leaders should be formalized and convened regularly. To that end, it was decided on unanimous vote that the group be advisory in nature to the Dean and that it be known as the CAST Student Executive Committee. Second, the students decided to begin planning an all-CAST event to be held sometime during the spring semester. The event that had the most momentum was a “CAST Celebration”, possibly held in Horton or on the Quad, to include informational displays, friendly competition, and of course, food.

The students also suggested creating a CAST affinity group on Facebook for announcing events, speakers, etc. Apparently, the most successful and preferred manner of social communication is through that medium in particular. For those of you who use Facebook, look for a CAST presence there sometime soon. For me, it will be a steep learning curve to get up to speed on using that mechanism for communicating with our students.

In short, it was a productive meeting with your student leaders. They would have made you proud...they were thoughtful and insightful. They were just what you would expect of a CAST major!

JAW

CAST Office

As this issue of newsCAST comes out, we find ourselves at the midpoint of the fall semester. The leaves are beginning to fall, the days are getting shorter, and we turn back the clocks on the first weekend of November. If you are like me, it seems like the semester is quickly slipping by as the seasons change. As of October 20th, we actually only have six weeks of instruction left. Please also realize that after the Thanksgiving break (November 24-28), there is only one week of classes followed by final exam week and Commencement on December 13th. Plan your work, and work your plan!

As you reflect on your teaching efforts thus far in the semester, perhaps you wonder how things are going for the students in your classes. While we administer the IDEA student course evaluation later this semester, this would be an excellent time to provide your students an opportunity to give more informal feedback. This midterm feedback might provide some interesting insights from your students that you can take into account as you teach your class the rest of the term.

This feedback can be in the form of a short reflective paper or directed questions. Examples of such questions are:

- What particular aspects of this class have you liked the most and least? Please give reasons for your answers.
- Which topics covered in this class have been most valuable to you? The least valuable? Please give reasons for your answers.
- How would you suggest changing this course to improve it? Please be as specific as possible.
- What, if anything, have you learned in this course that will be helpful to you as a future professional?

An assessment like this only takes about ten minutes. It should be done anonymously to get candid responses. It shows the students that you care about their opinion and allows you the chance to make adjustments that can positively impact your current students as well as future ones! Thanks for your instructional efforts so far this fall and good luck with the rest of the semester.

ACL
CAST Research Office

The College Research Committee, with a representative from each academic unit of CAST, has focused efforts this semester on updating the various CAST research support programs and making all applications electronic. Recently updated programs include:

Student Travel Awards: Available to undergraduate and graduate students presenting at conferences, maximum value increased to $250. Your student will have access to additional travel support by presenting at the undergraduate or graduate Research Symposium in the spring.

Publication Incentive Program (PIP): Award amounts were increased earlier this semester and the application is now electronic. A PDF version of the published work replaces the paper submission, saving an immeasurable heap of pulp trees.

University Research Grant (URG): A Word template for electronic application will facilitate the application and review processes. Since funding for this program comes from both the Provost’s Office and CAST, we have less latitude to increase the amount of the awards. The budget of a URG remains at a maximum of $5,000, with the salary component limited to one month’s salary at the time of the award or $5,000, whichever is less. Because the maximum URG value has not increased for nearly ten years while faculty salaries have (thankfully) risen, the CRC unanimously approved the addition of the following line to the program, “The CRC strongly encourages all academic units to supplement the salary of a URG recipient to the level equivalent to one full month,” and encourages discussion of this supplementation within each academic unit. The URG program is a critical component of the research culture within CAST, and discussion of the program must extend beyond the CRC. Your feedback and suggestions on the URG program are welcome. Send them to me or to your representative on the committee.

Details on these and all Research Office programs are available on the CAST website. Take the time to become familiar with the various programs (and also those offered by Research and Sponsored Programs), and utilize them to enhance your scholarship.

Upcoming CAST Research Office Events:
URG Workshop Thursday, October 30, 2:00-4:30, Turner 104
CAST Writing Workshop Friday, November 1, 1:00-4:30, Turner 104.

Important RSP application deadlines
Grant-Writing Mentorship Program applications for Spring 2009 are due in the Research & Sponsored Programs office (HOV 310) no later than 4:00 p.m. on October 31, 2008. This program is intended to result in the submission of an external grant, and facilitates the process by providing the recipient with assistance (in the form of an experienced mentor) and time (in the form of ¼ reassigned time from teaching for one semester). See the RSP website for details.

Please contact me if you have questions, concerns or suggestions on any CAST research program. Until next time, don’t let your old age get in the way of your youth.

SM

Department of Agriculture

Drs. Ken Smiciklas, Jeff Wood, Paul Walker, and Rob Rhykerd attended the American Society of Agronomy International meetings from October 5-9 in Houston, Texas. During the meeting on Monday, October 6, Drs. Jeff Wood and Rob Rhykerd gave a presentation entitled “The Human Capital Crisis Facing Agriculture.” On Tuesday, October 7, Drs. Ken Smiciklas, Paul Walker and Rob Rhykerd presented a poster entitled “Processed Swine Manure – Composting and Center Pivot Application to Crops.”

Dr. Rob Rhykerd also served as the Chair for Division A01 - Resident Instruction, and served as the Chair for the Undergraduate Research Symposium. Dr. Jeff Wood served as a judge for the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Dr. Randy Winter gave an invited presentation “Illinois State University’s Center for Renewable Energy” at the 2008 Illinois Energy Expo in Bloomington on October 3.

The 2008 Agriculture/Horticulture Career Day was held on Wednesday, September 24 in the Brown Ballroom of the Bone Student Center. Over 40 agricultural and horticultural firms and 175 agriculture students participated in the event. The career day is co-sponsored by the Illinois State University Student Chapter of the National Agr-Marketing Association (NAMA), the Horticulture Club and Alpha Zeta.

School of Kinesiology and Recreation

Dr. Steve McCaw, KNR, recently completed work as an expert witness for the Urbana Police Department and the Champaign County State’s Attorney office on an alleged murder case. Dr. McCaw’s role was to work with a forensic pathologist and an animator from the Illinois State Police to create three videos. Two videos were used to demonstrate the impossibility of the testimony of the accused, while the third recreated the biomechanics of the attack, accounting for the injuries to the victim and the physical layout of the scene. The videos were instrumental in the accused submitting a guilty plea rather than going to trial.