Dear Alumni,

The new academic year has been busy! But first, I was happy to be able to report to the Chancellor that the last academic year was our best year since the College’s founding 12 years ago. This includes our tripartite teaching (restructured and new degree offerings, student placements, and teaching scores), research (extramural funding, impact and number of publications) and our service missions to support the health of the state and beyond. Kudos to our faculty, staff, and students working so hard to build our model of a College of Public Health of purpose-driven learning and discovery.

Despite national declines in MPH applications, we had an increase in new enrollments. And the Department of Epidemiology had an increase in total enrollments. Our student body continues to represent our communities with 20% international students and 18% underrepresented minorities.

We were busy this summer building on these successes by developing new programs and selecting new team members. We welcomed Wendi Jensen (Grant Administration Coordinator) to the Dean’s Office as well as Ann Essay (Research Assistant) and Debra Kellstedt (Post Doc Research Associate) in Health Promotion, Mac Otten (Professor), Kendra Ratnapradipa (Assistant Professor), and Abraham Mengist (Assistant Professor) in Epidemiology, Matthew Beacom (Assistant Faculty in Environmental, Agricultural, & Occupational Health), and Alexandria DeLira (Health Data Associate), Han Liu (GIS Data Specialist), and Dong Liu (Health Data Analyst) in Health Services Research and Administration.

Kudos to Lorena Baccaglini and Tricia LeVan for teaching to residents and fellows in the Department of Anesthesiology. According to the department chief, their efforts resulted in dramatically increased test scores. Kudos to Athena Ramos who was honored with the “Familia y Comunidad” award at the Latino Center of the Midlands annual Destino Dinner. I got to experience her being honored first hand as one of her guests and the moment was made even more special by the fact that Athena started her professional career nearly 20 years ago at the Center and has never wavered in her involvement. Kudos to Chandran Achutan who has recently made two trips to Kyrgyzstan to evaluate the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and to give a Master Class on advances in sensors in exposure assessment. He also organized a multinational study looking at PPE use in agriculture in Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia. The results of the study will be presented at the European Public Health Conference in Marseille, France.

As I read the news, I become more convinced every day of the value of what our College does to advance public health. Whether that be gun violence, Ebola, MDR Salmonella, antivaxxers, climate change, childhood obesity, cancer and heart disease prevention, or healthcare reform. Our science is critical for new innovative solutions for this nation’s great challenges.

As the academic year moves on, we are focused on refining our strategic planning process to ensure we are making the greatest impact we can. The College’s Deans and Chair have been reviewing input, and we will continue to communicate about our strategic planning process and progress.

Wishing everyone a happy and safe holiday season. You can follow me on twitter @UNMC_DrKhan for regular college and public health updates.