

**Chairs' Corner – June 2006**  
**Faculty Field Tour**

TO: UW Foundation, Campaign Cabinet, Deans, Development & Alumni Staff  
FROM: William H. Gates, Chair, and Orin C. Smith, Vice Chair, UW Foundation

Dear Friends,

As you read this, some 30 of the UW's newest faculty members are roaming the state of Washington on a tour bus.

If it's Wednesday, this must be—Richland, for breakfast at 6:30; or the Laser Interferometer Gravitational Observatory at Hanford; or a luncheon meeting of the Grant County Economic Development Council in Moses Lake (where the big news is an upcoming \$600-million expansion, by the Norwegian solar-energy company Renewable Energy Corporation, of its Moses Lake operations); or the spectacular geology of Dry Falls in Grand Coulee country; or the Stennes Family Orchard near Pateros (Okanogan County); or (at last!) the beautiful Sun Mountain Lodge in the North Cascades.

This is one day's packed itinerary of the ninth annual Faculty Field Tour (FFT). The tour, for faculty members in their first or second year at the UW, runs this year from June 12th to 16th and will cover almost a thousand miles in a big loop around the state.

As you can tell from the one-day sample, this is not a trip for those in search of leisure and relaxation. Its main goal is to introduce UW faculty to the great diversity of Washington—geographic, economic, and cultural—and the pace is intense. But for many new faculty members, the tour is eye-opening. After a year or two in Montlake, working long hours to establish their teaching and research careers, they suddenly see a state they never imagined. Who knew there were deserts in the Evergreen State? Or amber waves of grain? Or a major Hispanic presence—not to mention the Yakama Indian Nation—in the Yakima Valley?

In the highly developed brains of these young professors, wheels start turning. They see their students in a new light. They discover new opportunities for research. They gain new insight into the role of the University—and their own work—in this richly and sometimes contentiously varied state.

This is all part of the plan. A public research university has ties and responsibilities to its state that private universities do not share, and the tour is a way to bring that home to UW faculty members early on.

But, says Norm Arkans (Executive Director of Media Relations and Communications), who has overseen the FFT from its beginnings in 1998, “we didn't anticipate how many other benefits the tour would bring.”

For one thing, the tour bus becomes a little hothouse of interdisciplinary conversation. This year, the travelers' fields range from linguistics to epidemiology, from aeronautics and astronautics to psychology, from French and Italian studies to business, from law to dentistry. "They start cross-pollinating," says Norm. "They discover common interests and problems, and sometimes they end up doing projects together. But more than that, they become a cadre of people—about 250 by now—who have a broad perspective on the UW. They're a group we can turn to when we need, say, a presentation in Olympia. They are real citizens of the University."

Early and recent alumni of the tour say much the same thing. Ann Mescher, who rode on the first bus in 1998 and is now a tenured professor of mechanical engineering, calls the tour "a great thing—it really helped me feel connected." And here is Crispin Thurlow from the department of communication, one of last year's travelers: "Once you get over your summer camp anxieties, it's a rare opportunity to spend a decent amount of time with colleagues from different departments. I found it to be an unexpected pleasure."

Harry Hayward, the FFT's impresario and traveling master of ceremonies for the past six years, varies the stops each year to reflect topical concerns (and keep his own interest fresh). In this year of soaring gas prices, for example, the tour includes a visit to the BP Cherry Point Refinery in Blaine, which processes crude oil from Alaska. But the biggest innovation this year is technological: video clips and tour blogs are being sent back to the FFT Web page even as the bus rolls on. You can travel along at [www.fielddtour.washington.edu](http://www.fielddtour.washington.edu).

We must confess to a certain amount of envy here. Traveling the state we love with these bright and curious young people, seeing it fresh through their eyes, watching them make friends for the University of Washington at every stop, would be a wonderful thing. Maybe next year.

Bill and Orin

#### Looking Back

- As of May 31, 2006, our **total Campaign giving since July 1, 2000, reached \$1,737,718,785** toward our Campaign goal of \$2 billion.
- The May Report of Contributions Notes is attached and contains fundraising details.

#### Looking Ahead

- **Friday, September 8, 2006**, Foundation Board Campaign Cabinet Meeting, 8:30 a.m. coffee, 9:00-11:00 a.m. meeting.
- **Friday, September 8, 2006**, Fifth Annual Recognition Gala, Suzzallo Library.
- **Friday, January 26, 2007**, Foundation Board & Campaign Cabinet Meeting, 8:30 a.m. coffee; 9:00-11:00 a.m. meeting.
- **Friday, April 27, 2007**, Foundation Board & Campaign Cabinet Meeting, 8:30 a.m. coffee; 9:00-11:00 a.m. meeting. Washington Weekend April 26-28, 2007.

- **Friday, September 7, 2007**, Foundation Board Campaign Cabinet Meeting, 8:30 a.m. coffee, 9:00-11:00 a.m. meeting.
- **Friday, September 7, 2007**, Sixth Annual Recognition Gala, Suzzallo Library.