

This forester found his niche in university administration

As an Associate Dean, J. Keith Gilless is in a position to fine tune the engine that runs the College of Natural Resources at UC-Berkeley

J Keith Gilless (M.S. 1982, Ph.D. 1983) remembers spending many a night at the UW-Madison in Russell Labs, waiting well after midnight, when computer costs were at their lowest, to run large computer modeling jobs. Today he is Executive Associate Dean of the College of Natural Resources and Professor of Forest Economics at the University of California, Berkeley. “I am responsible for general oversight of the College’s space, research centers and facilities, and field properties. I work closely with our four departments [in the College of Natural Resources] on new faculty hiring issues,” says Keith. He also represents the College on the statewide Agriculture and Natural Resources Program Council where he collaborates with his counterparts at other campuses and with leaders in California’s Cooperative Extension program.

His night-owl years as a graduate student helped



Associate Dean J. Keith Gilless prepares to escort two of his students at a recent graduation ceremony at the University of California, Berkeley.

prepare Keith for at least one activity in his current position—space management. He recalls the department chair (then Ron Giese) handing over a master key to the building with the request that he “keep an eye on things” during his late-night work sessions. Keith now has his own master key to Giannini Hall on the Berkeley campus and he says (tongue in cheek) that he’s regained that sense of power he felt as a graduate student.

Keith says he has the pleasure of working with a dedicated and professional staff in the Dean’s office at Berkeley. However, he jokingly says his calendar fills with appointments reminiscent of the visual display in a science fiction thriller showing the spread of a killer virus.

Speaking to today’s students, he offers this advice: “Never take the easy way through the program. If a course looks easy, find a harder one.”