AREA AND PERIMETER ON THE MALL
by Robbie Ray, March 17, 2010

The QEP Pilot funding allowed me to purchase 7 Deskmate II clipboards with calculator and 5 English tape measures. Students shared in a grade earned from a collaborative report on activities conducted outside on the Mall. They first used this new equipment to calculate area and perimeter of a triangle, using the Pythagorean theorem to get the length they couldn't measure. The right triangle was formed by two sidewalks and an hypotenuse across the mall, blocked for measurement by the ‘SRSU Geyser. Then they calculated areas and circumferences of circles formed by brick and concrete around the fountain.

Students took a pretest and posttest. Students improved at a rate of 50%. In addition, as you can see from photographs attached, they were engaged! I believe their rate of engagement was increased by the quality of their field equipment.
Jennifer Jordan says ED 3302 Developmental and Learning Theory is the first of these students’ professional studies block/sequence of courses. In other words, they are relatively new to the teacher education program.

The two students holding the posters are actually teaching the rest of the students about assimilation and accommodation and theory of constructivism for effective instruction and successful learning.

The class was given various/sundry items to create games—make rules for the games—decide how to measure learning the game—play the game—and then reflect on the creation process and learning.

Students in Dr. Louis Harveson’s wildlife classes enjoy many opportunities for hands-on outdoor learning. Here students help capture and transport a mule deer buck via helicopter to a processing site to attach a radiocollar. Once collared the deer will be released and monitored by SRSU students to determine movements and habitat use. (Photo by Travis Bryan, SR Wildlife Management major)

Students capture natural beauty of West Texas and Mexico

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Future teachers practice taking their future classes outside

100 Freshmen and Seniors take CLA Test

As part of our QEP assessment, SRSU has now administered the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) test for critical thinking. During the fall semester, 100 freshmen took the CLA, and during the spring semester, we hope 100 graduating seniors will take it.

Scores for both groups will be adjusted for their ACT/SAT test scores as well as for scores from comparison institutions. Our final “value-added” score will compare how much our seniors have improved compared to how other schools’ seniors have improved.

Schools who recruit students with very high SAT test scores are quite concerned about this test because, as a former Harvard president claimed, Harvard’s value-added critical thinking scores sometimes actually went down! If we are doing a good job of teaching, our value-added scores will be high. All Texas colleges and universities have signed up to administer this test.
Eleven Off-campus Agencies to Participate in Outdoor Expo 2010

Please mark your calendars and attend the Outdoor Expo, April 7, 2010, from 11 AM to 1 PM on the mall. Agencies, camps, and SRSU clubs associated with outdoor activities have been invited to tell the student body about their organization, demonstrate outdoor skills, solicit volunteers, hire summer or after-hours help, or promote other career opportunities. To date, four SRSU clubs and eleven city, state, or national agencies have committed to participate.

Participants include: Eyes of Nature Photography Club, Society for Conservation Biology, Hill Club, SRSS (Student Recycling and Serving Society), Texas Master Naturalists, Native Plant Society, Center for Big Bend Studies, Big Bend National Park, Desert Sports, Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Big Bend Ranch State Park, Fort Davis National Historic Site, The Sunshine House, and Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute.

Activities and demonstrations will include: preventing dehydration in the desert, bike repair and safety, rafting tips and safety, poster displays by two tech writing classes, 1880’s frontier army camp audience participation, and identification of wildlife tracks.

This should be a fun time. Find us on the mall on your way to lunch on April 7.

With snow on our QEP benches they don’t invite as many informal faculty/student chats.

Graduate students in Dr. Barney Nelson’s nature writing class head off into the depths of Santa Elena canyon to engage in some hands-on outdoor writing.

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Where dreams are limitless
The rumors are true! Horned lizards, better known as horny toads, really do squirt blood at you! (photo courtesy of Clare S. Freeman)

Mixing plants, poetry, & Title V

Drs. Martin Terry and Kathy Stein took on a learning community (ENG 0300/BIOL1401) for a Title V grant and blended in some outdoor QEP learning. During this field trip students were gathering material to write an acrostic poem based on a botanical term as well as an essay about where they found that botanical term expressed on campus. According to Stein, “Eric Morales did a great botanical acrostic poem, but I threw away their artistic renditions.” In an attempt to make up the loss she wrote:

A – Amply defining a term
C – Carefully chosen words
R – Readily identifiable definition
O – Orderly in nature
S – Simply delightful to read
T – Thoughtfully provoking
I – Indescribably delightful
C – Creatively shared

(ed’s note, Kathy, don’t quit your day job!)

UTEP’s Sun Conference on Faculty Development was excellent. Rafael Azuaje, Donna Greene, and Barney Nelson came away inspired, energized, and plan to attempt a similar conference on the SRSU campus next fall. We invited three of their best speakers who have already promised to come:

Dr. John Hadjimarcou, Chair of UTEP’s Department of Marketing and Management, led a pre-conference Workshop on blending scholarship, teaching, and service. He touted controlling our own time, happiness, and destiny in higher ed by blending our passions into a three-legged stool rather than simply checking off boxes on long faculty to-do lists. As an example, if your passion is gardening but you teach chemistry, look for ways to connect those dots: do your research on chemical fertilizers or fungicides, enrich your classes or develop new ones around your research, and concentrate your service around community gardening projects, the campus landscape, or local farmers’ markets.

Another excellent presentation was by Dr. David Forrest of Texas Tech’s Teaching, Learning, and Technology Center. Forrest used his music theory class as an example of engaging students by switching from passive learning to discovery learning. He said music students are performers, so they want to DO music, not listen to theory about it. So instead of giving his students a theory, defining it, explaining it, and then giving them examples to show them that their professor is right—he turns the process upside down. He now gives them examples and with targeted questions, guides their discovery of the patterns that lead to the theory. They now attempt to sell their discoveries to the professor. At the end of the class he simply says, “Ok, we call this _____.” He said the name of the concept is not as important as their understanding of it and their ability to recognize or apply it. He said the students loved the new approach, their retention of the material was much improved, and he enjoyed teaching more because he witnessed many more of those “ah, ha!” moments. He also co-led an excellent round-table discussion on how professors affect student motivation.

A third excellent presentation was a session on “A Journal a Day: Engaging Students through Writing,” described using brief, typed, journal responses, due at the beginning of class as a way to “force” students to do the reading and provide better class discussion.