During President Ricardo Maestas’s final faculty meeting of the year, the Faculty Seminar group again gave a group presentation on their thoughts via PowerPoint on teaching in the outdoors, using this region to enrich their courses, engagement, and critical thinking. Above are a few slides and photos from the presentation and below are each member’s words from their slides in order of presentation. The presentation was designed to share with the faculty at large some of the insights, lessons, or philosophical insights the members have gained while participating in the seminars.

Barney Nelson: “Humility: I gave my photography for writers class a handout on how to make water blur, since I’ve always known how but have never been able to do it. One student, Jennifer Myrick, tried the handout during a trip to a Mexico ranch...she did it!”

Rebecca Schlosser: “Learning: Sometimes learning means looking at familiar things with a new lens. QEP helps me look at teaching in new and improved ways.”

Kip Sullivan: “Collaboration: It has been exciting and stimulating to interact this year with the QEP faculty and to see first hand the terrific work going on at our campus.”

Mazie Will: “Professionalism: In my Management Communication course, students enjoy the Annual Business Etiquette Dinner and learn how to socialize and communicate in a professional way.”

Darwin Yoder: “To help your patient/ You need basic information/ Temperature, pulse,/ And respiration.” (a poem!)

Eric Holt: “Hands-on Learning: Mathematics. Jim Bob Salazar showed us how hands-on learning is managed in his pottery class. When teaching a math skill, I learned that the transition from demonstration by the teacher to student practice should be very gradual.”

Paul Will: “Quality: In Animal Science, we emphasize hands-on learning from ‘Conception to Consumption’ to ensure a quality food product. The Sausage Manufacturing students develop, prepare, and present quality sausage products to a panel of judges in the Annual Sausage Contest.”

Rick Garcia: “Physical fitness is a serious life-long game.”

Ryan Baade: “Learning teamwork, sportsmanship, and most importantly building friendships through intramural, fitness, and outdoor pursuits is a major part of learning outside the classroom.”

Scarlet Anderson: “Follow me outdoors: Nature knows no disabilities, only abilities.”

Kevin Urbanczyk: “Wisdom: Life’s too short!”

Filemon Zamora: “To be idealistic like Don Quixote is good in our profession. I always look for ways to improve, that’s why I am with QEP, to learn from other experiences.”


Brad Butler: “Teaching Philosophy: Sul Ross students in the outdoors: Compose music, investigate a crime scenes, act in a play, speak in front of a group, plant a garden.”

Kathy Stein: “Coach John Wooden said, ‘Promise to think only the best, to work only for the best, and to expect only the best from yourself and others.’ In other words, I have to demand of myself what I expect of my students.”

Ilda González: “If you learn the language, you learn the people. In my classes, my students are learning about the Hispanic Culture in West Texas by interviewing area Spanish speakers concerning the Spanish language, customs, folklore, cuisine and different points of view.”

Sandra Chambers: “Teamwork: Teaching is coaching and coaching is teaching.”

Jim Bob Salazar: “QEP has made a class of students, a group of friends.”

Donna Greene: “Our Job is to prepare students to take the first step. The direction they choose is through our inspiration.”
Outdoor EXPO 2010 draws parks, nature groups, clubs, classes, hikers, bikers, hula-hoopers, and a crowd!

Agencies, camps, and SRSU clubs associated with outdoor activities participated in the Outdoor Expo, April 7, 2010, on the mall. Their purposes were to tell the student body about their organization, demonstrate outdoor skills, solicit volunteers, hire summer or after-hours help, or promote other career opportunities. Six SRSU clubs and eleven city, state, and national agencies participated.


Activities and demonstrations included: preventing dehydration in the desert, bike repair and safety, rafting and canoeing tips and safety, an 1880s frontier army camp with audience participation, identification of wildlife tracks, s'more construction, rock painting, and an appearance by a miniature horse.

Students in Brad Butler's tech writing classes created posters of their ideas for outdoor learning and hung them between trees as hopeful prayer flags. Among over 35 ideas generated were entomology for beginners (to learn the desert insects), economic development based on creativity and ingenuity (instead of cheap labor and cheap resources), an outdoor obstacle course for criminal justice training, outdoor music composition (in the style of Beethoven), a range ecology scavenger hunt, and workshops on animal tracking, skull and feces identification, and telemetry techniques. Great ideas all! (See page six for three sample posters).

At the conclusion of the event, Brad Butler led a group of students in a guided hike up Hancock Hill (Sul Ross Mountain).
Students practice learning in the region and outdoors

Student teachers in Jennifer Jordan’s education classes practice taking a class outside for a pleasant change of pace in their own future classes.

Kathy Stein’s English 1300 students strike a pose before heading onto The Mall to document with words what they see, hear, and touch.

Choir Sings the Outdoors

It is very difficult to do outdoor learning projects for vocal/choral music because professors need indoor spaces to amplify the voices. However, the SRSU Concert Choir did perform several Native American songs during the Wind Ensemble and Concert Choir Concert May 6th. Included on the program were Six Songs from Southern Paiute texts, to which Donald Freed wrote original music. The texts all had outdoor themes: The Earthquake, Our Song, Eagle’s Tears, The Little Red Ant, A Paradox, and Sunset Clouds. The Concert Choir, in its indoor spaces, has still managed to engage beautifully in outdoor learning!

Museum to Honor Road-killed Bear

A year ago a 400 lb. black bear was killed on the highway near Alpine. Through the efforts of our local game wardens and DPS, he was saved. According to Museum of the Big Bend Director, Larry Francell, through a partnership with Texas Parks & Wildlife, SRSU's Borderlands Research Institute and the Museum of the Big Bend, this bear has been mounted. The museum is working on an interpretive exhibit and, when finished, will put the bear on display.

La lengua

“If you learn the language, you learn the people.”

Students, Addie Bencomo and Jennifer Myrick, practice new language skills learned in Ilda González’s Spanish classes as they interview local Hispanics to learn regional customs and cuisine.
Webinars with box lunches drew those interested in teaching

We often rely on Tim Parsons, Instructional Technology Specialist, to make technology work for us. Here he humorously draws on his wizardry powers and... wa-la, the show begins!

Holt Models for Faculty Seminar

The Center provided several webinars for faculty during the year. Above the assembled group listens to “Teaching Unprepared Students: Success & Retention Strategies.” Some webinars are quite interesting and helpful, others are boring rehashes of familiar stuff typed onto PowerPoint slides....similar to the way students say our classes work.

Faculty Seminar programs this semester included:

* A discussion of Filemon Zamora’s thoughts on the importance of relevance. Filemon suggested that our students would be more engaged with our classes if they understood the relevance to their lives and world. So the group worked through a workshop handout and discussed ideas.

* Jim Bob Salazar demonstrated teaching in a hands-on setting. The group journeyed to his ceramics lab where box lunches were provided. He titled his demo as “Hands-on activity utilizing the critical thinking process: making pots.” He vividly showed how explaining something and then expecting students to “get it” and be able to do it the first time is futile.

* Kevin Urbanczyk used Google Earth to show how he orients a class for a field trip into remote areas. He “flew” us around the Big Bend to see field trip and sandbar research sites in “Class trip to Fresno Canyon and Arroyo Segundo.” He will be presenting a similar program during the Shooting West Texas Photography Symposium in September.

Eric Holt gave an interesting presentation on Team Teaching to the Faculty Seminar group’s final lunch meeting. He modeled an excellent method of interactive teaching, using the audience’s own experience and strong feelings about the subject in order to increase engagement. With this topic, he got so much engagement, that the group hardly let him talk at all! Great method for class!

Millennial Student CD

The library has received “A Perfect Storm: Understanding and Managing Millennials”. It includes the CD plus a 90-something page booklet (the Power Points). We signed on for this webinar last fall and those in attendance thought it was so excellent we purchased the CD. It will be at the library circulation desk. Much thanks to Carol Fairlie for recommending this webinar to the group.

Eric Holt models for faculty seminar.

Salazar demonstrates centering clay to Chris Hillen.
Teams Do Spring Water Inventory And Urban Deer Numbers Research

Students in Dr. Louis Harveson’s Wildlife Techniques class had the unique opportunity to conduct field research on topics ranging from “urban deer populations” to “spring water inventorying” (see photos above). Implementing methods that were taught in the classroom, each team chose study sites and planned trips aimed at collecting data, making observations, and determining management implications for their respective topics. Upon completion of these initial steps each team then wrote a paper in the format of a scientific article using guidelines from *The Journal of Wildlife Management*. To close the semester, students shared their experiences and findings by way of Power-Point presentations before the class, graduate students, and faculty. Most Natural Resource Management classes have field-work requirements and Wildlife Techniques enables students to choose a topic of interest and gain hands-on experience in developing conservation strategies.

The Psychology of Teaching

Provost Dave Cockrum also re-presented his program on the development of educational psychology for the faculty at large. It had been a popular program for Faculty Seminar. Following a tour of the development of cognitive psychology, much of his talk focused on the ideas of Dr. Carol Dweck who has been receiving a lot of attention for her theories about mindsets. Dweck cautions that believing students are either “smart” or “dumb” harms both groups of labeled students because they never learn that hard work pays off and intelligence can be developed. Those labeled “smart” avoid challenges so they don’t lose their status and those labeled “dumb” think it is hopeless to try.

Math Students Do Softball Stats

The Sul Ross QEP Undergraduate Travel Project funded a trip for math students in Robbie Ray and Coach Sandra Chambers’ classes to a Lady Lobos softball game in Hobbs, NM this spring. Students attending the game kept offensive and defensive records and then used mathematics to turn the records into statistics for the game. Statistics are often compiled by a fraction described as “the part divided by the whole.” From that fraction, a decimal number for a player’s performance is reported. This Pilot Project was called “Get to 1st Base with Fractions, Ratios, Percentages, and Statistics.”

Next Year!

If you are thinking about joining or re-joining the Faculty Seminar group next year, we are thinking about forming two groups in order to accommodate more participants. Perhaps one group will focus on outdoor learning/critical thinking and one on engagement/critical thinking.

Free lunch!
Tammy Cash, student in World Literature, shows off her “outdoor” research project. Students paired quotations from world lit with kites of the world as a way to understand the concepts of imagery and figurative language. As an example Richard Baker paired a photograph of a kite with this quote from Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s “A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings”: “Elisenda let out a sigh of relief for herself and for him when she saw him pass over the last houses, holding himself up in some way with the risky flapping of a senile vulture.”

Students dream up “prayer flag” posters in Tech Writing Classes

These posters were created by Jordan Biebel (music), Rolando Hernandez (obstacle course), and Rebekah Whitehead (nature walk).

Big Bend Nature Walk

Unfurling dawn reaches out with essence scattering its colorful inspiration miracle palate of urging blissful colors

Distant silence breathes coolness across the desert vastness with peacefulness

A slight breeze playfully stirs the desert bushes, as the sun light captures the lower canyons with different colors

Spring floral bluebonnets of pastel blues grace the winding roadways inside the magnificent Big Bend Country

By She Whispers

Come walk and experience literature through the eyes of mother nature.

Training Obstacle Course

For Criminal Justice & SRSU

-Train Physically and Mentally
-Be prepared for future job opportunities
-Real challenges and obstacles
-Take a course or personally use
-Don’t wait until after graduation, Start Now!

World Lit Does Kite Research