



Lobo Stars

Newsletter 1

Sul Ross State University Quality Enhancement Plan



First Funding Awarded for Pilots of Engagement

The QEP Sub-Committee to Award Pilot Funding awarded funding to seven of fifteen submitted proposals for a total of \$4,904.

The following projects were selected for funding:

- Justin Badgerow** – Marching Band Invitational (partial funding for outdoor marching contest)
- The Hill Club** – The Solitario Project (a club sponsored field trip to Big Bend Ranch State Park for students with interests in the desert environment, geology, botany, biology, and English composition)
- James Downing** – Encounter Group Project (facilitated psychology class activity on UC patio)
- Chris Garcia** – ACE Reading Class Activities (dodge ball team activity with class and professor)
- Kathy Stein and Julie Vega** – ACE semester project (writing project using The Mall, digital cameras, and peer review)
- Kevin Urbanczyk** – Adopt a Sandbar Project (topographic and biological survey project in Boquillas Canyon, students selected from several classes)
- Rick Villarreal** – McDonald Observatory Star Party (transportation and expenses to take an astronomy class field trip)

Requests were judged using the following criteria, which are also listed on the application: potential for enhancing student engagement with an academic class or classes (1-10 points), potential for enhancing critical thinking or other significant academic

learning (1-10 points), potential for accurate assessment of those increases in student learning (1-10 points), potential for collaboration (1-10 points), potential for increasing outdoor learning opportunities (1-5 points), and potential for other (determined on a case-by-case basis, 1-5 points).

The committee charged with awarding the funding is composed of SRSU's three academic deans, Melanie A. Croy (Chair), Jim Case, and Robert Kinucan; Dean of Student Life, Liz Garcia; and Student Government Association President, Monte Piper. The committee suggested that those seeking funding next year should be specific as to assessment that will be used to document increases in student learning, involve as many students as possible in the project/activity, collaborate across disciplines as much as possible, request a "reasonable" amount of funding while allowing the project to remain viable, and be certain to submit a completed document with required signatures.

QEP Director, Barney Nelson, and Coordinator for Faculty Support and Outdoor Learning, Donna Greene, are also planning a second round of Pilots of Engagement funding that will target only student submissions. However, anyone with good ideas are still encouraged to send their ideas to Greene at dgreene@sulross.edu. She may be able to help find funding.

Lobo Stars to Host Student Conference

February 6 & 7, 2009

Lobo Stars invites all SRSU students to submit ideas for individual presentations, Power Point assisted presentations, panel discussions, and posters. T-shirts will be given to all presenters. Students should send a 100-word description of their ideas by December 5th to dgreene@sulross.edu.



Presentations will be limited to 10 minute time slots, no specific teachers or professors can be mentioned, presentation must provide positive suggestions not complaints or attacks.

Possible topics include:

- Outdoor learning situations to increase student engagement
- How can we prove students learn during outdoor and hands-on activities?
- What outdoor assignments could help students better understand and remember material usually presented in class?
- How can we integrate classes with outdoor activities?
- How can we improve attendance and retention?
- How & why do students become seriously engaged with a class or assignment?
- What is a working definition of critical thinking?
- Who is responsible for learning?
- What skills, habits, or knowledge are critical for today's college graduates?

Conference attendance and participation are both excellent additions to student resumes. SGA President, Monte Piper, will present the opening keynote address.

QEP Seminar Members to Attend Conference on Critical Thinking

Several members of the QEP Seminar will attend the 5th Annual Conference on Advancing Teaching and Learning, sponsored by the Texas Faculty Development Network, which will meet at the Merket Alumni Center on the Texas Tech campus in Lubbock, TX, March 5—6, 2009. The two-day conference will feature Dr. Diane Halpern, renowned teacher and scholar, who has written extensively on critical thinking. Dr. Halpern will present two presentations related to development of critical thinking in the classroom.

Outdoor Facilities to Appear on Mall, at Library, and...

Cast stone benches, outdoor tables and a rock and stone outdoor classroom will be installed this spring to help encourage more use of the campus for Outdoor Learning activities. Care is being taken to ensure that the new additions will further beautify our outdoor setting and provide comfortable and durable seating for all.



Hill Club Adopts SR Mountain Hike/Bike Trail Project

The Hill Club has adopted the Sul Ross Mountain hike and bike trail project as a club service project. Several of members and club advisors, along with the Texas Master Naturalists, helped with initial trail work two years ago with Dr. Kevin Urbanczyk.

Student participation includes trail maintenance which involves weed eating, displacement of rocks, cutting back cactus and other plants with potential to wound trail users, and building of embankments to provide secure turns for bikers.

To date almost eleven miles of trail have been cleared for hiking and biking. The trail is open to all students.

Donna Greene, Coordinator of Faculty Support and Outdoor Learning, is also a member of the Tierra Grande Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program. She explains, "Many of our members live in Alpine, so it just seemed beneficial to both the Master Naturalist Program and Sul Ross Hill Club that we participate." That group also helps with trail maintenance.

Camping Equipment Available from Recreational Sports

The Sul Ross Recreational Sports Program has quite a variety of activities and opportunities geared toward the Sul Ross community.

Want to go camping? Rent your gear from the rec center. The gear includes tents, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, stakes, tarps, backpacks, stoves, mess kits/cookware, dutch ovens, canteens, lanterns, and first aid kits. In short, all the basics needed.

Are you interested in intramural sports? Join basketball, dodgeball, volleyball, indoor soccer, or flag football teams.

Trying to get into shape? Try indoor cycling, yoga, Bosu core fitness, Pilates, or Tahitian Dance.

The fall hours for the rec center are:

M—Thursday, 6 AM to midnight

Friday, 6 AM to 10 PM

Sat/Sun, Noon to 6 PM.

For more information call the rec center at 8299 or check out their website at <http://www.sulross.edu/pages/4713.asp>.

Popular SACS Speaker To Give Luncheon/Workshop

Dr. Vicki Lott, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost at Lane College will present a lecture and workshop January 30, 2009 on race and gender equity as those subjects connect to and are enhanced by critical thinking and student engagement. The workshop, from 12:00 to 3:00, will be co-sponsored by the university's Quality Enhancement Plan and the Athletics Department with partial funding from an NCAA Tier II Programming grant.

Dr. Lott has been a popular speaker at Southern Association of Colleges and Schools conferences. She will be presenting a talk at their national convention this December on critical thinking and race relations. In the past she has presented talks there on intellectual humility and learning styles. Our program will combine those aspects into one presentation.

Dr. Lott is a humorous, non-threatening speaker who subtly makes the point that we are all different (gender, race, and learning styles) through demonstration and a workshop atmosphere. She emphasizes the critical thinking goals of intellectual humility, empathy, and fair-mindedness. Lane College, located in Jackson, Tennessee, is one of the nation's oldest private Black colleges.

Our expected outcome is better understanding of critical thinking, more mutual respect, and improved relationships between students, faculty, and coaches, as well as an improved learning atmosphere for all students.

Greene Initiates Adopt-A-Spot

Donna Greene, the new Coordinator for Outdoor Learning and Faculty Development, has adopted the area surrounding the west entrance of the Academic Computer Resource building. The area is a place where wind and rain deposit dirt and trash almost daily. Small, out-of-the way spots like these are difficult for Physical Plant employees to maintain in a pristine condition and provide good opportunities for service to the university.

Greene passes this particular spot, which is near her office in ACR 102, several times a day. She plans to keep it clean and has added some potted native plants donated by Patty Manning at the SR green house. Other ways to Adopt-A-Spot might be to pull weeds or pick up trash. Students or student organizations interested in Adopting-A-Spot can contact Greene at 837-8233 or at dgreene@sulross.edu

Greene hopes that her initiative will inspire others both on campus or throughout the area to begin similar projects.



New Projects Focus on Mall Area

Sul Ross State University's new Quality Enhancement Plan, called "Stars over La Frontera," is being touted as awakening a sleeping tiger. Signs of increased interest in outdoor learning are already obvious around campus as more and more classes are being seen outside and requests for student travel have increased.

A 16-member seminar group composed of SRSU faculty and staff has most recently chosen The Mall as a focus for course or assignment development and self-improvement as teachers. Members are planning several projects that will help increase opportunities for students to participate in hands-on learning outside the classroom.

Mall projects that are being designed by the group include providing interpretive signs, identifying The Mall trees, creating a walking-tour brochure, and publishing a possible special edition of *The Sage* literary magazine. Faculty members have designed assignments in which math students will study geometry shapes on The Mall, geology students will create maps, art students will do more outdoor work, and future teachers will act as docents to give informed walking tours. Numerous other projects are being developed around writing projects, ADA access, and Spanish.

The Mall Project is being chaired by Dr. Kevin Urbanczyk. Other members of the seminar group include Robbie Ray, Ilda Gonzalez, Jennifer Jordan, Kathy Stein, Scarlet Anderson, Martin Terry, Greg Wright, Carol Fairlie, Brad Butler, Laura Butler, Patricia Harveson, Rob Kinucan, Tramaine Rausaw, Donna Greene, and Barney Nelson.

The group meets every other Thursday over lunch.



- Big Bend
- Big Bend
- Davis Mountains
- STARF
- History
- Outdoor Majors
- Activities
- Hot Springs
- Employment
- Native Plants
- National Parks
- State Parks
- PAST TRIPS
- Campus



Paragraph here explaining the wonderful advantages of attending a hands-on university in the heart of the last frontier and la frontera. Talk about the opportunities that abound for students interested in the great outdoors, outdoor employment, the history and culture of the borderlands on both sides of the Rio Grande and El Rio Bravo (stress the mix). Stress how students can immerse themselves in silence, stars, and the cowboy/vaquero heritage of the great ranches and haciendas of West Texas and Northern Mexico.

GA Designing Webpages

Blakely Davis, graduate student in Range, Wildlife, and Natural Resource Management, has been hired to help design and build webpages for Outdoor Learning. She is working under the premise that prospective students who are interested in careers in the outdoors shop for a university online. SRSU hopes to create some photograph-rich pages in order to attract those students.

The webpages will also provide extensive faculty support for critical thinking, engagement, and outdoor learning.

The webpages will go through an extensive approval process before becoming public.





Diamond Jubilee Lecturer Discusses How the Land Speaks

by Jason Hennington,
News Writer

How does the land speak to you? During Sul Ross State University's 75th anniversary of the Diamond Jubilee lecture Oct. 2, Dr. Kent C. Ryden spoke about how the land speaks to him. Ryden's first visit to Sul Ross in the spring of 2008 was as a part of the Visiting Team from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Ryden, who has a Ph.D. from Brown University, has written a number of books dealing with landscapes in America. Ryden's lecture, "Landscapes as Environmental Text," focused on a representative journey down Tuttle Road in New England. While traveling he noticed how the landscape changed and spoke of its history.

"All landscapes are authored text," he said. "Landscapes are formed from actions humans thought were right. All are from decisions, right or wrong." Ryden believes, "We can learn a lot from the presence of our past. Landscape is a fantastic document," Ryden said.

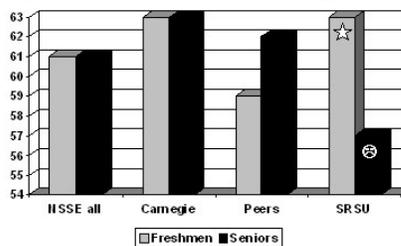
Those in attendance then viewed a slideshow showing a landscape progressing from urban to "wild." The slides were used to represent human influence over landscape and nature's ability to reclaim it. A number of other slides explained uses of stones and other materials, such as keeping livestock on the land. He explained how the transition between pine and oak wood was a past decision to clear some areas of the land while preserving others. Although the landscapes he showed in the slides looked like "wilderness," they were actually constructed by human hands and that process had been going on in New England long before the first European settlers arrived.

Ryden also offered examples to how state parks are created by humans with elements such as walking trails and land vehicles, all of which also alters landscapes. Ryden encouraged people to try to understand the world around them.

At the conclusion of his lecture, Ryden answered questions from the audience including a question about the way a college campus landscape should look. "It should not have any 'walls,'" Ryden said both metaphorically and literally. "Its not what it should look like, but more what it should contain."

Ryden also expressed surprise at how the Alpine landscapes spoke to him. "It struck me both times I've been here how many miles you can drive without seeing human habitation," he said.

1e. Discussion/Assignments included Diverse Perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) Often or Very Often



QEP Begins to Digest First Data From NSSE

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, David Cockrum, presented preliminary results from last year's baseline National Student Survey of Engagement test at the October 6th faculty meeting.

NSSE measures the atmosphere conducive to student engagement based on criteria from education research. Questions range from number of books read to types of assignments required.

As an example, the above graph compares first year students to seniors and comparable scores from all universities taking the NSSE test last spring, those in our Carnegie Classification, those we selected as peers (TX, NM, OK), and SRSU scores. Data from this question indicate that SRSU 63% (as high as any university and significantly higher than peers) of our first year students reported that discussion and assignments often or very often ask them to use diverse perspectives. However, only 57% (significantly lower than any other group) of seniors reported being asked to use diverse perspectives.

This question, therefore, may give insight into where our energy could best be spent toward increasing student critical thinking as well as engagement. More information will be forthcoming once the extensive data has been analyzed.

ACE Faculty Retreat

In the spring of 2009, Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) will schedule a retreat for their faculty. According to Dr. Kathy Stein, Head of ACE, the purpose of the retreat is for "discussion of how we can reboot the developmental ed program and how we can use QEP to help us do that." QEP has allotted \$1000 to aid in facilitating the retreat, date and location to be decided later.

QEP offers \$1,000
toward trip to
Double Tree Marina
Berkley, CA

for Faculty Assembly representative
to attend

**2009 Spring Workshops in
Critical Thinking**

February 27 - March 1, 2009

