In 2008, the Board of Regents introduced the Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Awards for the University of Texas system’s academic institutions. This award honors those who demonstrate exemplary teaching in higher education. Each year many are nominated from university departments across the state, but only a select few are able to pass the rigorous evaluation process and win this award.

In 2010, Professor Robert Webking was one of the select few. As many of our readers know, Prof. Webking’s primary focus is the delivery of high quality education to UTEP students. In fact, given the size of his introductory courses (500 students!) it is safe to say that many a former student have encountered his unique style of instruction.

Prof. Webking joined the department in 1978 directly out of the University of Virginia. Since coming to the department, he worked in developing two areas: law school preparation and bringing the Socratic Method into the contemporary age. It was the latter that caught the attention of the award judges because it solved one question that is plaguing higher education: How to keep high quality instruction with diminishing resources.

The general aim for his students is to learn to cope with paradoxes. He works to help students appreciate that the truth is often not simple or easy to understand. At times we have to put up with more confusion and complexity than might be comfortable. Being honest about what we do not know can be as important as recognizing what we do. These concepts, as well as many others, come out of his reading of Plato’s Republic. According to Webking, this volume is as important today as in the time when it was written.

Although the importance of what Plato teaches has not changed, the way the lessons are conveyed to students has. The Socratic Method of teaching has been a time honored tradition. In its original form, students are challenged with questions by a professor. This differs from a format where students listen to a scripted lecture. After answering the questions, more questions are asked depending on the answers. The process continues until students themselves experience a realization of the lesson. It is a dynamic process that requires concentration and engagement from the students.

This technique, however, depends on the professor hearing the students’ answers and adjusting the flow of information until students acquire an outcome. This is possible in a small class setting. The problem arises when there are hundreds in the classroom. How is a professor interested in using the Socratic Method going to manage all this information in the instance it is received?

One answer is technology — specifically the individual response systems that use small keypads or “clickers,” which Webking pioneered at UTEP. The concept is very straight forward. A professor projects on a screen multiple choice questions, one at a time, that are used to facilitate the lesson. Students respond to each question using the keypad. After an allotted portion of time, the percent frequencies of the responses are projected on the screen. Depending on the pattern of responses, a professor adjusts the questioning and other aspects of the lesson. Webking, as a fellow at UTEP’s Center for Effective Teaching and Learning, conducts seminars throughout the year to faculty across the campus. The technology has proven to be so successful that many in and outside the department have used it.

Prof. Webking clearly demonstrates innovation and a strong commitment to students. However, he notes that receiving the award not only required his efforts, but the nudging of our chair, Professor Greg Schmidt, as well as Prof. Schmidt’s efforts in compiling the data for the award application. He extends his appreciation not only to Prof. Schmidt, but also to other colleagues and past students that provided letters of support. In the end, it is Prof. Webking’s work that garnered the accolade. To that we say, job well done, Bob!
CHAIR’S MESSAGE
BY GREG SCHMIDT

This newsletter highlights some of the many activities and accomplish- ments of faculty and students in the Department over the past year. Here, I would like to focus on two extraordinary members of our faculty.

In March, we honored Professor Tony Kruszewski at a dinner in the El Paso Holocaust Museum for his heroic service in the Polish under- ground during World War II and for his many contributions to UTEP and the Paso del Norte community.

I am pleased that Prof. Kruszewski and his wife, June, have initiated the Kruszewski Family Endowment for Student Enhancement to support student-related programs and activities.

This generous gift is in addition to two endowed scholarships and an endowed professorship in the Department previously funded by the Kruszewski family.

In August, we received the very welcome, but hardly surprising, news that Professor Robert Webking had been awarded the UT Regents Out- standing Teaching Award.

Let me just note that during my three years at UTEP numerous strangers—upon learning that I am the chair of the Department—have spontaneously volunteered praise for Professor Webking’s teaching.

I cannot think of any person who deserves this award more. Indeed, I cannot think of how a person could deserve it more.

Go Miners!

A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY
BY JORDYN HAUGHT

I spent the first two weeks of
January in Guatemala conducting
research for my Masters thesis
on the possible second-
generation effects of receiving
microcredit.

During my time there, I crossed
one swinging Indiana Jones-style
rope bridge (missing slats over a
yawning chasm included), met a
pig named Lola, was urged to eat
the most succulent part of cow-
hoof soup, sat next to a coffee
bush and drank its recent har-
vest, rode on the back of count-
less motorcycles through beauti-
ful, but dangerous country, and
interviewed 96 thoughtful, hard-
working and welcoming Guate-
malans.

The country’s largest microlen-
der, Fundación Genesis Empre-
sarial, quite generously helped
me access these people. I worked
with two different asesores every
day for nine days, whose motorcy-
cles I clung to as we zoomed from
the city of Huehuetenango, San
Marcos or Quetzaltenango to our
more rural destinations.

I interviewed a mix of loan recipi-
ents, from Genesis and from
other organizations, and non-loan
recipients, attempting to discover
whether or not the children of
microloan recipients are healthier
and better educated than their
peers, and more likely to take
high-skill jobs in the formal econ-
omy.

I arrived in El Paso exhausted,
aching, and eager to go back. As I
embark on the next and far more
painful leg of this journey, coding
and analysis, I would like to thank
the political science department.

“I crossed one swinging Indiana
Jones-style rope bridge..., met a pig
named Lola..., rode...through
beautiful, but
dangerous
country, and
interviewed 96
thoughtful, hard-
working and
welcoming
Guatemalans”
Leonel Ruiz, a UTEP Political Science senior major, interned at the office of Rep. Silvestre Reyes in Washington, DC, in Fall 2010, as part of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute’s (CHCI) Congressional Internship Program. “It’s been an amazing experience working on Capitol Hill,” said Ruiz in an interview at the time that he was serving.

During his internship, Ruiz made numerous contributions in his service, which included conducting research on important policy issues, preparing reports for Congressman Reyes, attending congressional briefings, drafting press releases, and responding to constituent letters addressed to Reyes’ office.

Ruiz has been a highly active student and a very involved citizen. In addition to political science, he is also majoring in psychology and creative writing. Ruiz is a community service coordinator and writing tutor at UTEP. He has also been an intern for the County Criminal Court in El Paso.

Ruiz is involved with the Hispanic Youth Symposium, organized by the Hispanic College Fund, as well. He was a resident advisor at the New Mexico 2010 Symposium and is working to start a chapter in the city of El Paso. Ruiz is also very passionate about foreign cultures and languages. He is fluent in English, Spanish, and Bulgarian.

Ruiz will graduate from UTEP with an honors degree in May 2011. His career goal is to join the Foreign Service and learn several foreign languages while he helps to improve the conditions of poor countries around the globe. He also has ambitions towards becoming a member of Congress one day.

**TWO PATHS TO LAW SCHOOL**

Two political science students, Kenneth Bier (undergraduate) and Mark Daube (graduate), recently received acceptance letters from several well-respected law school programs, including the University of Texas at Austin School of Law, which ranks among the top 20 law schools in the country.

Bier noted that “The Department of Political Science at UTEP has excellent professors that have provided me with invaluable advice and assistance in achieving my goals. To name a few, Dr. Webking, Dr. Hiroi, and Professor Stanton have all helped me in my path towards law school and have given me great guidance. I believe the entire department is great, and I can honestly say that I enjoyed every political science class I took at UTEP. Programs such as the Law School Preparation Institute and the Political Science Honor Society, both connected to the department, have helped me achieve my goals.”

Similarly, Daube quipped that “The guidance and experience I received during my time at UTEP has been invaluable towards helping me achieve the goal of getting accepted into one of the best law schools in the country. The political science graduate program has provided me with an incredible amount of experience that will be of value throughout my life. While the support of the entire faculty of the UTEP political science department has been amazing, I would like to specifically thank Dr. Boehmer, Dr. Villalobos, and Professor Stanton, for writing letters of recommendation and providing suggestions that were an incredibly important part of my application portfolio. Overall, I would like to express my sincere appreciation towards the entire department for the experience and support that I received in my endeavors to gaining acceptance into law school. I am sure that I would not have been able to accomplish this without the help of my professors and peers.”
THE MEMORIES & REFLECTIONS OF TONY KRUSZEWSKI

Last spring, friends, family, students (current and former), and colleagues gathered for a remembrance dinner at the El Paso Holocaust Museum with Professor Tony Kruszewski as the keynote speaker. The full house experienced a visual display of the Nazi occupation of Poland and Warsaw Uprising.

Prof. Kruszewski gave an account of the struggle that included men, women as well as children. He described heroic events and provided many personal stories of those days (see Spring 2010 newsletter). The proceeds of the event helped start the Kruszewski Family Endowment. This endowment will help students realize educational achievement both inside and outside the classroom. We are very grateful for Prof. Kruszewski’s time as well as the generosity he and his wife June have bestowed to UTEP.

PI SIGMA ALPHA NEWS BY BIANCA RAMIREZ

The Epsilon Epsilon Chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, The National Political Science Honor Society at UTEP has met great successes in recent years. The goal of 'stimulating scholarship and intelligent interest in political science" has been persistent more than ever within recent events held by the Chapter. On November 12, 2010 the honor society inducted a record number of twelve students into its membership. The society also had the privilege of hosting Ambassador Roger D. Pierce to speak on several scholarship and internship opportunities presented by the US Department of State. Our chapter also won a Best Chapter Award for the 2009-2010 academic year. We also won from the national office a competitive grant to organize a Global Issues Forum in the spring semester and another grant to hold a recognition and award banquet for our members.

Congratulations to the newest honor society inductees!

Karen N. Arenas
Gina Carrion
Humberto Cruz
Pamela Cruz
Luzmarina García
Aldo A. López
Lehi Madero
Alonzo Omar Provencio
Bianca Ramírez
Fernando Salcedo
Cagney V. Sanders
Kacy Wittek

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Gold Contributors
Mr. Richard S. Gutiérrez

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Dr. Charles R. Boehmer
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CDR (Ret) William D. Treadway
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Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey D. Ward
Mr. Max R. Weber III

Blue Contributors
Mr. & Mrs. Leonard R. Cox
Mr. & Mrs. Glenn N. González
Ms. Amanda L. Gutiérrez

Political Science Faculty

Thank you for your support!
Dr. Charles Boehmer published an article in *Defense and Peace Economics* that examines the link between economic growth and war. He also won a $5,000 UTEP research grant to collect data on how international organizations relate to international law.

Dr. Irasema Coronado was promoted to full professor. She was also named chair of the Joint Public Advisory Committee, which issues recommendations to the Council of the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation.

Dr. Gaspare Genna published two journal articles. The first, published in *The Journal of European Integration*, is a coauthored work that addresses methodological issues regarding case selection biases. The second, published in *International Politics*, assesses both the European and US efforts to sign free trade agreements in the Western Hemisphere in light of China’s growing influence in the region. He also contributed to curriculum development in the area of North American Relations.

Dr. Taeko Hiroi has been active in developing international programs at UTEP as a contributing member of the Asian Studies Program and participant in the six-university consortium on Chinese studies development, which recently won a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. She is also a core faculty member in the Brazilian Studies Certificate program now under development. In 2010, she presented two papers at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association. Prof. Staudt spoke at the annual border security conference. Her critical comments were widely distributed through the Americas Program, Center for International Policy: www.cipamericas.org/archives/3403.

Dr. José Villalobos published a coauthored chapter on the White House staff in *New Directions in the American Presidency* (Routledge 2010), as well as a coauthored scholarly essay on Obama’s staff in the *Presidency Research Group Report*. He also served on the Executive Board of the American Political Science Association’s Presidency Research Group. Separately, he continued to serve as President of the Midwest Political Science Association’s Latino/a Caucus and also served on the MPSA annual conference program planning committee.
THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

• Dr. Kathleen Staudt honored with a Special Collection/Colección Especial in her name at Casa Amiga in Ciudad Juárez

• Ramona Segura wins the College of Liberal Arts Outstanding Administrative Support Award

• And much, much more...

SUPPORT YOUR ALMA MATER

Supporting your alma mater has always been very critical to us. Over the years, we have deeply appreciated your financial assistance.

UTEP’s Political Science Department is attracting diverse and outstanding scholars to an already respected faculty. We have dynamic students, with enormous potential. Everything we do is geared to developing high quality students, enriching our campus intellectually, and increasing the understanding of local and global events through our research. In short, we are doing our part to make UTEP a nationally recognized institution of higher learning. Exciting things are happening in the department and your gift helps make them happen.

Consider giving at the $50, $100, or $500 levels. Whatever your level of contribution, your generosity is deeply appreciated and will be wisely used. There will be a special recognition of donors at our annual homecoming celebration and in the newsletter.

On behalf of faculty and staff, our sincere thanks and best wishes to you.

Please make checks payable to UTEP and write in the memo area of the check either “Department of Political Science” or the name of the specific Department of Political Science endowment to which you wish to contribute.

Mail your check to:
The University of Texas at El Paso
Office of University Development
Kelly Hall, 7th Floor
500 W. University Ave.
El Paso, TX  79968-0524

Or, if it is more convenient, you may make your gift online at:
www.utep.edu/givingto

To learn more, please call Dr. Gregory Schmidt at (915) 747-7973.

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