Students Gather in New Mexico for Leadership Retreat

On the weekend of September 14 –15, the Institute for Community-Based Teaching and Learning in collaboration with the Center for Civic Engagement sponsored their first leadership retreat at the Fort Lone Tree Retreat Center in Capitan, NM. The students who attended were able to participate in outdoor activities designed to build confidence and teamwork as well as forums and discussions which addressed issues such as cultural diversity and social justice. The goal of this program was to encourage university students to become more involved in their school and community in leadership positions.

The outing, which was entitled “Action for Change,” allowed students to participate in low and high-level ropes courses as well as discuss leadership opportunities for the students of today.

Throughout the retreat, several guest speakers made presentations. Among the most notable was nationally renowned speaker Jimmy Cabrera. One of his speeches, entitled “What’s in your Backpack?” was a motivational piece that broke down the word BACKPACK into an acronym that encouraged students to set goals for themselves and remain persistent in acquiring the self-confidence and skills necessary to achieve them.

Frank López, Law Professor at Texas Tech, spoke about social justice and the importance of social awareness and ways that youth can become engaged.

At the end of the program the students were enrolled in a web-based discussion group, and an Action Planning agenda that will help students to get involved in the community. The hope is that the students will continue to remain in contact with each other, fostering the skills that they acquired over the weekend and most importantly become engaged in their community.
Students Recognized at Awards Luncheon

Community Partnerships is proud to announce the completion of the 8-month internships by students at local nonprofit organizations and public schools. On August 15, 2001, the closing luncheon was held at the UTEP El Paso Natural Gas Company Center (Commons) to recognize the work of the participating student interns. Attendees included the nonprofit organizations, interns, public school representatives, and the Community Partnerships staff and sponsors.

The thirteen interns had made the commitment to work for seven months at different nonprofit organizations in El Paso and Juarez. The students were from a variety of fields such as Business, English, Education, and Criminal Justice. Each student was matched with a particular nonprofit organization based on the available skills of the student and the demonstrated needs of the organizations. At the luncheon, each student was asked to make a brief presentation outlining their work and contributions to their respective organizations.

Students talked about tutoring and mentoring underprivileged children in Juarez, developing and maintaining databases, grant writing, and community networking.

All interns expressed satisfaction with the program and were grateful for the experience gained as well as for the opportunity to work for and with the community. Many of the students received praise and recognition from their respective organizations and all received a token of appreciation from Community Partnerships.

Audience comprised of community members, organizations, and distinguished guests.
Faculty Members Honored

On September 5th, Community Partnerships sponsored the third annual Faculty award luncheon. The event was held at UTEP’s El Paso Natural Gas Company Center and recognized the efforts of all professors who participated in various endeavors with the Community Partnerships program. The award recipients represented various departments including Accounting, Anthropology & Sociology, Communication, Education, English, Information & Decision Sciences, Languages & Linguistics, and Political Science.

Carla presents Nancy Antrim with award.

Dr. Natalicio was present at the function along with Department Chairs, Deans of Colleges, and other faculty and staff. She praised the efforts of the participants for their commitment and contributions towards the betterment of the community. The recognized participants received small tokens of appreciation on behalf of the Community Partnerships program.

The recognized professors were:

John Scenters-Zapico (English)
Tricia Gabany-Guerrero (Anthropology)
Elaine Hampton Teacher (Education)
Amit Ghosh (Information and Decision Sciences)
Gregory Rocha (Political Science)
Alfonso Morales (Sociology)
Gang Lee (Sociology and Anthropology)
Manuela Romero (Sociology)

L. Diane (Fox English)
Nancy Antrim (Languages and Linguistics)
Olga Ligouri (Teacher Education)
Terry Glandon (Accounting)
Carolyn Mitchell (Communication)
Irasema Coronado (Political Science)
Louie Sáenz (Communication)
Groups to Examine Economic Conditions in South El Paso

The Barrios 2000 project is a program aimed at assessing the resources and needs of two Empowerment zone areas in South and South-Central El Paso. The project is comprised of a collective of organizations who provide unique community services and networking contacts which would help in the attainment of the end goals of the project. Groups involved include the National Council for La Raza, the El Paso Empowerment Zone, the Center for Civic Engagement, and a group of six nonprofit organizations known as “La Alianza” which is comprised of La Fe Clinic, La Mujer Obrera, El Puente, the Center for Popular Education and Community Organizing, Southside Low Income Development, and Sin Fronteras.

The project, which is in the early stages of implementation, is primarily comprised of a survey that will be administered to the local residents. It will be asking for people’s perceptions of neighborhood assets and needs along with demographic information. The survey will also be asking specialized questions such as the use of healthcare resources in the area and the spending habits of the local residents. UTEP students will be working in collaboration with the nonprofit organizations in the data collection and processing. After the information is gathered, it will be disseminated to the participating groups for use in grant proposals as demonstrating the needs of the area.

For more information call Community Partnerships at 747-7969

Project SHINE Starts in the Area

Project SHINE, a national community service program has made it to the El Paso area. Project SHINE (Students Helping In the Naturalization of Elders) is a program designed to help older immigrants and refugees in the process of attaining citizenship. Often times, these persons feel that they are too old to acquire the skills necessary to pass a citizenship test or face great difficulties in attempting to prepare on their own. Project SHINE offers the assistance and encouragement needed for success. The project helps the applicants by providing student-led tutoring in the subjects of history, civics, and English as well as providing assistance with translation services and application processing.

Volunteer workers are bilingual college and university students from a diversity of fields. Students may enter the program from fields such as Communication, Languages, Political Science, History, and Education and see how their respective studies are needed in practical settings. The participating students are able to provide the key services for those in need but also gain valuable experience in the process.

By establishing a program in the El Paso area, the local chapter has joined the ranks of eight other cities such as Philadelphia, Milwaukee, San Francisco, and Honolulu in providing a helpful community service. If you would like to learn more about the program on a local or national level, you may contact:

LOCAL: 

NATIONAL:
Project Circles to Continue Forum on Social Issues

In mid-October, a contingent of 10 students and sponsors from UTEP will participate in the continuing forum of Project CIRCLES. This project is organized as a forum for schools to discuss the social and human rights issues surrounding those school’s populations which are composed primarily of African-American, Mexican-American, and Native-American students. The other participants are Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA and Oglala College on the Pine Ridge Reservation, SD.

The previous forum had been held at UTEP in April. At this meeting, representatives from the three schools gathered together to discuss shared community experiences and differences. The focus of that meeting was immigration profiling on the border. Participants were able to discuss border politics, racial profiling, and immigration issues such as Operation Hold the Line and Border Patrol’s harassment of Bowie High School students in the early 90’s.

The next forum will take place on October 10-13 2001 at Morehouse College in Atlanta and it is expected to be as great a success.

Contest Winner Profile: Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Las Cruces, Inc.

As promised, the Community Links newsletter is providing a piece on the community organization that correctly answered last month’s contest question. This month’s winner is the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Las Cruces, Inc.

The history of the program is very rich and its mission is dedicated towards the betterment of a child’s future. As cited from the national website www.bbbsa.org:

The Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America is the nation's oldest and largest youth mentoring organization. Since 1904, caring adult volunteers have been helping millions of children reach their full potential and fulfill their dreams. Programs in all 50 states match kids with mentors who provide meaningful friendships and share fun experiences.

The mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America is to make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth, primarily through a professionally supported One-To-One relationship with a caring adult, and to
assist them in achieving their highest potential as they grow to become confident, competent, and caring individuals, by providing committed volunteers, national leadership and standards of excellence.

Las Cruces branch case worker, Lori Armenta stressed the need for volunteers to fill the Big Brother/Big Sister roles for local youths, especially for those located in the Sunland Park area. The volunteer process is comprised of a careful screening, then pairing with a youth with similar and compatible interests. Volunteers are asked to participate in different activities with the children at least 1 to 2 hours per week. If you feel the desire to be a positive role model in a child’s life and are enthusiastic about making such a commitment, then call Lori Armenta, case manager for Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Las Cruces at (505) 523-4514. Here are some profiles of youths who wish to be paired with a Big Brother or Big Sister:

**Little Sister – Age 12**
Enjoys basketball, pool, and swimming. If she had one wish, she wishes she could work at Sea World with the seals. She would like to be a teacher when she grows up. She’s been waiting for 5 months for a Big Sister.

**Little Brother – Age 8**
Enjoys soccer, fishing, and horseback riding. If he had one wish, he would wish for a Big Brother. When he grows up, he would like to be a policeman. He’s been waiting for one year and nine months for a Big Brother.
Civic Engagement

Too often, civic engagement has been misconstrued as a distant affair that only takes place from time to time and it is lamentably labeled as a chore instead of an obligation. Many of us can think back to our middle school years and remember the optional Civic Education class that was at times nothing more than a “drag.”

In reality, civic engagement is about fostering the capacity to evaluate and contribute to the resolution of problems in our community. The desire of the Institute for Community-Based Teaching and Learning or “Community Partnerships” and the Center for Civic Engagement is that if students, faculty, and others understand their own and others’ characteristics better, they can build bridges across differences, and thus democracy will function more effectively. Strong relationships in a community are imperative in order to achieve a strong community, given that a community without relations among citizens is less a community and more a random collection of people.

One of the goals of the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) and Community Partnerships, within the realm of higher education, is to expose students to different community issues and ideas, and encourage them to critically view the different options and possible solutions. Community Partnerships and CCE activities aim at developing civic skills, inspiring engaged citizenship, promoting a civil society, and building a good community.

Community Partnerships is an effort to work as a “learning-together endeavor” and to build a stronger community through purposeful projects. This way the university and community allow themselves to be open to learn together as they work side by side and inspire a commitment to participate for the betterment of all the community.

Not only should we teach students about civic responsibilities, but we should also continue to involve and facilitate the exchange of ideas between community outreach and academics. This will not only help students develop their skills and give them the opportunity to perform those abilities for which they are studying and training.

Civic engagement isn’t only for young people who have a stake in the future of the whole community, but rather it should be open to and put into practice by everyone, from young to old. Individuals should never be left without the opportunity to enhance their ability to participate in their community. As each segment of society takes responsibility for civic engagement, the community’s civic spirit will go forward and become not just an activity but instead a practice of the heart.

Carla Cardoza
Director
This summer with the assistance and support of the Center for Civic Engagement UTEP students Adolfo Hernández and Deida Rodríguez had the opportunity to attend the second OXFAM leadership academy. The weeklong event took place from July 28 through August 3 at Northeastern University in Boston Massachusetts. Hernández and Rodríguez were two of the 80 selected students nationwide to attend. Among the universities represented at the event were Yale, Brown, St. Mary's, Notre Dame, University of Washington, Florida A&M, University of Wisconsin, University of Alaska, University of Idaho, St. Edward's, George Washington University, and Morehouse. The leadership academy discussed a wide range of topics, among them were poverty globalization, the environment, farming issues in the United States, and national and international politics. Participants had a full schedule as most days were scheduled from 9 am to 9 pm. The project helps the applicants by providing student-led tutoring in the subjects of history, civics, and English as well as providing assistance with translation services and application processing. Students were also given the opportunity to enjoy themselves and get to know Boston. To facilitate this the Oxfam staff set a scavenger hunt involving the most popular attractions of the city. Among them were, the Boston Museum of Art, the site of the Boston Massacre, The Boston Public Library and other historic buildings.

“It was one of the greatest experiences of my college years” said Hernández of the OXFAM leadership academy. Rodriguez thought that “the dedication of the OXFAM staff was very impressive. Attention had been paid to every detail throughout the week” Rodriguez was also very pleased that the issue of NAFTA, a topic she is very interested in, was discussed. “There was a wonderful lecture that discussed NAFTA in
detail. I was also very pleased that I had the opportunity to discuss NAFTA with someone from Environmental Protection Agency” said Rodriguez.

Hernández and Rodriguez will create a new student organization this semester for students interested in being involved with problems that affect the El Paso/Juárez community directly. This new organization will be called C.O.I.N. Caring about Our Interests Now, if you are interested in getting involved, please e-mail Adolfo Hernández at chrt6@yahoo.com.

Student Adolfo Hernández.

Photo Album

Lunch time! At the third-annual faculty award luncheon.

Organization directors and interns looking on to their peer’s presentation.
Retreat participants walking to their rooms at Fort Lone Tree.

Retreat participants passing on a “hula hoop” during a leadership activity.

Thank you for your support and participation!!!

Newsletter Editor:
Jaime Chávez (915) 747-8892