UTEP Students Participate In Second CIRCLES Conference

The University of Texas at El Paso's Center for Civic Engagement sent ten student representatives to attend the Racial Justice conference in Atlanta, Georgia as part of the national CIRCLES project. The conference was held October 11-13 on the campus of Morehouse College in Atlanta and attendees represented the schools of Morehouse College, Oglala Lakota College, Washington and Lee University, University of Texas at El Paso, and the University of California at Davis. The student bodies of these schools are comprised largely of minority populations or have strong civic and social justice programs.

Project CIRCLES was organized with the mission of providing students the opportunity to dialogue with others about the concerns they have on local, regional, and national social issues affecting minorities and initiate action. UTEP sponsored the last conference on its campus in the spring of 2001.

Over the course of the conference, students heard presentations on racial profiling in social, medical, and political contexts, as well as the impact it has on the community. Topics included racial profiling by the police, inequalities in the treatment of minorities during doctors visits and testimonials by community members and researchers.

Atlanta mayoral candidates Shirley Franklin, Robert Pitts, and Gloria Bromell-Tinubu were introduced as a leadership panel and given the opportunity to address the audience about the situation and take questions from the various college and university representatives.
As a concluding exercise, mixed groups of students and representatives were given the opportunity to come together and discuss the information that had been presented and develop action plans to address the issues in their own communities. While at the conference, students were also taken on tours of the historical Morehouse College grounds and the Martin Luther King birth-home and memorial.

Delegates from the Oglala Lakota College closed the conference with a traditional Native American healing ceremony, where participants formed and maintained a support circle while listening to the personal stories of each person. Future plans for the CIRCLES groups include continued dialogue between the participants as well as the implementation of ideas that have arisen in the conferences. The next CIRCLES conference is anticipated in the spring of 2002 at Oglala Lakota College, North Dakota.

**Project INEA Educates Community Members**

The Institute for Community-Based Teaching and Learning has been playing an integral role in assisting in the education of Mexican citizens through the participation in a local INEA program. INEA (National Institute for Adult Education) is a program, under the direction of the Mexican Secretary for Public Education (SEP) and the Foreign Ministry Service (SRE), whose mission is to help Mexican nationals that did not have the opportunity to complete their primary or secondary levels of education in Mexico.

Since February of 2000, Community Partnerships has worked in conjunction with the Mexican General Consulate in El Paso to organize INEA study groups directed by UTEP tutors. The INEA program provides Mexican citizens 15 years of age and older with the opportunity to learn basic literacy skills or complete their elementary or middle school education. Registration for the program is continuous and the courses of study are self-paced. When students complete a curriculum of studies,
they are given official exams for each grade level and upon successful completion, they are certified by the SEP to have completed the studies for a specific grade level.

The UTEP and INEA partnership was initiated when Community Partnerships was asked if it was possible to provide some student tutors for the program. The institute contacted Dr. Tafoya, a former UTEP language professor, who organized students in his Spanish classes to become study group instructors. Since then, a partnership was formalized with the Mexican General Consulate by establishing the positions of INEA coordinators between the two institutions. Graduate student Carolina Pallares serves as the Community Partnerships representative and her duties include the recruitment of student instructors, site development, and assisting in the maintenance and processing of course curricula. Dr. Suárez, director of the ESL department at UTEP, has also since continued to help involve students from classes to participate in the INEA program.

UTEP instructors direct the progress of the study groups and provide educational and tutoring services to participants. The UTEP students come from many different fields of study and the program has sites located around the city. If you would like more information about participating in the INEA program, you may contact Carolina Pallares at the Community Partnerships offices or the education department in the Mexican General Consulate at (915) 533-8555.

### Ranchland Middle School To Be On the Big Stage

UTEP students Javier Robles and Horacio Ortega, participants in the Levis Youth Empowerment Program, have been involved in coordinating the Art Education Project with students from Ranchland Middle School. Under the direction of Mr. Robles and Mr. Ortega, Ranchland students participate in theater workshops and are currently in the process of preparing a play for public performance.

The Youth Empowerment Program is a project under the direction of the Center for Civic Engagement and is funded by a grant from the Levi-Strauss Foundation. Its mission is to support programs that educate young people in decision-making and problem solving processes for issues that affect them and offer the opportunity to apply the knowledge that they have acquired.

The Art Education Project focuses on using the Fine Arts to engage students. One of the previous accomplishments of the project was the Ysleta High School Puppet Group. This group was comprised of Ysleta High School students who came together to write and perform educationally themed puppet shows for younger children.
The Art Education Project is made up of twenty students from Ranchland Middle School, who volunteered to be part of the project, which has workshop and applied work components. The workshop component introduced students to the dynamics of theater with exercises in self-statement and voice and body control. In the applied-work component, students will prepare, rehearse, and perform a play for audiences from around the city.

During a recent trip to UTEP to tour the facilities of the Theater Arts department, the students were asked about their involvement in the play. Many of the students had previous acting experience or wanted to try it out for the first time and they felt that this was an excellent opportunity to do so. They all enjoyed the exercises and rehearsals and were also looking forward to their future performances. Mr. Robles and Mr. Ortega, serving as project coordinators, have played a major part in organizing this project. They prepared the program outline, recruited, and are preparing the students for the final project.

Mr. Robles and Mr. Ortega developed this program with the feeling that art programs have the potential of being effective tools for reaching out to the teen population. Along with developing leadership, responsibility, and communication skills, they also feel that participating students will have the opportunity to develop artistically and find more honest ways of expressing themselves.

The Ranchland group will be performing the play Promenade by Josh Adell. The play is a fairytale story about a young girl who disguises herself, with the help of a theater arts teacher, to woo the young man she is attracted to. It is a humorous tale of friendship and self-discovery with a happy ending.

The play is scheduled to be held at the Bel Air High School auditorium. Performance dates will be in January 2002, with morning performances for Ysleta district schools and evening shows open to the general public. For more information, contact Javier Robles at 857-0789 or the offices of Community Partnerships.

Editor’s Note

Dear Readers:

As you all know, the mission of Community Partnerships is to serve the public interest by initiating and maintaining working relationships between the university and our various community organizations. As previously mentioned in the September newsletter, Community Partnerships is willing to publish articles about your organization’s past, present, or future activities. Several organizations have taken advantage of the offer and in this newsletter you will see stories about the Eyes and Ears Program, the Literacy Education Center, and the Criminal Justice Research Project.

For those of you interested, the offer still stands. Community Partnerships welcomes and is willing to publish a story about any nonprofit organization or activity in the southwest border
region. If you would like more information or would like to submit an informative piece, feel free to send the information to the Community Partnerships offices in Benedict Hall or call (915) 747-7969.

Sincerely,
Jaime E. Chavez

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**Student Volunteers Help Monitor Campus**

UTEP student volunteers have been involved in a program, run in conjunction with the campus police department, to assist in the monitoring of the student parking lots. The project is titled the Eyes and Ears Program and was developed to deter crimes such as automobile theft and vandalism. Transported by campus police to monitoring stations, volunteers stand watch over the peripheral campus parking lots. Through high visibility, the program has managed to lower the burglary rate of vehicles on the UTEP parking lots.

The Eyes and Ears program is a cooperative undertaking between the Criminal Justice program, the Criminal Justice Student Society and the UTEP Police Department. According to Robert Martinez, program coordinator, “the Eyes and Ears Program is an expansion of the continuing effort to educate in community policing theory and application and broaden crime prevention concepts to involve more of the campus community in providing for University Police on preparing for campus patrol.”

It is important because it brings faculty, students and campus police together in a collaborative community oriented project.”

There are currently 25 student volunteers participating in the program and they come from many different academic fields. The program runs primarily in the fall and spring semesters and volunteers are asked to serve at least one hour per week but usually donate more time. If you would like more information, you may contact Robert Martinez at the Eyes and Ears offices at (915) 726-8429.

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**Center Helps With Community Literacy**

The Department of Teacher Education’s Literacy Education Center has several established community outreach programs designed to improve literacy levels for people of all ages. These
programs provide this invaluable service to the community but also afford prospective teachers the opportunity to gain experience in the reading method by participating in various community based literacy programs. Two of the main programs are UTEP Readers and the Literacy Education Workshop.

The Literacy Education Center’s philosophy is that reading is needed as the modern foundation for all types of learning. Therefore following the mission of the College of Education, which is “to prepare effective teachers, counselors, diagnosticians, and school administrators, who successfully address the problems of schools and other youth serving agencies, especially in communities with a significant Hispanic population,” the center maintains its objective, with the specific goal of addressing and serving the region’s literacy needs. The center’s definition of literacy is all-encompassing, to include reading, writing, and various methods of visual communication.

The Literacy Education Center’s programs offer different types of opportunities for participation. The UTEP Readers program calls for students from the College of Education to participate in a field placement program as part of course or departmental requirements. Students participating in this program provide homework and tutoring assistance at various schools and sites throughout the city. The Literacy Education Workshop is a program that allows UTEP students, working towards a reading specialization, the opportunity to apply assessment and modification techniques to children who are having difficulties with their literacy skills. The program has also begun to work with parents to teach them about the role they play in their child’s literacy ability and how they can play a more active role. It is open on Thursdays to parents from area schools for a nominal fee.

The programs are open to students from any field, but volunteers are mainly undergraduates and graduates from the College of Education. If you would like more information about the Literacy Education Center or any of its programs, please feel free to contact the Center at 747-7661.

My Perspective on CIRCLES

By Joel Martínez

From October the 10th to the 13th I had an opportunity to go to Atlanta for a racial profiling conference that was sponsored by the Center for Civic Engagement. I had previously participated in the conference that was held at UTEP so I was familiar with the topics to be discussed. Carla Cardoza, the Community Partnerships director, had also prepared all of the student representatives by giving us reading packets about Atlanta and different topics.
As soon as I got off the plane, I began to feel slightly out of place. Being from a place where the majority of the population is considered “Hispanic,” Atlanta was a different experience. On our first day in, another student from UTEP and I went for a walk downtown. I have to be honest and say that I felt somewhat different, but not uncomfortable, because everywhere we looked, we could not see someone that was not African American. At first I felt some apprehension, but then that I had just never been to a city where the population is mostly African American. This perception was noteworthy but I was not able to rationalize it until the end of the trip.

The conference was held on the beautiful campus of Morehouse College where the students and faculty were very friendly. I felt that all of the students and I had a common bond, so it was not hard to start a conversation with students from other institutions and universities. On the first day of the conference, we heard presentations about racial profiling which is an interesting but unfortunate occurrence. The second day of conference was also very interesting because I had a chance to find out what were the issues that the local mayoral candidates had to deal with. I was able to see the differences and similarities in community issues between El Paso and Atlanta. The conference was very intense and I was exhausted by the end of each day.

My overall experience was not a surprise, but I did have a realization. I had expected the trip to give students from different backgrounds a chance to interact and dialogue with each other about racial injustice. We did this and I was able to make friends not only with students but with faculty as well. My realization dealt with my feelings from the first day we were in Atlanta. A person’s perception is based on their experience. Being originally from Mexico, then coming to El Paso, my experiences and understanding are embedded in the Mexican culture and surroundings. Arriving in Atlanta with a different population and context, I had my initial feelings for being out of place, but because I also arrived with an open mind and listening to the dialogue of the conference, I was soon looking beyond my surroundings and the context and was feeling very comfortable. In the end, I learned about different ethnic traditions and situations, but best of all I learned that there are people that are trying to do something about race issue to make our communities a better place.

Joel Martínez is a Junior Graphic Design Major studying at the University of Texas at El Paso. He is employed by the Center for Civic Engagement as a graphic design artist and is involved in several community outreach projects including the CIRCLES program and C.O.I.N. (Caring about Our Interests Now).
Community Internships

Community Partnerships would like to announce the opportunity for nonprofit organizations and UTEP students to come together to participate in the internship program for the spring semester. This is a 7 month program where students work 19 hours a week at a local nonprofit organization. There are currently a total of 14 internship positions available for nonprofit organizations and UTEP students. The program offers participating students the chance to gain valuable practical experience in their field of study while providing a service to the community. As for the organizations, it offers the opportunity to have a staff member with specialized skills at no additional overhead cost. In the past, students have come from a variety of academic departments such as Education, Business, and English to provide services such as tutoring and educational programs, development and maintenance of databases, and grant and technical writing services.

In order to qualify for the program, nonprofit organizations must be from the local region and complete a Request For Intern form demonstrating a need for the specific student services to be provided over the course of 7 months. These forms are available online or at the Community Partnerships offices and must be submitted by December 7, 2001 to be considered.

Interested students must meet a series of requirements. They are:

· Must have an interest in civic engagement
· Must be Juniors or Seniors
· Must be enrolled for Spring 2002 in an Internship/Independent course
· Must have reliable transportation
· Bilingual in English and Spanish preferred
· Minimum GPA of 2.8

The student will receive course credit plus pay for the internship/independent course and will receive $600 per month stipend. In order to complete the application process, students need to submit a copy of their resume, a reference letter, a written approval and consent from their internship/independent studies professor, along with an essay highlighting their career goals, and particular community interests to Miguel Rivera, intern coordinator, by December 7, 2001.

This is an excellent opportunity for all participants to consider opportunities for participation, networking and community outreach. If you would like more information about organizational or student participation, please call Miguel Rivera at (915) 747-7969 or visit the Community Partnerships offices in Benedict Hall room 103.

Students Help In Community Legal Matters

UTEP students participating in the Criminal Justice Research Project have been involved in doing pro-bono research for indigent defendants involved in the El Paso Court system. Along with
providing this service to the community, the project is designed to give students hands on experience helping the community and is the equivalent of a first year law school course in legal bibliography. The Criminal Justice Research Project has been recognized by the State Bar of Texas with the prestigious STAR award for their contributions to the community and it has also received a grant from the State Bar Foundation to continue with their activities.

Students participating in the program come from different fields of study, but all have a vested interest in attending law school. If you would like more information about participating in the program or its activities, please call the faculty advisory, Dale McCleary at (915) 747-7087.

**Community Partnerships Spring Retreat**

The Community Partnerships spring retreat is tentatively scheduled for the first week of April. This is the opportunity for the organization’s staff and networking partners to come together to discuss the state of affairs and the prospects for the future.

This year Community Partnerships has invited renowned author Frances Moore Lappe to be the guest speaker for the event and she has agreed to do so. Lappe is author of many books including a book about democracy and public life, *The Quickening of America; Rebuilding Our nation, Remaking Our Lives* and the popular *Diet For a Small Planet*. She is a social analyst and discusses the possible solutions to social and global issues.

Information will be forthcoming so look for more in future issues of the Community Links newsletter.