Action for Youth Initiates a New Year

The Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) has set in motion a new initiative called Action for Youth, and will continue to provide technical assistance to organizations involved in the Healthy Paso del Norte (Healthy Communities), sponsored by the Paso del Norte Health Foundation. Under the Healthy Communities initiative, CCE has been working with seven non-profit organizations in Southern New Mexico, Cd. Juárez, and the El Paso area, in an effort to build capacity within the organizations and throughout the communities where the organizations work.

The new Action for Youth initiative is a regional program that also works with organizations in Southern New Mexico, the El Paso area, and Cd. Juárez in an effort to improve the overall health quality of adolescents in the region. The initiative works with a total of ten organizations in the region and is in its fourth year of funding, which is expected to continue for two more years.

The CCE will be helping the organizations develop their indicator research, strategic action plans, and evaluate their programs on a number of different levels.

In an extension period granted to the nonprofit organizations, the CCE helped the communities to research baseline indicators for their work. The communities formed committees, (Action for Youth Continued Click Here)

Dia De Los Niños a Successful Yearly Event

Since 1997, El Paso Public Library, in collaboration with local agencies, has successfully coordinated Día de los Niños: Día de los Libros (Children's Day: Book Day) to celebrate children and promote reading.

The mission of Día de los Niños: Día de los Libros is to promote literacy while bringing children and parents together in a positive environment to celebrate their past, present and future through their culture. The main objectives of this event are to increase the community's awareness about reading to children, the importance of celebrating children, participation in the library and its programs, and to provide information to the community about services available to families. This year the library's goal is to have between 35,000 to 50,000 children and their families from El Paso and the surrounding area to participate in the (Dia De Los Niños Continued Click Here)
National Survey of Student Engagement Comes to UTEP

A research team comprised by Jason DeSousa (Morgan State University, Maryland), Arthur Chickering (Vermont College), Mary Howard-Hamilton, and Carla Morelon (Indiana University) concluded a three day visit at UTEP, Friday January 31.

The group is working on a research project called "Project Deep." The reason for the visit was because UTEP scored very high on certain measures of student learning, as measured by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The research team was investigating what types of techniques faculty use and students engage in, that make for our strong learning environment. Some of their questions were aimed at exploring UTEP students' experiences when interacting with University faculty and staff during their educational journey, and the things UTEP might have done or might have not done to make students' learning experience a good one.

They were also interested in the University's efforts to increase and support community involvement through the course curriculum. A positive factor is UTEP students' involvement in important learning activities tied into the community, such as the ones coordinated through the Center for Civic Engagement and Praxis.

Students from various majors who have participated in community-based programs were present on Friday to express their views and opinions. Among other things discussed were thoughts on how our university has supported them in many different ways.

For many of the students, their participation and involvement with the Center for Civic Engagement opened up many opportunities such as research projects with major universities and job opportunities with non-profit organizations and large corporations.

The students were mainly grateful to have been able to have UTEP as a stepping stone for their future, and the room glowed with pride reflecting all their accomplishments.

Project INEA Brings its Successful Attitude to UTEP Employees

In this ever-changing world where education and technology are key elements for individual success and healthy communities, it is refreshing to experience the positive attitude of the UTEP students, volunteers and participants working in the Mexican Consulate Project. The project is primarily for Mexican nationals who have immigrated to the United States and who were forced to abandon their studies at an early age, but have realized that it is

Participants in the program like Carlos Diaz and Agustin Morales are excited to be able to accomplish this goal after such a long time, but feel it was worthwhile doing it. Cesar Orrantia, program coordinator and instructor, says "there's a very rewarding feeling when you actually go out there and become part of this positive change."
never too late to accomplish their educational goals. They are referred to as "educandos".

INEA, which stands for Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos, is a program run by the Mexican Consulate and coordinated with UTEP's Community Partnerships. UTEP student volunteers provide "educandos" with classes leading up to the completion of elementary and middle school education. After successfully completing the program, "educandos" receive their Mexican Certificate of Completion from the Mexican Ministry of Education. This first step equips them with some basic tools to perhaps continue their studies towards higher education.

True Community Partnership

Dr. Keshtvarz of the Computer Information Systems department has successfully implemented community-based teaching and learning in his curriculum for three years and this year was no exception. This College of Business professor, warmly referred to as Dr. Kesh, has been incorporating community-based teaching and learning in his classes for two years now, and is directly responsible for going out into the field alongside his students, and meeting with agencies in the community that might have a need for his students' newly acquired computer skills. Some of these attractive options for nonprofit organizations would be creating or developing their own websites, developing a local area network, and data base design. The students get to apply what they've learned in class to actual 'real life' business-like situations and they gain much-needed experience.

UTEP faculty and students are commended for implementing and supporting such civically rewarding and beneficial programs. Dr. Kesh's course goes a step further; he and his students gather information pertaining to the organizations' needs, analyze the project at hand, design and implement a plan, and provide free training to the nonprofit organizations involved. "We want to make sure that after we leave, they can continue to use what we've implemented, and update it themselves when needed," explains Dr. Kesh.

The students are very passionate about the overall results of this program, as well as enlightened by the coincidental and much-needed civic awareness. Several students who took this course had good things to say. "I learned how important it is to reach out to the community; the involvement in the community is an integral part of the education of UTEP students," stated Roman Alcantar, UTEP student. This opportunity for students to connect with the community and genuinely "make a difference" has been a fundamental skill that is invaluable to all students, and the key factor that drives the Community Partnerships.
Everyone involved feels this is an important factor needed to produce a thriving community, which is why UTEP continues to maintain these community partnerships. "This class was an experience that will benefit all of us throughout our careers," states Monique Finley, another student who participated in the program.

The positive effects of this program continue to snowball. So far there have been over 200 UTEP students who have completed this CIS course this past year. In spring and fall 2002, a total of fourteen students were placed with their participating agencies in permanently paying positions.

Participating agencies have been extremely pleased with the results of this program. Several of the participating agencies include Cristo Rey Catholic Church, El Paso Association for the Performing Arts, Y.M.C.A., El Paso Police Department-Youth Initiative, Growing on the Border and Thomason Hospital. Nell Tovar, of the El Paso Police Department, says, "I know their level of commitment and positive attitude reflect the values of your institution, and therefore we are very grateful." Mr. Marcos Velarde, of Alliance for Children and Families, praises the program and appreciates how his agency and the students all benefit from community-based teaching and learning.

UTEP student Michelle Mendoza said, "We have learned to put others before ourselves, and by doing so, will make this world a bit better and make us better people as well." Dulce M. Piñon says, "This was a fun project where we learned systems analysis and design and applied it to the world." "For us it is amazing to learn something in class, and the next day get together in a group and implement it in the real world," explained Cesar Rodriguez. There is no doubt that Dr. Kesh, along with the Center for Civic Engagement-Community Partnerships, has "done it again" by bringing together students' skills and their social awareness to complement our ever changing community.

For more information on how to get your classes involved, call Carla Cardoza at the Center for Civic Engagement at 747-7969.
Workshop on Women's Health Issues

The Center for Civic Engagement, in collaboration with the College of Health Sciences, the Women's Studies Program, and the Center for Effective Teaching & Learning, will be conducting a workshop that focuses on women's health issues. This workshop will be open to all faculty and community members.

The focal point will be on approaches and methods to integrate women's health into undergraduate courses. The event will also celebrate the decade-long history of the Women's Health Care/Nurse Practitioner graduate program at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Participants will hear workshops from distinguished and committed experts that include Vicki Ann Lucas, PhD, Vice President of Women's Services, MedStar Health (Baltimore), and former faculty member and administrator at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Nursing (Houston); Executive Director Clemencia Prieto, El Paso Center on Family Violence; and Vicky Roberts, M.D., who has worked with El Paso community-based organizations and promotora programs.

Service Learning-The Wave of The Future

A number of courses at UTEP ranging from Education, Computer Information Systems, and the medical fields have integrated "service learning" into their curriculum. Service learning is a strategy where you implement what you learn in the classroom into the community. And although "hands-on" or "field experience" is not a new concept, service learning is all that, with an additional twist to it.

Many fields require students to complete an internship in order to finalize their training. This serves students in getting actual hands-on experience. College students eventually finish their degrees and move on to practice their what they have learned throughout their college careers. Service learning, however, is created and geared to also connect the student to the community in a positive way. Instead of just getting experience, the students are giving learning experiences to non-profit organizations, under-serviced communities and individuals.
Through the Canutillo Even Start program, headed by Dr. Judith Munter, UTEP Teacher Education students participate in a Service-Learning project with Canutillo Elementary School's Family Literacy Program.

The students have an opportunity to learn about issues faced by families that are developing literacy and/or fluency in the English language, and use their skills as technology and literacy instructors. One of the UTEP students reflects on her participation by stating, "I think our presence gives many of the parents encouragement, since we are the product of long and hard dedication to the educational system". 