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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

SPRING 2008

POLITICAL SPIN

THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT WELCOMES NEW CHAIR

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Dr. Gregory D. Schmidt assumes chair duties in 2008**
- **Help America Vote class to help out at El Paso voting stations**
- **Honor Society wins national award**
- **UTEP students attend USAF Academy Assembly**

In 2007 the department launched a national search for our next chair. We are excited to report that Professor Gregory D. Schmidt filled this position in January 2008. The following is an interview with the new chair.

What attracted you to UTEP and the department?

I have both professional and personal reasons for coming to UTEP. Although I was quite happy at my former university in Illinois, I had pretty much accomplished everything that I could realistically expect to achieve there. At UTEP I have the challenge of managing a growing department. Whereas I was the lone Latin American specialist in my previous department, here I am, well, *como un pez en el agua*.

On a personal level, I grew up in Austin and have family ties throughout Texas, including West Texas and El Paso. My wife and I thoroughly enjoy El Paso and its people. Its proximity to Mexico is also attractive. And it is certainly a lot warmer here than in Illinois. In February we enjoyed seeing snow up in the Franklins without actually being in it!

Tell us a bit about your academic background and expertise.

I earned my B.A. from UT Austin and my Ph.D. from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. At UT Austin, I was extremely fortunate to spend a year abroad in Peru, a country whose politics have never ceased to amaze me. My wife is Peruvian and we frequently return to that country. Most of my publications focus on Peru, dealing with such topics as development, decentralization, electoral rules and administration, executive-legislative relations, and gender. I am proud that some of my work has been published in leading journals and books by prestigious presses in the United States. But I am equally proud that my work has frequently appeared in Spanish and is well known in Peru.

What do you see as the major strengths of the department?

The faculty is committed to our students and cares deeply about their success at UTEP and beyond. Our senior professors have devoted their lives to UTEP, even though they had opportunities elsewhere. Our junior faculty is bringing new skills and perspectives to UTEP. Although most of our students are the first in their families to attend college, we challenge them. "Excellence with access" is not just a slogan.

The department is also helping UTEP to become a major research university. Members of our faculty have national and even international reputations in various fields, including border studies, civic engagement, comparative politics, international relations, Latin American studies, law school preparation, and regional integration. This is an exciting place to work or study!

What is your vision for the department in 5 or so years?

I hope that we can continue to build a dynamic department that supports UTEP's mission in teaching, research, and service. I hope to stimulate greater student involvement, improve undergraduate education, reinvigorate our M.A. program and begin the new multidisciplinary Ph.D. program that is now under review at the state level. I believe that we can do an even better job of providing excellence with access to the people of the Paso del Norte region and beyond.

As a graduate of UT Austin, what will be your feelings when the Longhorn football team visits UTEP next September?

Welcome Longhorns. Go Miners!

UTEP STUDENTS HELPING WITH DEMOCRACY
BY ALFONSO SÁNCHEZ

The Border Poll Crew, under the Center for Civic Engagement, won a grant for the 2006 midterm elections to recruit young bilingual poll workers. Thanks to the combined effort of the Center for Civic Engagement and the El Paso County Elections Department, the Border Poll Crew met its goals and provided 70 young bilingual poll workers to El Paso County during early voting and Election Day.

We are once again in election season and this November will be a defining moment in U.S. history. Thus, the Political Science Department and the Anthropology and Sociology Department created a course to 'institutionalize' the Border Poll Crew for the upcoming presidential election. The departments will offer the course, "Help America Vote," in the fall '08 to once again recruit young bilingual poll workers for this year's presidential election.

Students that register will not only have a first-hand opportunity to experience how democracy works. They will also receive credit hours towards their degrees and remuneration from the El Paso Elections Department for working on Election Day.

STUDENTS BRAINSTORM IDEAS ABOUT DISMANTLING TERRORISM
BY NICHOLAS KOMOROWSKI

Ashlee Placencio and I participated in an undergraduate conference sponsored by the United States Air Force Academy, February 5-9, 2008, on the Academy grounds in Colorado Springs. The theme of the conference was "Dismantling Terrorism" and included cadets and civilian students from US and foreign colleges and military academies. The conference (Assembly) was highlighted by various expert speakers but more importantly organized students into roundtables led by faculty from civilian universities with the goal of brainstorming and debating an actionable policy that will be published and disseminated to Congress and the US Department of Defense. The Assembly also provides an excellent means by which to network, make new friends, and gain a greater exposure to policy-making and the world more generally.

Regardless of whether the policies were viable or the arguments worthwhile, the Assembly offered an amazing opportunity to meet and discuss important ideas and issues academically with previously unassociated peers both from other universities and multiple military academies. This allowed for a free and drawn out exchange of perceptions, concepts, and ideas on a pertinent subject not normally found within the scope of undergraduate classes. The topics may be touched, and discussion or debate may be promoted, but the opportunity to do so for an extended time and with specific

Nicholas Komorowski and Ashlee Placencio exchanging ideas with fellow students.

DISMANTLING TERRORISM (CONT)

goals is rare and should be embraced. The exchange of personalities and experiences between military cadets and university students is vital to developing round perspectives of the world. I have made new friends and I expect to continue to engage them in discussion on multiple subjects for a long time to come.

Ms. Placencio stated, "how many students can say 'As an American, I sat between an Israeli, a Pakistani, and an Iraqi student discussing the possibilities to rid the world of terrorism?' This was possible in my trip to Colorado Springs, Colorado for the 50th Annual Air Force Academy Assembly. The varying opinions, experiences, and knowledge between the students and cadets were amazing. I have a newfound interest in international relations. This has helped shape my views and outlook on international law. In my opinion, future UTEP students should have the opportunity to be a part of something like this. The experience was incredible and life- changing."

"I sat between an Israeli, a Pakistani, and an Iraqi student discussing the possibilities to rid the world of terrorism."

POLITICAL SCIENCE HONOR SOCIETY KEEPS ON ROLLING

BY SHERI SAINZ

UTEP's Political Science Honor Society, Pi Sigma Alpha, Epsilon Epsilon Chapter, was recognized as an outstanding chapter for the 2006-07 academic year. Only four other chapters received this recognition nationwide. We were also awarded an activities grant from the national office. Receiving the award and grant solidifies the fact that our chapter is growing in size and involvement both on and off campus!

Pi Sigma Alpha began its 2007-08 activities with local and national elections. Two candidates for District Attorney presented at our past meetings: Theresa Caballero and incumbent Jaime Esparza. Pi Sigma Alpha members asked both candidates imperative questions relating to the duties of District Attorney and hit on key issues involved in each of their campaigns.

Pi Sigma Alpha was proud to co-sponsor the Face to Face Politics: 2008 Forum Series. This all-day event hosted debates for the following elections: Sheriff, 388th and 488th Judicial Courts, County Commissioner No. 3, and our highlighted debate was for District Attorney. Chapter members proposed questions and helped with logistics before and at the event. The Face to Face forum allowed UTEP students and staff to visit with and listen to issues each candidate promoted the week before the March 4th primary election.

Currently, as America is watching history unfold in front of our eyes with the road towards a Democratic candidate for President. Pi Sigma Alpha is planning to host an informational session on the Presidential candidates. In conjunction with University Democrats and University Republicans, Pi Sigma Alpha hopes to have each organization represent its party's designated candidates and speak on its behalf. This session will enable students the ability to learn more about each prospective Presidential candidate and party.

Faculty advisor Gaspare Genna with Pi Sigma officers and new members.

Pi Sigma Alpha is also involved in various community service projects ranging from judging speech and debate tournaments to becoming involved in a program which mentors children who have either one or

HONOR SOCIETY (CONT)

both parents incarcerated. This program involves a one year commitment and encourages the promotion of the children's morale and educational endeavors.

We are looking forward to wrapping up our busy year with a banquet celebrating our success and achievements.

Our members have worked hard since re-starting our chapter only three years ago. It has been a journey which started with a few members and little recognition. In the future we will continue the positive momentum of involvement and continued recognition. We have high hopes for future success!

UTEP STUDENTS PARTNER WITH BOWIE SENIORS

BY ALEXIS BETHONEY

Last fall semester I was in Dr. Kathy Staudt's Public Policy class. One interesting part of the course was the assignment on community outreach.

I chose to work with Acción Texas and Bowie High School. I put together a group and we got to work!

Our goal was to find internships for Bowie High seniors in the area. These seniors were some of the brightest that Bowie had to offer. They were, for the most part, involved in an advanced accounting program.

As my group and I went from business to business on Alameda, we found that most businesses were unable to help these seniors. The reasons were **not** because they didn't want to, but because they just could not afford it. The businesses around Bowie are in dire need of financial support and financial advice. We went to approximately 60 businesses and only about 1/10 of them were financially able to help.

I think the aspect of this project that we loved the most was getting to talk to these extremely intelligent Bowie students!

The aspect of the project that I know my group and I were discouraged with was the situation in which we found these businesses.

At the end of our project, we submitted all the information to Acción, and it was then up to them to further aid the Bowie students with jobs. We thoroughly enjoyed doing this project, and more so, we enjoyed meeting new people.

"I think the aspect of this project that we loved the most was getting to talk to these extremely intelligent Bowie students!"

POLITICAL SCIENCE FACULTY ACTIVITY

Irasema Coronado has co-authored a book titled: *Políticas: Latina Public Officials in Texas* (February 2008 University of Texas Press). In this book, the authors profile the women who have been the first Latinas to hold key elected and appointed positions in Texas. The authors explore and theorize about Latina officeholders' political socialization, decision to run for office and obstacles they overcame, leadership style, and representational roles and advocacy. They profile 15 Latinas including Irma Rangel, the first Latina elected to the Texas House of Representatives, and Judith Zaffirini and Leticia Van de Putte, the only two Latinas to serve in the Texas Senate. The authors will be presenting this book at various academic conferences throughout the U.S. and here in El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. **Dr. Coronado** is also serving as an associate dean in the College of Liberal Arts, continues to teach in the department of political science and is on the board of the Frontera Women's Foundation. Her research focuses on the international migration of children and the impact of deportees on Mexican border cities. She continues to collaborate with her colleagues at the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez on research projects and sits on their Ph.D. in Social Science advisory board.

Charles R. Boehmer had a very busy and productive year, publishing an article on diversionary conflict in *Politics & Policy* and a forthcoming article on democracy and militarized conflict in *Conflict Management and Peace Science.* He continues to research topics relating to international organization, economic growth, trade on conflict, the determinants of open and closed borders, and the effect of food deprivation on civil war. **Dr. Boehmer** presented his latest research on interstate political community and peace in June at the Peace Science Society European

FACULTY ACTIVITY (CONT)

Meetings, Tinbergen Institute, Amsterdam. He was invited to attend the US Air Force Academy Assembly as a faculty liaison to discuss "Dismantling Terrorism" (see article on page two) and, in a new federally funded program, he taught international relations and geopolitics at both the undergraduate and high school levels in the new Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence at UTEP. He has also been an active participant and committee member for the El Paso del Norte National Issues Forum, for which he participated in the taping of "The People's Voice" a forum on energy policy aired nationally on PBS.

Gaspare M. Genna has published an article in *Latin American Perspectives* and another article was reprinted as a book chapter in *Inter-American Relations in an Era of Globalization.* Two prestigious organizations that specializes in regional integration invited him to present his work: The Comparative Regional Integration Studies Program at the United Nations University (Burges, Belgium) and the European Union Center of Excellence at the University of Miami. Last summer, **Dr. Genna** taught formal decision making and international political economy for the new Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence at UTEP. He also contributed to community outreach through presentations at the Annunciation House Border Awareness Experience Program and membership in the program development committee for the El Paso del Norte National Issues Forum.

Joseph Graves is working on a book project titled *Should We Banish the Need for Ethics in Government*. Some of the questions addressed in the book are: Do moral talk and moral actions help candidates stay in office? Are there moral reasons and ethical considerations that public officials need in making policy? He is also including students' responses to these questions in his manuscript. **Professor Graves** was honored at the Liberal Arts Gold Nugget Award ceremony as the UTEP professor who inspired the Award recipient to study law and go to law school. Intelligence agencies in the U.S. and Mexico have also requested his views on how the two governments can collaborate to combat drug trafficking and organized crime in the border region.

Taeko Hiroi has recently had several articles published and accepted for publication in leading journals . An article was published in *Latin American Perspectives* and another was reprinted as a book chapter in *Inter-American Relations in an Era of Globalization*. Two more articles are forthcoming in *Comparative Political Studies* and *The Journal of Legislative Studies.* **Dr. Hiroi** is also working on a wide range of research. One of her current research agendas is the analysis of the fiscal and monetary cycles in Latin America. Another examines the relationship between the system of government and the stability of democracy in the world. She has also been working to strengthen UTEP's international program by helping to develop the curriculum for a renewed Asian Studies minor. She is also helping in the effort to establish a partnership between UTEP and Brazilian universities and develop student and faculty exchange programs. As a part of this effort, she is very excited to take a group of students to Brazil this summer.

Z. A. Kruszewski lectured in Europe for the Smithsonian Institution (Scandinavia and Baltic Region) and taught a seminar at the University of Warsaw East European Summer School. He also participated in two international conferences on Central Europe in Warsaw and Berlin. **Professor Kruszewski** was also decorated by the Polish Government with the "Pro Memoria" medal for meritorious contributions for the people and deeds of the participants of WW II. In El Paso, he is a member of the El Paso Holocaust Museum Board of Directors.

Kathleen Staudt has been active in teaching, publishing research, and community activism. Her next book, *Violence and Activism at the Border*, will be released by the University of Texas Press this summer. The research is based on surveys and workshops with 615 women, aged 15-39, in Ciudad Juárez, and on five years of participant observation in anti-violence organizations. Additionally, she has authored or co-authored three book chapters in *Community Organizing and Political Change in the City*, *Street Vendors Worldwide*, and *Reforming the Administration of Justice in Mexico*. She has also published an article in *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*. In **Professor Staudt**'s courses, many students learn actively and deeply, involved in meaningful community-based teaching and learning experiences. In her fall public policy class, student teams partnered with Acción (see article on page four), a micro-enterprise lending NGO; with the City over new parking options in the Neighborhood Revitalization Areas of Lower Dyer and Chamizal; with the Non-Profit Enterprise Center to identify grant opportunities for El Paso nonprofit organizations, and with schools on the push-out/drop-out problem that leads to low high school graduation rates in El Paso.

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Supporting your alma mater has always been very critical to us. Over the years, we've 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.

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