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News From the Dean for International and Border Programs

Global Conversation on the Border: Inequality and Injustice: Education as Cause or Solution?



Recently I participated in a seminar on peace, justice, and global civil society in Ballyvaughn, Ireland. The seminar was dedicated to the late Ron Moffatt, past President of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, who had devoted his life, both personal and professional, to the cause of peace and justice worldwide. The seminar brought together scholars from the U.S., Mexico, and several European countries. I was honored to be asked to speak at the start of the seminar, an opportunity I used to highlight the work of NAFSA during Ron Moffatt's presidential year and then speak to subsequent developments in peace and justice as these relate to NAFSA after his untimely death.

The week-long seminar was moving in every way—intellectually, emotionally, and perhaps most importantly, personally. Everyone present was anxious to carry on the work necessary to arrive at a more peaceful and just world.

Personally, I embraced the opportunity to work with my colleague and counterpart at the *Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua* (UACH) to organize a bi-national conversation—a Global Conversation—to look at and analyze the role of how education can contribute to the alleviation of inequality and injustice on the US/Mexican border. The Global Conversation we envision will take place in Chihuahua during the fall 2009 academic semester and in Las Cruces during the spring 2010 academic semester. Participants in the two planned Conversations will include faculty, staff, students, and community and statewide representatives from UACH and the State of Chihuahua and from NMSU and the State of New Mexico. The ultimate goal of these two Global Conversations will be to prepare participants to empower others, including their own students, colleagues, friends, and border citizens in general, to feel there are actions they can take to gain control in their own lives, despite the rampant border violence, and to do so largely through education.

The concept of the Global Conversation is not new. Indeed a Google search will reveal numerous situations in which Global Conversations have taken place, focusing on many different topics and themes. In fact, the two organizers of the peace and justice seminar in Ireland, Mell Bowen, President of BCA, and James Skelly, professor at the University of Ulster, use the

Global Conversation format in their award-winning education abroad course on “sustainability and the environment,” a combined online, distance, and face-to-face course designed to help students develop a better understanding of the environmental problems associated with economic globalization.

The purpose of the Global Conversation that Dr. Favela and I are planning is to help participants understand the empowering nature of education within the context of the US-Mexico border. As we all know, the cities and towns along the northern Mexican border (most notably Cd. Juárez, but including the entire northern border of Mexico) have been and continue to be plagued by drug-related violence, economic despair, and health-related issues. At a recent meeting organized by NMSU’s International Programs and the Consulate General of Mexico in El Paso, many if not most of the representatives from the Mexican universities voiced a pessimism about the situation their universities face; a pessimism based on a widely-held perception that their people are powerless to affect change.

Coming out of that meeting I felt ambivalent. On the one hand, I agreed with my Mexican colleagues; and who wouldn’t—the violence is pervasive, dangerous, and unsettling in the extreme. There is little that one can do, or even one institution such as a university, can do to end the violence. On the other hand, I disagreed. And the reason I disagreed is that I feel that everyone can, at the very least, take control over decisions about their own lives, about what their options are and what is important to them. More specifically, I feel that everyone can do his or her part to alleviate inequality and injustice, two root causes of violence and despair on the border and, indeed, worldwide. And I believe that education can and should be the primary means to do this.

The problems we face on the US-Mexico border, especially on the Mexican side, are challenging; to understand these problems within a global context will be the focus and intent of our proposed “Global Conversation.” We believe a focus on education can be empowering—to look at the role of education, the role of schools and universities, in providing the means to alleviate border inequality and injustice.

We have just begun to develop the concept for our Global Conversation, but we are excited, and the excitement is shared by colleagues with whom we have spoken. We are confident that we will be implementing this idea of a bi-national Global Conversation; future editions of **International Briefs** will include updates and additional information. Please don’t hesitate to contact me should you be interested in participating.



Peace Corp

Grad school or and Peace Corps...why not do both? The Peace Corps Master’s International program combines graduate study with Peace Corps service overseas. Prospective students apply separately to the Peace Corps and the graduate program(s) of their choice. Typically, students complete one year of graduate school and then serve 27 months in the Peace Corps, after which they return to the university to complete any remaining degree requirements. More than 60 universities currently partner with the program, 11 of which offer degrees in agriculture.

Since 1987, the Master’s International program has offered participants a unique opportunity to combine graduate study with significant international service, connecting theory and practice and contributing to the Peace Corps’ first goal: to help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women. The Peace Corps is interested in making this program more widely known among the agriculture and higher education communities. For more information, please visit www.peacecorps.gov/masters, or contact Eric Goldman at egoldman@peacecorps.gov. For more information about other Peace Corps opportunities in agriculture, please visit www.peacecorps.gov. We ask that faculty and staff share this information with as many students as is possible.

J-1 Visa Scholar Program

A new and revised web page has been set up at: <http://jexchangeservices.nmsu.edu> that is dedicated to providing information to incoming exchange scholars, as well as information for departments and other units wanting to invite scholars to NMSU. The site also has links to the DS-2019 Request Form plus other forms used to gather information and make decisions about eligibility of scholars for the J-1 visa. To contact the Responsible Officer for the J-1 visa program, Dr. Paul E. Huntsberger, send email to jscholar@nmsu.edu. This email is dedicated to serving departments sponsoring exchange scholars (professors, researchers, specialists) and the scholars themselves and is monitored by Dr. Huntsberger.

Twenty-Sixth Annual World Food Day Teleconference, October 16, 2009

The title of this year's annual teleconference is "Global Food Crisis: Opportunities, Responsibilities and Solutions." This year's teleconference will consider the impact of the financial crisis on those living in poverty, the responsibilities of the rest of the world and the solutions that are emerging. Three experts from different backgrounds working on these issues will exchange views on the 26th annual teleconference. Max Finberg, newly appointed Director of the USDA Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships; Rep. Jim McGovern, serving his seventh term as representative from Massachusetts; and Joy Phumaphi, of Botswana, Vice President and Head of the Human Development Network at the World Bank will be our special guests. In addition to the panelists there will be a live uplink with the Prix Laureate from the World Food Price ceremonies in Iowa. The program will be broadcast from Washington DC from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm Las Cruces time. The program will be broadcast on C-Band, and the DISH network will carry the program. For additional information, please contact Carmen Salinas at casalina@nmsu.edu or 646-7506.

Chihuahuan Desert Network

The National Park Service established a service-wide, inventory and monitoring program to address the lack of credible scientific information available to national

parks on their biological and physical resources. The Chihuahuan Desert Network is one of 32 networks across the country engaged in the development and implementation of long-term monitoring of multiple national parks. The Chihuahuan Desert Network includes six national parks in New Mexico and Texas: Amistad National Recreation Area, Big Bend National Park, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Fort Davis National Historic Site, Guadalupe Mountains National Park, and White Sands National Monument, plus the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River.

The Network office is located at New Mexico State University. Co-location with the NMSU facilitates collaboration with other NMSU researchers and programs. The Network cooperates with NMSU in planning and developing educational, mentoring, and intern opportunities that will benefit NMSU's goals of education while furthering knowledge about resources within national parks. For example, the Network hires student workers and graduate students to assist with database management and integration with GIS, and researching and documenting legacy data. The Network provided funding to the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Ecology to develop predictive models for invasive species and to develop habitat and corridor suitability models for wildlife.

The Network is the process of developing a monitoring plan that will serve as the foundation for a long-term ecological monitoring program designed to build on existing information and understanding of park ecosystems and to make maximum use of leveraging partnerships with other programs, agencies, and academia. The monitoring protocols under development for vegetation, soils, air and water quality, invasive species, and birds will complement work already occurring in the national parks. In the next couple of years the Network will be seeking assistance from University faculty and students to develop monitoring protocols and begin field sampling. For more information about the Chihuahuan Desert Network or the National Park Service, please contact Tom Richie at 646-5295.



Carlsbad Caverns National Park (upper) and White Sands National Monument (lower) are among the unique resources encompassed by the National Park Service's Chihuahuan Desert Network.

EDITORIAL NOTE:

THIS NEWSLETTER IS RELEASED THE BEGINNING OF EACH MONTH. THE CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF NEWS ITEMS IS THE 25TH OF EACH MONTH. PLEASE SUBMIT ITEMS WHICH ARE PLANNED AND/OR ARE SCHEDULED FOR SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE. THIS NEWSLETTER IS INTENDED TO SHARE INFORMATION AND TO INFORM OTHERS ON CAMPUS OF UPCOMING AND PENDING ACTIVITIES, TRAVEL, VISITORS ON CAMPUS, ETC. FOR THIS REASON, ITEMS WHICH ARE SUBMITTED FOR ACTIVITIES WHICH HAVE ALREADY TAKEN PLACE WILL ONLY BE UTILIZED IF THEY HAVE SOME RELEVANCE TO FUTURE ACTIVITIES. PLEASE MAKE SUBMISSIONS TO CIP-ADM@NMSU.EDU. IF YOU WISH TO REVIEW OLD ISSUES OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS ISSUES FOR THE LAST 12 MONTHS CAN BE FOUND ON THIS SITE.

Office of International and Border Programs
New Mexico State University
MSC 3567
P.O. Box 30001
Las Cruces, NM 88003-0001