

ADP Newsletter

National Director of American Democracy Project visits Fort Hays State

FHSU is one of 201 campuses across the country participating in the American Democracy Project. When our university was chosen for a site visit by George Mehaffy, it was a proud day for our campus. George Mehaffy is the Vice-President of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities as well as the National Director for the American Democracy Project. The American Democracy Project was developed in 2001 by the AASCU and the *New York Times* to combat problems in today's society that threaten democracy.

According to Mehaffy, FHSU's dedication to the ADP is extraordinary. "What was surprising to me was the amount of creativity, the amount of imagination, the amount of activity coming from an institution that is smaller," said Mehaffy. "What I'm looking for and what I always celebrate is when I can find an institutional commitment to civic engagement. I have found that at FHSU."

Dr. Mehaffy visited over breakfast with faculty and community members involved in ADP efforts; attended *Times Talk* over lunch; spoke at the Service-Learning and ADP Vision Team meetings; and gave a campus/community presentation. Mehaffy spoke about how the United States came about having our form of democracy, and how democracy and civic engagement have been on the decline. Mehaffy believes that it will take great efforts on the parts of Americans in order to keep democracy around for future generations. His presentation can be viewed at <http://vodreal.fhsu.edu/ramgen/ctelt/adp/mehaffey.rm>.

Although Dr. Mehaffy is pleased with the efforts for ADP at FHSU, he warns there is far to go. "After all is said and done," says Mehaffy, "the question still remains: How do we get everyone involved?"



Dr. George Mehaffy addresses students, faculty, and staff in the Memorial Union



Meeting with FHSU's ADP Vision Team

What is the American Democracy Project (ADP)?

"The ADP seeks to help participating colleges and universities find ways to develop students' civic capacities, their sense of social responsibility and their commitment to public action."

"The ADP's primary vision is to inspire today's students to be tomorrow's active citizens. The ADP works to provide students and the rest of the community opportunities to become involved through volunteerism, voter registration, and dialogue with public leaders."

An initiative of the
American Association of State
Colleges and Universities



Times Talk

Times Talk is a weekly lunchtime discussion based on issues covered in the *New York Times*. Since the inception of *Times Talk* in October 2004, it has grown in popularity among faculty, staff, and students alike. This spring's presentations, led by faculty, staff, community members, and students, sparked tremendous debates.

Dr. Chapman Rackaway, director of *Times Talk*, is pleased with its success. "In one year we've seen *Times Talk* become an integral part of the New York Times Readership Program at FHSU," says Rackaway, "Through *Times Talk*, the campus community has the opportunity to explore areas that are interesting and intellectually challenging. I believe we are providing a positive influence on the intellectual culture of FHSU."

Students from Harriet Caplan's *Business Organizations and Government Regulations* course presented their research on corporate accounting fraud, outsourcing, and international business issues that were featured in the *Times*.

"I feel *Times Talk* was a very valuable experience in my education process," said senior Megan Schmidtberger, an accounting major from Victoria. "I had to be on my toes ready to answer any question directed towards me. I learned a lot by just listening to what other people had to say."



Students from Harriet Caplan's class presented business-related topics at *Times Talk*



Bill Shanahan speaks out in an open forum about Kansas politics

What's The Matter With Kansas?

An intrigued audience of nearly 150 embraced the concepts of the American Democracy Project during a recent town hall forum. A four-person panel led the discussion surrounding Thomas Frank's 2004 book *What's the Matter with Kansas?* Panelists summarized the book, reviewed the political history of Kansas, and then debated both in favor and against the the author's main points.

The forum was organized in an effort to revitalize dialogue and interaction within the community. Fort Hays State University students, faculty, and staff, as well as community members from as far away as Larned participated in the event, which lasted well over two hours. The discussion was lively with commentary and questions from the public, whose active involvement was encouraged. "I hope the university does more of this. FHSU has the brain capital to launch the discussion, and for the public outside campus, this seems to fit right in with FHSU's American Democracy Project initiative," said John Montgomery, *Hays Daily News* editor and publisher. The *Hays Daily News* was a co-sponsor of the event.

Select ADP Events: Spring 2005

- Jan.22: **Tsunami Relief Fundraiser: FHSU vs Kearney BB Game**
(Tigers in Service)
- Feb.1: **State Education Day & Raise Your Voice Event**
Kansas State Capitol - Topeka, KS
(Student Government Association)
- Feb.2-27: **Black History Month Exhibits: The History of Nicodemus**
(Friends of Forsyth Library)
- Feb.28-Mar.1: **Speaker: Ji-li Jiang, author of *The Red Scarf Girl***
(Women and Gender Studies Program)
- March 11-12: **FUSION: A Weekend Celebrating Diversity**
(Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Unity Project)
- March 31: **Women's History Month: Take Back the Night Rally and March Around Campus**
(Women and Gender Studies Program)
- May 5: **Brown vs. Board of Education Anniversary Debate**
(Debate Team)

Alternative Spring Break

Tigers in Service organized a unique service opportunity that took place this spring. The program, called Alternative Spring Break (ASB), places teams of college students in communities to engage in service and experiential learning during their spring break. To coordinate this year's ASB, Tigers in Service teamed up with Denver's DOOR (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection) program.

Eight FHSU students spent their spring break in the Denver metro area, volunteering in soup kitchens, food banks, and homeless shelters for women and children. This experience enabled the students to gain further understanding of community issues they would otherwise have never learned about.

"We worked hard and were busy, but had a good time doing it. We realized what we were doing was having an impact and making a difference," Jared Fox, ASB Volunteer.

Tigers In Service will offer ASB again next year.



FHSU students work in a soup kitchen

National Youth Service Day

On April 15-17 millions of youth participated in National Youth Service Day (NYSD), the largest service event in the world.

Fort Hays State University had its own group of NYSD representatives present on campus and on the streets surrounding campus. There is little doubt that Fort Hays State University is one of the cleanest campuses you will find anywhere. However, something quite different can sometimes be said for the residential area just off campus.

Tigers In Service organized nearly 100 volunteers to clean up the area. With the support of the Hays City Commission, the Parks Department, Public Works, and local residents, volunteers took to the streets. The city of Hays generously donated all of the supplies needed for the event as well as all trash removal.



Area youth clean up campus

Welch Helps Promote Civic Engagement

George Welch, CEO of Solutus Group in Chicago, sponsored weekly, quarter-page ads that publicized American Democracy Project events. "When approached by the Center for Civic Leadership, I was pleased to be able to sponsor a public information section about it in

the University Leader." The advertisements aid in making FHSU students, faculty, and staff aware of events and information regarding civic engagement. By creating awareness of civic engagement, FHSU moves closer to having a more fully engaged campus.

"When I visited FHSU last year, I was impressed with the growing interest and activities of civic engagement on campus. I believe the best thing we can do is invest our time and money in the next generation who will lead us."



English Department Embraces Service-Learning

English courses are all about getting students to think critically and connect with their world through language. FHSU English faculty have chosen to implement service-learning into their courses because of its ability to connect students with their community beyond the classroom.

Students in Brenda Craven's **English Composition II** class participate in an oral history project focusing on student life during the 1940s. Drawing on resources from Forsyth Library, students familiarize themselves with FHSU and western Kansas during that time period. Students also learn about the interview process and develop and refine a set of questions before conducting a personal interview with a "senior" FHSU alumnus. Following the interview, students create and edit a final transcribed draft for archival purposes.



Cheryl Hofstetter Duffy's **Advanced Composition** students volunteer with local nonprofit agencies. They write about those agencies through research papers, exploring an issue relevant to their chosen agencies. Finally, they create a public document for that agency. Students in **Theories of Rhetoric and Composition** conduct research and write annotated bibliographies for middle and high school teachers. Students in **Techniques of Teaching English** tutor ESL students at the public library and a local high school. Students in **English Composition I** collaborate with international students studying at the Hays Language Institute to write newsletters for use in the HLI classroom, where having relevant, high-interest reading material is vital. Graduate students in **Teaching Community-Based Writing** interview residents of the Alterra Sterling House assisted living center and write their oral histories.

Pam Shaffer teaches **Multiculturalism in the U.S.**, a course designed in part to move students beyond their limited cultural experiences. Dr. Shaffer asks her students to spend time working with a nonprofit agency, learning about the work of that agency and the constituents it serves. Students write an essay defining service-learning, profiling the agency, and reflecting on their experience working in the community. Finally, students discuss that experience with the rest of the class so they learn from each other and heighten one another's understanding of the world beyond the life of a college student.



Students in Sharon Wilson's **Technical and Report Writing** class use their writing and organizational skills to orchestrate projects to benefit local agencies. Working in teams, students planned an event to recruit college men to volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters, sponsored a "Bowl for Kids' Sake" fund-raiser, staged a "Paint a Pumpkin" day for children still on the waiting list for a "Big," and organized a "Paint an Ornament" party for potential Big and Little Sisters. Another team held a fund-raising auction for the Russell Community Partnership, and one student organized an "Adopt a Pet" day for the Humane Society of the High Plains. This coming fall, students in **Techniques of Teaching English** will participate as tutors with a variety of local organizations.

Linda Smith teaches **English Composition 102, Environmentalism: Reading the Past; Writing the Future**. This course not only traces the history of environmentalism in the U.S., but also encourages awareness of contemporary environmental issues as students develop a land ethic for the 21st Century. Students work with FHSU departments, Facilities Planning, the Physical Plant, and Residential Life—as well as with various offices within the City of Hays. This fall, students in **English for International Students** will complete a service-learning project geared toward helping future international students. Students in this class develop a self-help handbook written by international students for international students.

