

# A SEMESTER IN REVIEW

## What is the PROF Center?

### Special points of interest:

- What is the PROF Center?
- Dr. Marilla D. Svinicki of The University of Texas at Austin gives Workshop on Teaching
- Dr. Hosokawa introduces Problem Based Learning to faculty and students
- What is Service Learning?
- Professor Marcela Moran discusses Film & Literature Class
- Dr. Sergio Garza talks about Plazas Comunitarias

In 2005, a team of administrators noted that there was need for a center that would focus on mentoring and helping faculty and students achieve their respective goals in higher education. On the basis of data from the administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NESSE) and other relevant sources, the Professional Resource Opportunities for Faculty Center (PROF) was created to help faculty and students alike meet their personal goals.



Texas A&M International University Killam Library

The PROF Center also provides several professional growth opportunities for faculty to facilitate the delivery of the courses they are teaching. It also provides the tools to increase student involvement and collaboration in classrooms to enhance the overall learning environment. The various activities occur in both Fall and Spring semesters and begin with an organized faculty orientation in the summer.

During the Spring 2013 Semester, the PROF Center hosted two faculty seminars — one by Dr. Marilla D. Svinicki from The University of Texas at Austin and another by Dr. Michael C. Hosokawa from the School of Medicine at the University of Missouri.

Through the Title V Sophomore Success Initiative, Dr. Marcela Uribe, Service-Learning Coordinator, and staff have helped faculty create courses that increase student involvement in the classroom as well as in their community through Service-Learning. Each course focuses on two distinct aspects. The first is to identify student learning outcomes. For example, in the Literature & Film class, students are expected to compare and contrast films and literary works, as well as understand how literary works may be adapted into films. The second aspect is the service learning portion in which students are to be expected to connect what they have learned in the classroom to an issue in the community. In the case of the Film and Literature course, students create short videos to showcase the efforts of Literacy Volunteers of Laredo.

## “Lessons About Teaching Large Classes”

The PROF Center hosted a faculty workshop February 8, 2013 by Dr. Marilla D. Svinicki from The University of Texas at Austin on how to teach and engage students in large classes.

In the fall 2012, over 7,000 students enrolled at TAMU, leading to an increase in the number of students enrolled in different courses. The workshop was created to help professors teaching large classes further expand their knowledge on how to manage and effectively deliver instruction in classrooms with over 150 students using specially designed teaching methods.



The workshop’s main objectives were to teach TAMU professors different ways to actively engage and approach students in large classes to increase their learning capacity and involvement.

Dr. Svinicki advised faculty members that one of the best techniques that can be used in large classrooms is to group students into teams because teamwork facilitates learning and increases their likelihood of completing assignments. Another technique discussed was how to let students have input regarding the structure of the curriculum for the course to increase their involvement and learning.

In addition, Dr. Svinicki stressed that students need to be engaged and make a connection with the material in order to further learn and expand their knowledge in and outside the classroom. In doing so, students are able to associate real life situations with experiences inside the classroom to help them understand both the material and the world in a simpler way.



For more information on the workshop by Dr. Svinicki, interested individuals can contact the PROF Center’s office (KL 415) at 326-3132 to obtain the full workshop video.

## “Problem-Based Learning”

**D**r. Michael C. Hosokawa, a graduate studies professor at the University of Missouri School of Medicine (UMS), delivered two workshops on Problem-Based Learning (PBL) on April 4-5, 2013 at TAMIU.



According to Dr. Hosokawa, problem-based learning is based on the idea of “learning to learn” theory. This means that students can establish connections between what have learned in real life situations or problem-based scenarios with their classroom experiences. Student working groups allow students to learn from each other rather than from a sole authority. Doing so tends to increase students’ motivation and participation in the learning process.

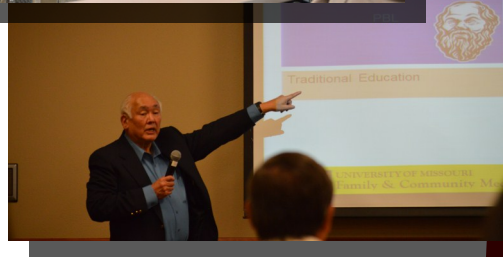
The first workshop was open to faculty and students from the College of Education and focused on the importance of PBL. Dr. Hosokawa gave various examples of students in his own courses and the various experiences he has faced during his time at UMS. He also explained how PBL can be used in classroom learning communities, including those in the medical programs at UMS’s School of Medicine.

“Can today’s educators teach for a world they can’t imagine?”

Dr. Michael Hosokawa

On Friday, April 5, the workshop for TAMIU faculty focused mainly on the incorporation of PBL into their curriculums, the assessment of PBL, and the benefits of PBL for TAMIU. Throughout his presentations, Dr. Hosokawa explained in detail how professors can use PBL to make instruction intriguing, useful, and an essential part of their teaching.

For more information on the workshop by Dr. Hosokawa, individuals are encouraged to contact the PROF Center’s office (KL 415; 326-3132), to view the full workshop video.



## “Service-Learning at TAMIU”

Service-learning at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) has sparked interest in students to become more involved in the community of Laredo. The various classes offered in the spring and fall semesters give students an opportunity to participate in credit-bearing courses paired with community service.

The purpose of the service-learning program is to create an overall awareness among students of various issues impacting the city of Laredo.



Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich students’ learning experiences, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

Through the course of two years, the Service-Learning Initiative has grown by offering various courses to students on the purpose of service learning in the communities. The program works in conjunction with various local organizations to provide well rounded experiences to the students, as well as insight into what the organization does to benefit the community.

Each year the PROF Center hosts a Service-Learning Expo for students to showcase students’ involvement in service-learning activities. Additionally, the PROF Center offers a Summer Seminar for professors to share ideas and develop the various service-learning courses offered at the University. These experiences help students and faculty alike acquire a deeper understanding of the different aspects of service-learning at TAMIU.



Although the service-learning program at TAMIU has been in existence for only a couple of years, students participation and interest in the program has increased substantially. Professors interested in participating in a service-learning course are encouraged to speak to Dr. Marcela Uribe, Service-Learning Coordinator.



## “Service Learning, cont’d”



### Facts about Service –Learning at TAMIU

- 72.6% of students agree or strongly agree on having enough information about the service project.
- 88% of students were able to arrange transportation to the service-learning site/ placement.
- 78.1% agree or strongly agree that the service work they performed helped them learn the course content.
- 77% agree or strongly agree on the enhancement of their learning of the course content through the reflection of activities.
- 92.3% agree or strongly agree that their service-learning work made a positive contribution to the community.
- 83.5% agree or strongly agree that the service learning course has made them more likely to engage with the community.
- 71.5% agree or strongly agree on social problems being more complex than they used to think.
- 72.6% agree or strongly agree on taking another service-learning course.
- Out of the 85 students that answered the survey: 35 were sophomore, 19 were juniors and 19 were seniors.
- 93% of students were between the ages of 18 to 29. (45.9% 18-20 and 47.1% 21-29.



## “Literature and Film & Literacy Volunteers of Laredo”



**M**arcela Moran, TAMIU Associate Professor of Communications, the PROF Center, and Literacy Volunteers of Laredo have come together to create a course at TAMIU in which students learn how to relate literature and film with a service-learning project.

This semester Moran chose the novel *“Push”* written by the poet Sapphire as the foreground to the service-learning course because of the high percentage of illiteracy in Webb county. The book’s film adaptation, *“Precious,”* tells the story of the main character in the novel and her struggles with illiteracy.

Moran’s interest in service-learning is illustrated by her efforts to contact Dr. Marcela Uribe, Service-Learning Coordinator, to figure out how to design a service learning component as part of the study of the book *Push*. This inquiry was deemed appropriate due to the high illiteracy rate in Webb county, and because she wanted to make her students aware of illiteracy in our community.

The course integrates learning about various literary mediums with their film adaptations to help students understand and appreciate their similarities and differences.

As a final assignment, students are required to conduct interviews at Literacy Volunteers of Laredo and create a short film explaining the services offered. They must also write an essay explaining the interplay between one of the literary works they have read in or outside of class and its respective film adaptation.

The film service-learning project helps students in at least two ways. First, students must interview either a tutor or a participant at Literacy Volunteers of Laredo to learn more about their experiences, personal struggles with literacy, and the services provided by this organization. Doing so enables them to connect what they learned in the community with the experiences that *“Precious”* encountered in the movie. Second, students must utilize the film methods they acquired in class to produce their own short video.

For more information about ways to incorporate service-learning into University courses, interested individuals are encouraged to contact Dr. Marcela Uribe at 326-3133, [marcela.uribe@tamiu.edu](mailto:marcela.uribe@tamiu.edu), or in her office (KL 415).



## “Language Arts & Spanish: Plazas Comunitarias”



Dr. Sergio D. Garza, Director of the D. D. Hachar Honors Scholarship Program and Assistant Professor of Bilingual Education in TAMIU's College of Education, with assistance of the PROF Center and the Mexican General Consulate, created a service-learning course. In this course, students learn effective strategies to teach Spanish Language Arts, while providing assistance to the Plazas Comunitarias program.

The course emphasizes two main instructional methods to teach reading and writing. These include the word view approach and teaching through a socio psycholinguistic point of view.

The service-learning component of the course was developed as a result of Dr. Garza wanting to improve the academic Spanish of the students at TAMIU. He was able to get the students involved in a service-learning project by collaborating with Dr. Marcela Uribe, Service-Learning Coordinator and the Mexican General Consulate in Laredo. The project enabled participating students to help Mexican citizens living in the United States and Canada to earn their elementary and middle school certificate. The Mexican government created this program out of concern for citizens living in a foreign community with limited possibilities of continuing their education.

Dr. Garza's students tutor the adults participating in the Plazas Comunitarias program. This experience has helped students become keenly aware of how to teach academic Spanish. The students enrolled in the course alternate every Saturday as they take turns working with the adults at Larga Vista Community Center, located in south Laredo. The students use what they have learned within the classroom to help participating adults earn their respective educational certificates.

In addition, participation in the Plazas Comunitarias program enables students to develop an awareness of the multicultural diversity that exists in Laredo. Many of the participating immigrants possess a variety of native languages (e.g., Nahuatl, Totonaca), as well as different Spanish language dialects. The students are amazed by the plethora of experiences that these Mexican immigrants possess, but which educators may not know exist. Dr. Garza acknowledges that it is vitally important for educators to understand the student populations they serve to maximize the benefits of the services provided.

For more information about Plazas Comunitarias, interested individuals are urged to contact Dr. Sergio Garza at [sgarza@tamiu.edu](mailto:sgarza@tamiu.edu), 326-2674, or visit him in Killam Library, 418C.







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