

Warped

by Scott McCullar



Professors say field trips give view of 'real world'

By SUSAN MCDONALD
Reporter

The words "field trip" usually conjure up visions of elementary students going to the zoo.

However, fields trips now have become a prevalent part of a college education. Professors agree, that field trips give students a chance to see the real world and get knowledge they can't receive in class.

Many professors even schedule required field trips in their syllabi.

Dr. Arnold LeUnes, an associate professor of psychology here, requires his students to go on at least one of four field trips scheduled during the semester. LeUnes takes his students to the Travis State School, the Austin State Hospital, the Giddings State School and a picnic for the people at the Brehm State School.

LeUnes said he sees a definite change in students' attitudes toward mentally retarded people after the trips. They also increase student awareness about mental health issues, he said.

"You can talk about it until you're blue in the face," LeUnes said. "But the students don't know until they've seen it. A picture is worth a thousand words."

LeUnes said he makes his field trips mandatory because many students would not participate if the trips weren't. This is because students are either too busy or they don't want to know about mentally retarded people.

"These are not excuses," he said. "Now that they are part of course requirements, I have almost a 100 percent turnout."

Other professors use field trips as extra credit, such as Dr. John Giardino, an associate professor of geography. Giardino makes several field trips each year to Colorado and New Mexico as well as Junction and Galveston.

"Field trips are classrooms on wheels," Giardino said. "They give students a first-hand look at and experience with phenomena in the world."

Giardino said field trips also are important because they help break down barriers between the professor and the students.

"They (the students) see that professors eat and smile and laugh . . .," he said. "We're not just someone who comes in and lectures for a few hours each week."

The trips also give students the opportunity to get to know each other which increases classroom cooperation and creates a friendlier atmosphere.

Six marriages have resulted from people meeting on his field trips, Giardino said.

Besides those scheduled for a class, clubs also sponsor trips. Dr. Gary Schugart, dean of the College of Business Administration and the Accounting Society sponsor, takes students to either Dallas or Houston to visit accounting firms. The trip is open to juniors in the organization.

"The purpose of the trip is educational," Schugart said. "A large portion of juniors (accounting majors) doesn't even know what accountants do."

Also, it is important for students to see the physical atmosphere and surroundings he will work in, Schugart said.

"The students find out more about what accountants do in a weekend than a professor could lecture about in weeks," he said.

The Marketing Society, sponsored by Dr. Larry Gresham and Dr. Alan Bush, both assistant marketing professors, takes trips to Dallas, Houston and San Antonio to tour companies such as Zales, Neiman Marcus, Joske's and Sanger Harris.

"Students get a good picture of what these firms do," Bush said. "They get a real world perspective of what goes on and see different job opportunities. This is something you can't get in a classroom."

Besides seeing job differences, Gresham said field trips are beneficial because they give students the opportunity to see classroom ideas and marketing strategies put to use in real-world settings.

Gresham said field trips are also good public relations for the University.

"People have a stereotype of Aggies that is no longer of value," Gresham said. "Neiman-Marcus was shocked when our group was 80 percent to 90 percent female. They were expecting a bunch of men in uniforms."

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