**Geography: Researching national issues**

Faculty in the Department of Geography are some of the most prolific researchers at Texas State, winning more than $10 million in grants and contracts over the past five years. Their projects, which include a diversity of topics, provide valuable information on issues of national importance.

**Preparing the next generation of geographers**

For the past three summers, public school students from the Rio Grande Valley to the Panhandle have come to the Texas State campus to explore careers in Geography. In a workshop sponsored by the Geography Center for Geographic Education, the students use geographic technology to do such things as measure water flow rates in the San Marcos River, take inventories of plant and animal life, navigate through an obsolete course using Global Positioning units, and create maps that show water resources and water usage. They also study a geographic hazard—a nearby gorge that was created by sudden flooding. The purpose of the workshop, which receives funding from the National Geographic Society, is to interest students in pursuing careers in geography. “The students get a wonderful opportunity to think about what they would like to do in the future and to realize that it can be a wonderful career opportunity,” said Geography Professor Dr. Richard Boehm. Students have enjoyed the workshop so much that some have returned as workshop counselors in succeeding years. One participant—Joseph Herron, a junior at Harlandale High School in San Antonio—said, “Geography is more than just remembering the capitals of states; it is involved in everything, from monitoring pollution to predicting where some people in the United States will live.” I found it truly amazing what you can do with a career in geography.

The Geography Center also trained more than 300 Texas public school teachers this year to use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology in their classrooms, bringing them up to date on the technology and its uses. The workshop was funded and in the marketplace.

The training was sponsored by a grant from the National Geographic Society. Teachers learned to create a systems of layered, computerized maps that enable the analysis of spatial information. For example, by using GIS, students can determine probable crop yields by looking at soil conditions and rainfall amounts, or they can analyze fire risk and determine where police departments should allocate their resources.

**Climate change and the alpine tree line**

The Lovell Center for Environmental Geography and Hazards Research has a grant from the U.S. Geological Survey to study soil microbes against climate change and the alpine tree line in Glacier National Park.

Kens, who won two on the U.S. Supreme Court

Dr. Paul Kens, Professor of Political Science at Texas State, has received a $400,000 fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, to write a book on the U.S. Supreme Court from 1873 to 1887. The book, part of a University of South Carolina Press series on the history of the U.S. Supreme Court, will cover the Reconstruction-era tenure of the Court’s seventh Chief Justice, Morrison R. Waite. During Waite’s tenure (1873-1887), the Supreme Court decided its first cases interpreting the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, adopted after the Civil War. These amendments abolished slavery (13th Amendment), established citizenship rights (14th Amendment) and guaranteed the right to vote for former slaves and U.S. citizens of color (15th Amendment). Notably, decisions by the Waite Court reduced the protections against discrimination that the 14th Amendment afforded to African Americans and set the scene for the later use of the Amendment as a protection for business interests against government regulation. Dr. Kens, who in 1996 received the Hughes-Gossen Award for Historical Excellence from the Supreme Court Historical Society, received another NEH fellowship in 1999, to write a book on the famous gold rush forty-niner and U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen J. Field, and he is author of the 1998 book Exchange: New York Economic Regulation on Trial, both published by the University of Kansas Press.
Saving Hays County’s rural character

People are drawn to Hays County, where San Marcos is located, because of its rural character—it’s beautiful scenery and open spaces. As a result, Hays County has one of the fastest-growing suburban populations in the state, which threatens to diminish the county’s rural quality.

“The open spaces, we’ll have to find ways to help farmers and ranchers to sustain agriculture—to earn a living so that they can stay on their land,” said Dr. Sue Johnson in Texas State’s Department of Geography. She and Dr. Pamela Showalter in the Department of Geography have a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to study ways that Hays County can maintain its rural character by continuing to farm even as the countryside becomes more suburban.

To celebrate its 30th anniversary, Pi Alpha Alpha published a commemorative monograph containing the best three papers from its national manuscript competition. Papers by Texas State graduates Julie W. Loera (2003 MPA) and Amy C. Jones (2004 MPA) were among the three selected. Loera’s paper focused on food safety emergency response procedures and Jones’ paper discussed access to technology in Texas public schools.

Texas State MPA students often win the nation’s top awards for their papers, in part because they follow a method for organizing and writing research papers, created by Dr. Patricia Shields, MPA program director. Called Step by Step: Building a Research Paper, the method has been adopted by universities, government agencies, and businesses around the country.

U.S. State Department funds International Studies curriculum

The Center for International Studies received a $156,878 grant from the U.S. Department of State to add and revise courses in the International Studies degree program. Under the grant titled “Inter-American Studies Project,” courses will be added in Latin American and Canadian literature, in intercultural education and communication, in the social and economic history of the Americas, and in Business Spanish, French, and Portuguese. Also, a world technology course and the International Studies seminar will be revised to include a Canadian-Latin American emphasis. The grant will also enable the Center to offer the U.S. State Department’s “International Studies 101” course to the general public.

Native Americans suffer environmental discrimination

Native Americans in the West today could be disproportionately exposed to toxic chemicals and unexploded bombs, compared to non-Native Americans. A study recently published by Dr. Chad Smith of Texas State’s Department of Sociology and Dr. Gregory Hooks of Washington State contends that the dramatic expansion of U.S. military bases during the 20th Century was largely concentrated in remote, arid places where Indian reservations are located. Using Defense Department data on hazardous locations are close to Indian reservations.

Sustainable agriculture maintains soil fertility, fights erosion, and produces food using a minimum of chemicals. Its success depends on widespread community support: communities must incorporate farming into their urban planning and provide markets for the farm’s products. “For sustainable agriculture to work, the community has to adopt it as a goal. Communities in the Northeast and Midwest have succeeded in incorporating sustainable agriculture into their land use plans, but that hasn’t happened yet in Hays County. We hope our study will instigate that dialogue,” Johnson said.

Dr. Chad Smith

Dr. Sue Johnson

Advancing students’ writing through creative writing instruction

Social studies teachers in Hays County and San Marcos are learning new ways to teach history. The teachers attend summer institutes, given by faculty in the Texas State Department of History. The institutes focus on American history from the 15th through the 20th Centuries. The emphasis is on teaching students to become critical thinkers and to gather evidence and draw conclusions from primary historical sources—such as the U.S. Declaration of Independence or President George W. Bush’s Address to Congress after 9/11. An institute web site—http://www.tustanet.edu/teachamhistory/—provides teachers and students with access to dozens of significant historical documents and practical lesson plans for using primary sources in the classroom. Trace Etienne-Grey, workshop coordinator and History Department faculty member, said the workshop broadens the teachers’ perspectives by helping them to do such things as analyze how historians use evidence, examine bias and point of view, gain an understanding of historical debate, and examine history through the values of the time. The interaction with the public school teachers also helps the Texas State History faculty by giving them a better idea of what information and resources the teachers need in order to help students to make sense of history. The institutes are funded through a $750,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education.