

## Summary of SAGA 2008-2010 by Claudia Slate, SAGA Director

### Faculty

Approximately 43 classes a year—172 classes total-- included SAGA components, and the premier SAGA class—ENG 220—a survey of literature that focuses on poverty and hunger was taught by Professor Paula Buck for three semesters. Professor Mary Pharr taught an advanced film studies class that viewed and critiqued films with the themes of poverty and hunger. In Fall 2009, all of the 21 First Year Experience classes used the common reading, *Enrique's Journey*, as a text, and addressed the SAGA theme within an interdisciplinary context.

### SAGA Committee

The committee met monthly during the school year to share information and make decisions about the implementation of SAGA throughout campus. The committee established an Advisory Sub-Committee that includes community leaders whom the SAGA committee can consult for guidance and information concerning local opportunities for service. After considering dozens of books, the committee approved a common reader for first year students for Fall 2009: *Enrique's Journey* by Sonia Nazario. A VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) volunteer, Sabrina Edwards came to campus Fall 2009 and has been committed to identifying options for service learning partnerships, networking with local volunteer agencies, and creating a database of resources and opportunities.

### Students

**Presentations**--SAGA has been the highlight of several presentations to students. During orientation week, all first time students watched a video introducing the SAGA theme with interviews of students, alumni, and community activists. Then students participated in a lively discussion about their involvement in the community. In another session, resident advisors and orientation leaders received particulars about SAGA. The SAGA video was shown to all students at the September convocation as well. The SAGA director presented SAGA goals and some specific ways to become involved to about 100 students from campus organizations attending the SGA Leadership Summit.

**Convocations**—In Fall convocations, two common reading authors, Da Chen, author of *Colors of the Mountain*, and Sonia Nazario, author of *Enrique's Journey*, spoke to a campus wide audience and held question and answer sessions later in the day. At a Spring 2009 convocation, representatives from Oxfam spoke on “Framing the Global Food Crisis” and conducted afternoon breakout sessions to give students the tools and resources needed to mobilize around specific food crisis issues. The evening program was an Humanitarian Emergency Simulation in which students joined a highly interactive role-playing session based on an imaginary (but very possible) scenario. Blake Mycoskie, founder of Tom's Shoes, spoke at a spring 2010 convocation and involved FSC students in an effort to give shoes to needy children in the Lakeland community.

**Student Development**—A Hunger Awareness Meal, held in September 2008, was organized by Student Development with help from resident advisors.

**Volunteer Services**—Service Days were held each semester with opportunities for students to volunteer their time both on and off campus. Also, the VISTA volunteer on campus organized Poverty and Hunger Awareness Week, November 16-20, 2009, with panels of formerly homeless

individuals from Lighthouse Ministries and Talbot House. One organization that FSC students, faculty, and staff have come to embrace as one of their favorite outreach projects is Farmworkers Ministry, which aids over 500 migrant workers and their families by donating food, clothes, and tutoring services. FSC involvement has included volunteering at free health fairs for the workers and their families and fulfilling dozens of children's gift requests at Christmas. Several emergency food drives at FSC helped fill the Farmworkers Ministry pantry.

**Films--**Two films on the topic of poverty and hunger were shown in the Thrift Room each semester. Some of the films shown were *Billy Elliot*, *God Grew Tired of Us*, and *Slumdog Millionaire*.

**The Student Government Association**—SGA sponsored and organized the Week of Impact during the spring semesters of 2009 and 2010 providing students lots of opportunities to learn about SAGA issues and to act upon their awareness. They helped out at the Farmworkers Ministry (where they organized donated clothes and prepared for a yard sale for migrant workers), at Talbot House, and at Lighthouse Ministries. Students also made and distributed food for the homeless with Campus Sandwich Ministries.

**Wellness Initiatives**— The Wellness and Volunteer Fair was held each fall with approximately 25 organizations setting up tables and giving 100's of students ideas for cooperation within the local Lakeland community. The Wellness Center held an all day Wellness Retreat with a strong emphasis on the SAGA theme on Saturday, February 2, 2009. The keynote address included question and answer and discussion about students' experience with SAGA. Two of the breakout sessions—Haiti Mission Trip and Migrant Worker Program—also focused on poverty and hunger. Though the number of students participating was low, student response on a conducted survey evaluating the retreat was overwhelmingly positive. Also, with Race Across America, fitness programming conducted a virtual race with a SAGA theme where participants earned "miles" by exercising. Each week had a different with educational information about poverty and hunger pertaining to that particular region or city, along with motivational text to encourage the 41 participants.

**Student Organization Service**—each student organization on campus adopted at least one philanthropy focused on poverty and hunger. *Cantilevers: A Journal of the Arts*, which annually publishes the poetry, short fiction, and art from FSC students, alumni, faculty, and staff, sponsored a SAGA writing competition in 2009 and presented an award to the best entry that had a poverty and/or hunger theme.

**SAGA offshoots**--SAGA has generated several offshoot initiatives available to students. During The Center for Science and Religion, which holds an annual lecture series, focused the four lectures of 2008 on the theme of poverty and hunger. Speakers from FSC and from the Lakeland community spoke on varying aspects of SAGA. Also, one of the modern language professors took a group over spring break 2009 on a service learning trip to Honduras in conjunction with Hope for Honduras, a nonprofit organization dedicated to make positive changes in the life of impoverished children in this Latin American country. SAGA sponsored the campus visit of a spokesperson from Hope for Honduras to introduce the program to students and faculty.

### Assessment

**Collection:** Faculty members on the SAGA committee collected sample student assessments (in the form of embedded questions and essays) from SAGA component classes and have used a rubric to determine student progress on SAGA knowledge and awareness. The Survey of Awareness was given to students each fall and spring. A SAGA Scan was given to all students

at fall and spring convocations asking if they had been involved in an FSC sponsored community service activity and if they had participated in a community service activity not directly related to FSC.

**Results:** The Spring 2009 Awareness Survey showed an increase of students who had volunteered from 27% to 43%. In Spring 2009 out of 1233 students polled with the SAGA Scan at convocation, 60% had been involved in some community service. Of those reporting involvement, 33% said that it was in the area of providing food or shelter. In Fall 2009, out of 1,657 responses to the SAGA scan, 48% had participated in an FSC related community service project and 31% of those were SAGA related. The Survey of Engagement and Survey of Awareness were given to students in April during the busy MWF 9:05 a.m. class hour to ensure a cross section of students. Focus groups with a cross sampling of students were held in April 2009 to assess changes in students' awareness and knowledge of the SAGA theme. These students indicated that they would like more course assignments that required non-essay projects (oral, visual, statistical, case studies) rather than so many papers assigned on the topic of poverty and hunger. However, overall they appeared to support the SAGA effort enthusiastically. The assessment results reflect well on our course efforts. Approximately 66% of the students who responded to the SAGA Engagement Survey Spring 2009 reported SAGA- related activity in their classes, with 50% reporting class discussion, 63% between 1-4 readings, 61% between 1-4 writing assignments, 54% presentations, and 57% other class activities. 90% of the students reported their experience with SAGA related activities as Excellent, Good or Fair. Results from Spring SAGA surveys and focus groups are not yet available.

### **Examples of Faculty Efforts**

**The Library** provided an extensive SAGA display with books focused on the SAGA theme and maintained a website link with statistics about poverty and hunger.

**The Modern Language Department** sponsored a spring break trip to Honduras, where students interacted with impoverished Honduran children and adults.

**The Theatre Department** performed a play with poverty as a central theme—audiences were able to experience how poverty shaped the characters' lives and bound them together.

**A Math class** assigned a set of countries for which they were to determine. E.g. Land use, population, literacy rate, infant mortality rate, unemployment rate.

**An Economics class** assigned a research paper that defined hunger and poverty and then grappled with a comparison of living space and income of poor families and non-poor ones and how the government and private organizations combat hunger.

**An Accounting class** discussed-how tax laws affect those in poverty.

**A History class** dealt with the role of poverty in the progression of the French Revolution

**Computer class** students developed software applications to educate users about the problems of poverty, e.g. the relationship of AIDS and poverty in Central Africa. One student planned to use the project in interning in high school social studies classes.

**English classes** critically read and discussed literature and films relating to poverty and hunger, responding in essays and journal entries. E.g. economic conditions and social problems portrayed in Victorian English novels.

**In Sociology** a service learning component meant that students worked with needy community children with a food experiment that promoted discussion of the SAGA theme.

**A Religion class** studied the economic and political context of various countries with different religious traditions. Of course, the Center for Science and Religion sponsored a four lecture series on different aspects of the SAGA theme.

**In Communication**, students' gave speeches about an aspect of poverty and hunger. The students of another class researched how the media cover issues of poverty and hunger.

**Education** classes did research projects on the poverty level of the city the students hope to teach in. Dozens of education students were Christmas angels last year for migrant workers' children.

**In Biology**, a research paper was assigned on the biological aspects of poverty and hunger. Some focused on agriculture, some on the health and disease aspects.

**Nursing** focused on the Health care needs of the poor. Interest in meeting the needs of homeless persons was fueled by one student whose brother is homeless due to drug/alcohol problems

## **Director's Impressions**

### **What went particularly well**

Achievement of cooperation across campus, i.e. faculty, who incorporated SAGA themes in their classes and sent the committee student essays for assessment; wellness center, volunteer office, Chaplain's office, and student development.

Establishment of a common language of community service on campus, aided by presentations to students and efforts during first year orientation.

Increase of student excitement and participation in community service, including establishing a strong bond with the Farmworkers Ministry.

Gathering of data according to the QEP plan.

### **What needs improvement**

Funding and support from the administration for service projects and faculty development of SAGA classes

Synthesizing and distributing of data in a timely matter and communication and cooperation from Institutional Research. This could result in timely analysis of the data so that programming improvements could be made accordingly. Better collection of data from organizations, etc.

Timely feedback from the administration regarding suggestions from the Common Reading Task Force.

Rethinking of the Film Series. While the attendance was good during the fall because of FYS classes giving extra credit, it fell dramatically during the spring. With no FYS classes, the film series attendance will probably falter. The question will be whether all the planning and effort that goes into this series is justified given the low turnout.

Consideration of a SAGA script, a set of facts and discussion questions about the SAGA theme, for faculty members to consider employing in their classrooms and for student life to use in programming. This would make student awareness easier to assess.

