

SAGA Report for Fall 2008

Faculty

Though the planned breakout session of the Faculty Forum was cancelled (due to the weather), an extensive SAGA Faculty Plan was presented to each faculty member. This Plan outlined SAGA themes, goals, student outcomes, and assessment measurements; listed SAGA events and courses with SAGA components; and provided a timetable of SAGA faculty initiatives. EXL 101 (Examined Life), which every incoming student takes, includes SAGA discussions and activities. Also, approximately 43 classes include SAGA components this semester, and the premier SAGA class—ENG 220, taught by Professor Paula Buck—is a survey of literature that focuses on poverty and hunger, with several outside speakers who are presenting on the topic.

SAGA Committee

The committee has meet monthly and has collected from faculty all the course syllabi that have SAGA components and sample assessments from their classes (in the form of embedded questions and essays). Four assessment sets will be collected from each of the seven divisions this semester, and faculty members on the SAGA committee will use a rubric to determine student progress on SAGA awareness. The committee is establishing an Advisory Sub-Committee that will include community leaders who the SAGA committee can look to for guidance and information concerning local opportunities for service. A Student Sub-Committee is also being established to include students who want to focus their energy on organizing service opportunities for the campus community. A SAGA sub-committee is in the process of recommending a 2010 common reader that focuses on poverty and hunger for incoming students. A VISTA volunteer will be coming to campus in November and will be committed through the academic year to establishing a database of local volunteer opportunities and to networking with local agencies.

Students

- The Survey of Awareness was given to students last spring and new incoming students this fall. The Office of Institutional Research has the results of both.
- SAGA has been the highlight of several presentations to students. During orientation week, all first time students watched a SAGA video that was created by an FSC communication major to introduce 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. On September 20, Claudia Slate presented SAGA goals and some specific ways to become involved to about 100 students from campus organizations attending the SGA Leadership Summit.
- The Hunger Awareness Meal was organized by Student Development with help from resident advisors and was held on the evening of September 25. This was a hugely successful event, involving about a 100 students. “Got a late night hunger?” was an

experience that challenged students to think about the realities faced by those who seek to make a difference. Each participant was given a colored card that defined what economical class they were required to join. Each class was also given a distinct meal (e.g. the rich received a three course meal while the poor received rice and water), and there were stories and songs of poverty and hunger told from all over the world. The program ended with a debriefing session which encouraged the students to talk about their experience and how they would like to act upon the awareness that was created. A survey was sent out the following day allowing the students to evaluate the program.

- First year students have been discussing the common reading, *Colors of the Mountain*, by Da Chen in their EXL classes. Da Chen spoke to the entire student body at the September convocation and to an English department group of about 50 in Danforth Chapel as well.
- A Volunteer Fair was held during Fall Service Day. Twenty-five organizations set up tables in Ordway and gave approximately 100 students who attended lots of ideas for cooperation within the local Lakeland community. One such organization, Farmworkers Ministry, is planning a November Welcome Back Party and Free Health Event for about 500 migrant workers and their families at a local church. Several faculty members are encouraging their students to participate in the event and/or adopt children for Christmas, taking Christmas angels to fulfill the children's gift requests.
- Each student organization on campus will adopt at least one philanthropy that focuses on poverty and hunger, and several clubs have already discussed the possibility of appointing a SAGA chair who will organize the effort.
- The SAGA film series is underway: *Billy Elliot*, a film about a young talented boy overcomes his impoverished coal-mining background in England, was shown to an audience of about 80 on September 2. Mary Pharr introduced the film and helped with the film notes, and Tom Norman was instrumental with the setup and after-film discussion. On November 12, students will have the opportunity to view *God Grew Tired of Us*, a documentary about the Lost Boys of Sudan. Resident advisors will be attending, and a post-film discussion will follow. The Festival of Fine Arts is getting in on the action as well: *Dancing at Lughnasa*, a play set in rural Ireland in 1936, will be staged November 13-16 and 21-13.
- SAGA has generated several offshoot initiatives. The Center for Science and Religion, which holds an annual lecture series, focused this year's four lectures 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, along with a nursing professor, is organizing a spring break 2009 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. In addition, students seem to be recognizing the research potential of the SAGA initiative: one FSC student has approached a psychology professor about doing a collaborative project focusing on the attitude of the poor about their economic condition.