Although Hurricane Ike caused significant damage in Nacogdoches, the SFA campus was relatively unscathed. Communication with students, faculty and staff was maintained during the storm through the campus alert system, and the SFA Emergency Operations Center issued 15 situational updates through the Web site, e-mail and voice-mail. The university's food service provider, Aramark, supplied meals on campus and at Red Cross shelters throughout the city. The Columbia Regional Geospatial Service Center supported search and rescue operations in Galveston, and two Web applications used for public safety and information purposes were launched during the storm. For complete details on the SFA response to Ike, log onto www.sfasu.edu/campusafety/ike.asp
Welcome,
As Stephen F. Austin State University celebrates 85 years of providing an outstanding educational experience in a beautiful and historic setting in East Texas Forest Country, we are pleased to bring you this second edition of The SFA Vista. I am happy to share with you these stories of the accomplishments of the university’s outstanding faculty and students.

As we celebrate the rich heritage of the university’s first 85 years, we continue to look ahead and plan for days to come. We recently unveiled the university’s Strategic Plan 2013: Planning for the Future. This is the framework upon which we as a university community will continue to build our institution, while responding to the changing realities of our world, our country, our state and our region. This set of achievable objectives will position Stephen F. Austin State University to fulfill its mission and become a “national model of a high quality, student-focused, comprehensive university.”

The campus continues to be a vibrant community of learning, made even livelier by construction taking place on the Early Childhood Research Center. Construction will begin soon on the Richard and Lucille DeWitt School of Nursing facility, just north of the campus. We look forward to opening these two new facilities for students who will continue in the tradition of building foundations for successful careers on our campus.

As you read the Vista stories of how SFA students improved the lives of East Texans by assisting a Nacogdoches nonprofit agency, completed research to aid a local law enforcement agency, and supported the university’s cleanup efforts after Hurricane Ike ripped through Nacogdoches, you will see why I consider it an honor and privilege to be a part of a university community that is enriched by the dedication of its members. It is this dedication that has inspired the university for 85 years, and the same dedication will keep us going for generations to come. I hope you will join us in the journey.

—Baker Pattillo
President
Stephen F. Austin State University

Letters
Editor:
I have received, read, and thoroughly enjoyed Issue One of The SFA Vista. Even though I am pretty far removed from my years on campus, the items covered were both interesting and inspiring to this old SFA Alum.

I graduated in the class of 1947 with a double major in chemistry and math and later earned an M.D. degree from the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, served three years in the U.S. Air Force, and practiced family medicine in Waxahachie until my retirement. Since my retirement, I have been more involved with SFA, having established an Alumni Scholarship Fund in my name as well as a charitable gift annuity with the SFA Foundation. With this I have received some two dozen thank-you letters from recipients with details regarding their ambitions, curriculum, and progress toward their goals. Thus, it is nice to see the articles on the various colleges, building programs, research projects, and student accomplishments, and I will look forward to subsequent issues.

Sincerely,
Nelson W. Jones, M.D.
Waxahachie, TX 75165

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People often say that teachers touch the lives of their students, but Dr. Alan Sowards touches the lives of teachers, and as a result, has a positive impact on children he never even meets. He has created a legacy of learning that reaches far beyond the SFA campus into classrooms across the state through programs that take science out of the classroom and into nature’s science lab—the great outdoors.

With a background that includes a decade as vice president for education of an oil and gas association, Sowards teaches his SFA students how to convey lessons to their future students by utilizing outdoor classrooms, as well as in-class aquariums, terrariums and container gardens. Rather than rote memorization, Sowards’ students learn to think about issues and the possible solutions to problems. He helps them understand why they should care about environmental issues.

“Instead of keeping students indoors, teachers can take what they’re teaching in class and let students experience it in the real world,” Sowards said. “This is not a new philosophy—it’s been written about and studied. But the exciting thing is that our research is showing the typical gender and racial differences found in indoor learning situations are not present with field-based experiences.”

Almost 20,000 Texas school students in the past six years have participated in Sowards’ Bugs, Bees, Butterflies and Blossoms program at SFA’s 20-acre Mast Arboretum. Sowards’ SFA students spend the first month of the spring semester learning hands-on science activities that correlate to state and national science standards. Then thousands of school students descend on the campus for their day in the gardens. “During the three days that we have
Educational programming, internships and distance learning opportunities. “It is the only partnership of its kind in the state,” Sowards said. “It will continue to provide an authentic learning laboratory to prepare SFA students for their professional careers, along with research programs and services for both undergraduate and graduate students.”

Sowards’ research for the Texas Science Teachers Association has presented some eye-opening results and shows that education in an outdoor laboratory environment crosses gender and ethnic boundaries to provide an equal learning opportunity for all students, regardless of the student’s learning style.

“There was a 42-percent gain in knowledge with no significant difference in gender scores,” he explained. “Typically, there is a 20-percent difference between male and female scores. There also was no ethnic group difference. This is because field investigations that utilize hands-on, inquiry-based activities involve students in their own authentic learning.

Abstract ideas are made more concrete and relevant. Not only do the students gain more knowledge, there is better retention of that knowledge.”

While Sowards is pleased with the results of this research, he finds the biggest rewards for his work in the e-mails he receives from his former students after they have graduated and are teaching classes of their own and utilizing field investigations to teach science concepts. Many set up outdoor education programs for their schools or bring their students to SFA to participate in one of the outdoor education programs.

“I’ve got good students here,” Sowards said. “They are serious about education, and they see the value of what we are doing.”

—Shirley Luna
Competitions Prepare Students for Careers in Marketing

You often need a good guide, coach or teacher to help you get where you want to go in life. SFA students who work with Dr. Marlene Kahla and Barbara Bieber-Hamby, marketing faculty in the Nelson Rusche College of Business, are fortunate to get all three.

Kahla and Bieber-Hamby prepare SFA students to compete in national and international marketing competitions against students representing some of the top universities in the world. SFA students have competed in these events, won top honors and established a name for SFA. And, in doing so, they have instilled a tradition of excellence for future teams.

SFA students have participated in contests for the American Marketing Association, the National Student Advertising Competition, the Houston Advertising Federation, and the International Collegiate Case Competition. Typically, the teams are assigned to a client company and given a real-life marketing project. The teams conduct market research, develop a marketing plan and present the plan to a panel of judges at the international competition. The judges normally include representatives from the client company and marketing professionals. Past client companies have included: Apple, Kellogg’s, Goodyear/Sullivan, and Procter and Gamble.

“These competitions prepare students to work in industry,” said Bieber-Hamby. “They learn that deadlines come quickly and that a company will not extend a deadline because the students woke up late. They learn that competition is real and that they must do their best work 100 percent of the time.”

Kahla and Bieber-Hamby take great pride in working with the teams and helping the students achieve their goals.

“I enjoy seeing the students learn how to apply their talents and skills in real situations,” Kahla said. “One team member from the most recent competition told the judges that this project had pushed him further than he ever thought he could be pushed.”

It is clear from talking with these professors that a bond forms between students and teachers while under the pressure of preparing for the competition.

“We regularly receive e-mail updates and Christmas cards from our former students,” remarked Bieber-Hamby. “They let us know when big events happen in their lives, such as getting a promotion or having a baby.”

One such student is Devin Greer, a 2007 graduate of SFA and former president of the SFA AMA chapter who competed in the 2006 International Case Competition. His team came in third to the teams from the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business and the University of Wisconsin.

“The AMA International Collegiate Case Competition is the collegiate equivalent to The Apprentice,” said Greer, referring to the popular reality-TV show. “Being in the AMA competition gives students the opportunity to apply the knowledge they have learned in the classroom with the supervision of two proven professionals.”

Part of what makes the competitions such a great training environment is that the marketing students often work with SFA art and communication students in developing the creative aspects of the project. Dr. Linda Bond, a communication faculty member, and Peter Andrew, a professor in the School of Art, have played major roles in helping the SFA teams prepare for the competitions.

In 2007, SFA students were on all three of the top winning advertising teams at the Houston Advertising Federation Student Conference and Competition. According to Bond, Kahla and Bieber-Hamby are so knowledgeable that the SFA teams consistently out perform students from larger schools.

“We’re lucky to have the two of them at SFA,” Bond said. “They care so much about the students that they have opened the doors to interdisciplinary work. Our students benefit from their spirit of collaboration and wealth of experience.”

Ultimately, a college education should help students prepare for the rest of their lives. Having professors, guides and coaches such as Kahla and Bieber-Hamby helps ensure that SFA students enter the world well prepared. Many of their students have gone on to top-level administration positions for companies including NBC and ABC/Disney.

“The mentorship and knowledge that Bieber-Hamby and Dr. Kahla so willingly offer their students makes transitioning into the workforce very easy,” Greer said.

—Marcus Cox
Boundaries of Being a Student and Taught Me What Professionalism is."

SFA’s theatre internships are unusual, explained Scott Shattuck, director of the School of Theatre. "Most schools offer their students only a one-semester internship, and only with nearby theatres. Our program gives our BFA students nine months of exposure and training in some of the nation’s best regional theatres."

The nine-month program allowed Flores to work on numerous shows, rotating between observing and interning with a professional stage manager and serving as an assistant stage manager.

"The scheduling was very beneficial," explained Flores. "I was able to use what I learned from interning and put it into actuality as an assistant stage manager."

The internship program was one of the reasons Rosenberger, Sugar Land senior, chose to attend SFA. She saw the Guthrie internship as a way "to make connections in the theatre world and to absorb all I can about stage managing."

Thus far, her expectations are being met, reported Rosenberger, pictured at bottom left. "Every aspect (of the experience) is incredible. Everyone is very good at what they do, and I learn so much every day."

Since the Guthrie is home to three different venues, the interns gain exposure to a variety of performance spaces and a broad range of stage-managing techniques.

Flores also noted that the internship put him in contact with incredibly talented and famous people. As he was watching the recent Tony Awards, he was struck by Mark Rylance’s acceptance speech for winning Best Lead Actor. "I was in awe because I worked with Mark during ‘Peer Gynt.’ I took his line notes for two months, and there he was accepting a Tony."

While the majority of SFA theatre students complete the professional internships during their final college year, some, such as Flores, return to SFA for one or two semesters.

"It’s such a benefit to have students come back to share with faculty and students what they’ve learned," said Allen Oster, SFA professor of theatre. "Chris began sending information back last spring to help make our stage managers more effective."

Oster added that the internships are beneficial in other ways, too. "Many students have landed their first professional jobs as a direct result of the internships, and people across the United States recognize that SFA graduates know what they’re doing."

"It’s a successful component of our overall program," said Shattuck. "One we hope to keep growing."

—Sylvia Bierschenk

A Sampling of SFA Theatre Internships

A.D. Players (Houston)
One of Houston’s largest resident theatres, producing plays that uphold human values, offer creativity, and promote literacy and education.

Arizona Theatre Company (Tucson and Phoenix)
About 25 SFA students have interned at this 40-year-old professional resident theatre recognized as one of the most dynamic theatres in the country.

CLIMB (Creative Learning Ideas for Mind and Body) Theatre (Minneapolis)
A nationally recognized nonprofit company that has provided programming to schools for 32 years.

Dallas Children’s Theatre
One of the largest professional, nonprofit family theatres in the Southwest, ranked by Time magazine as one of the top five theatres for youth in the United States.

Milwaukee Repertory Theater Company
About 40 SFA students have been placed with this nationally-recognized theater company providing the highest level of professional theatre in Wisconsin for 51 years.

The Guthrie Theater (Minneapolis)
A cultural landmark serving as a flagship for the American regional theatre movement since 1963.
Deep among the trees in a lush green forest west of Alto, Texas, Dr. Matthew McBroom, assistant professor in the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, leads a group of SFA researchers and student assistants to a water sample collection area. They are collecting the samples for a study McBroom has been working on since 1999 to determine the effects logging and other forest practices have on the waterways of East Texas.

“The ultimate goal was to establish whether we can clearcut and re-establish forestlands to meet society’s demands for wood products without degrading our water resources,” McBroom explained.

Initial indications are that if state-recommended best management practices—BMPs—are followed, water quality can be maintained.

“Leaving buffers of timber along stream channels is one way we can have less impact on water resources,” he said. “The research we are doing now further proves that current forest practices have much less impact on water resources compared to the way we did things 30 years ago. It gives landowners further scientific justification for using forestry BMPs.”

McBroom’s project is one of several studies recently incorporated into the newly formed Waters of East Texas (WET) Center at SFA. According to Dr. Kenneth Farrish, director of the Division of Environmental Science, The WET Center has created an interdisciplinary team of researchers with a strong background in water-related research.

“Water is becoming a huge issue for Texas, in general. The rest of the state doesn’t get as much rain as East Texas, so they are looking more and more to East Texas to supply their water.”

Because of the strength of the program, graduates of SFA’s environmental science and forestry programs are in high demand. The collaborative work between undergraduate and graduate students increases the amount of research that can be completed and provides an ideal learning experience for both groups.

“When we first put the WET Center proposal together, we started brainstorming about the one thing we were short of, and that was labor,” Farrish said. “There is such a high demand from government and industry for graduates with environmental knowledge, it can be difficult to get students to stay and pursue a master’s degree.”

That also may be a result of the research models being utilized in the center, which prepare students for their entrance into the working world.

“Usually we have a graduate student who is responsible for a particular project, and undergraduate students are hired to float between projects, helping whoever needs assistance at the time,” McBroom said. “We have found this to be a very effective model because we are teaching our graduate students to be more effective personnel managers at the same time we are training our undergraduates to work in environmental sciences and natural resources.”

Adam Miller, a recent SFA graduate with a master’s degree in environmental science, now is employed as a research associate in the WET Center, conducting field research and data analysis and preparing research publications and proposals. He is completing a literature review project for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality covering the Angelina and Neches river basins. As a result of SFA’s program, Miller is a believer in teaching scientific concepts in the context of real-world application.

“Here at the WET Center, I am able to further my research interest while obtaining great experience working side-by-side with faculty who are experts in their fields,” Miller said.

Nine research scientists from agriculture, biology, environmental science and forestry are affiliated with the center. Because of its interdisciplinary nature, projects are collaborative and have the potential to research very complex problems.

“This network may bridge gaps of information by opening lines of communication on campus,” Miller said. “The WET Center will give SFA students an opportunity to better understand and solve current and future issues facing the state.”

—Dylan Parkhurst
When government officials in Claremont, Calif., needed assistance in responding to public outcry after an unarmed man was killed by police officers, they looked to Dr. Theodore Joseph for guidance. Joseph now is training SFA psychology students to follow his lead.

After a 1999 shooting by police officers left an unarmed man dead, the City of Claremont and the California Highway Patrol authorized a vehicle-stop study and hired Theodore Joseph to lead the effort. At the time, Joseph was a doctoral student at Claremont University, and he designed a study to determine whether there were racial or ethnic disparities in vehicle stops, and if so, if there were plausible alternate reasons to explain them.

“There’s a very fine line between a gut reaction to suspicious behavior and racial profiling,” said Joseph, pictured at left. “The Claremont study confirmed that racial disparities in vehicle stops exist, but further analysis revealed that alternate explanations, such as poor driving quality, may also exist.”

As a result of Joseph’s work, the Claremont City Council affirmed its adherence to laws prohibiting bias-based policing and adopted a resolution that committed the city to continued diversity training for employees. Now an assistant professor of psychology at SFA, Joseph and his SFA students are helping local police target their efforts to improve community safety and monitor the attitudes and concerns of local residents.

Joseph joined the SFA faculty in August 2005, and he has dedicated himself to teaching his students how to use research to create a better society and point out deficiencies that might stand in the way.

In a 2007 study conducted by Joseph and his SFA students, the Nacogdoches Police Department’s objective was to determine residents’ impressions of public safety efforts in the community and provide direction for future efforts. It was the first study of its kind for NPD. The weekend prior to Thanksgiving, 24 students converged on seven Nacogdoches grocery stores to conduct surveys. The students had been trained in proper techniques to obtain relevant data, such as unbiased participant selection.

“The undergraduates were involved in data collection, and they learned to select participants and approach them in an unbiased fashion; enter, evaluate and analyze the data; and write a report,” Joseph said. “Graduate students were involved in designing the study and working with NPD officers to make sure the data gathered were the most useful to them.”

Several of the students presented the data at professional conferences in Plano and Washington, D.C. During his tenure at SFA, more than 20 of Joseph’s students have presented their research at professional conferences.

Heather Hastings of Euless said the project provided the research experience she needed to be successful in her quest to get into graduate school. Kristen Newell, a graduate student from Dallas, said she was surprised the group was able to collect more than 900 surveys in one weekend and hopes to participate in similar studies in the future.

“I would like to get a job that allows me to practice psychology and continue my research, so the more research presentations and publications I have, the better chance I have of obtaining my desired career.”

According to Nacogdoches Chief of Police Jim Sevey, pictured with Joseph at left, it was discovered through the survey that local residents wanted the department to emphasize drug enforcement, crime prevention and educational programs in schools. The police chief has used the survey for both short- and long-range planning and goal setting.

“A summary of the survey was submitted to the City Commission, and the survey results were used in forming the newly staffed Traffic Division and in planning future expansions in our Street Crimes Unit and in the forming of a future narcotic interdiction unit,” he said.

Sevey said he was not surprised by the top three concerns of Nacogdoches residents—narcotics, traffic problems and youth narcotics issues—because those tend to be the top issues across the state. However, he was surprised at the level of the public’s support for the department.

“I am accustomed to seeing approval rates in the 70s (percentiles)—ours were much higher,” he said. “NPD has a specific plan on increasing community support, and the survey told me we were making headway toward that goal. I was pleased.”

Sevey has previously utilized public input as a component of community policing and said he was pleased with the quality of the survey Joseph and his students designed. He hopes to utilize Joseph and his student researchers in the future as opportunities arise.

“We have an excellent working relationship—and friendship—with many SFA faculty and administrators, and I am very confident in the quality of their work,” Sevey said. “NPD could not have conducted the survey alone, and the results would not have been as accurate. We are very appreciative of SFA.”

—Shirley Luna
GIBSON ENTOMARIUM PROVIDES RESEARCH AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Belying its status as the third-largest insect collection in Texas, the William W. Gibson Entomarium at SFA operates in relative obscurity in an out-of-the-way corner of the Miller Science Building.

Stacked floor to ceiling with jars, boxes and drawers containing a dizzying number of insect specimens from beetles to butterflies, passersby could easily mistake the unassuming space for an overstuffed storage room. But for SFA’s biology students and faculty—and the researchers from far and wide who visit and borrow specimens—the unassuming Gibson Entomarium is a trove of invertebrate treasure.

“The purpose of the entomarium is to build and preserve a record of the invertebrate life of the East Texas region,” said Dr. William Godwin, curator for the collection, pictured at right. “It also has served to educate countless SFA students, many of whom have been inspired to pursue research opportunities, internships and careers in entomology.”

The university has had a collection since the 1930s when Dr. Hal Parks began taking students on collecting trips around East Texas and to the coast as far away as Rockport. In 2007, it was named in honor of longtime SFA biology professor Dr. William W. Gibson, pictured at left, who had spent almost half a century expanding it from a small, one-cabinet collection to its current inventory of an estimated 200,000 specimens.

“Many of its extensive holdings are of great historical interest because of the renowned taxonomists who collected them,” said Dr. Anthony Duben, dean of SFA’s College of Sciences and Mathematics.

“It’s valuable as a research repository because the species collected give evidence of the changing ecology of the regions from which they were gathered. Since the entomarium has samples dating back to years prior the founding of the university, it is possible to tell stories of regional ecological change over nearly a century.”

Many of the specimens arrive at the entomarium via insect traps retrieved from research locations throughout East Texas. Once they are received, the insects contained in the traps are painstakingly catalogued and then dried and pinned inside special storage trays designed to protect them from the damaging effects of light and moisture. Each specimen’s information also is stored in an electronic database to be used in ongoing research projects.

Much of the cataloguing and other work conducted in the entomarium is done by SFA students, Dr. Duben said.

“SFA undergraduate students routinely have opportunities to do hands-on research that would be difficult, if not impossible, to do in a larger institution. Their work gives them outstanding research experience that they can take with them to graduate school or to their jobs after earning their degrees.”

Shawn Benedict says he has done just that. The May 2008 SFA graduate now works for the Nature Conservancy as a conservation technician at the Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary. The sanctuary, located in southeast Texas, is part of a comprehensive effort to protect and restore the longleaf pine ecosystem on the West Gulf Coastal Plain.

Benedict says a big reason he was able to land his “dream job” with the Nature Conservancy was the hands-on experience he gained working alongside Dr. Godwin in the entomarium and on various research projects in the field.

“I spent many hours looking at insects under a microscope and separating them to their correct class and order,” he recalled. “All that experience was very valuable information to have on my résumé.”

The Gibson Entomarium’s partnerships with numerous outside entities, including the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Houston Museum of Natural Science, provide excellent professional networking opportunities for SFA students, Godwin said. Those relationships often lead to paid student-researcher positions, internships and jobs after graduation.

The entomarium is a vehicle for the department to collaborate with other university programs on unique, multidisciplinary projects.

Recently, after attending a lecture by Godwin on the characteristics of sphinx moths, SFA art students were invited to submit artwork inspired by the moths’ behavior or biology. A juried exhibition of the artwork was exhibited at the Cockrell Butterfly Center of the Houston Museum of Natural Science.

“The Gibson Entomarium is so much more than a big bug collection for the university,” Godwin said. “It’s really a vehicle that carries our students to a much greater educational experience than they would otherwise have.”

— Amy Roquemore