

Latino studies integrated into classes

By Anita Modi
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Grace Delgado was met with many changes when she moved to Pennsylvania after years of teaching at her alma mater, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) — but one stuck out to her.

As a student at UCLA, she participated in efforts to add classes about Chicanos, or Mexican-Americans, and Latinos to UCLA's course offerings. After a 12-day hunger strike, the university gave in and created a Chicano-Latino studies department, said Delgado, now a Penn State associate professor of history.

But at Penn State, this field of study is considered an "interdepartmental program," said Susan Welch, dean of the

College of Liberal Arts. And the difference, Delgado said, is huge.

Currently, Penn State students interested in the experiences and struggles of the Latino population may obtain a minor in Latina and Latino studies by selecting 18 credits from a total of seven related courses — many of which are cross-listed with courses of other departments.

Delgado said if a department like the one she left at UCLA was established in the future, students could obtain a Latina and Latino studies major and select from a broader variety of courses. Such a department would be independent of other departments, able to hire its own faculty and receive consistent university funding for its own programs.

But Welch said demand for the

Latina and Latino studies minor program has always been small, and she sees no need for a department at this time — especially considering the university's limited budget.

And while Delgado said she knows that Penn State is "eons away" from establishing a Latina and Latino studies department — a long process run by the Faculty Senate — she still hopes students will drive the effort.

President of the Latino Caucus Dahiana Tejada said the need for a department is clear. Not only are students limited in their course selection, Tejada (junior-geography and Latin American studies) said, but classes fill up quickly and are not offered consistently from semester to semester.

Delgado and other professors from the history and women's

studies departments are working to expand the selection of Latina and Latino studies courses available.

After a three-year hiatus, LTNST/WMNST 300 (Latina Feminisms), a class intertwining Latina and women's studies, was brought back this semester by Alyssa Garcia, professor of women's studies and African-American studies.

"We're filling the voids within our own departments," Garcia said. "Whether you are Latino or not, whether you are in sociology, business, international relations or finance, Latino studies is crucial."

History departments of other Big Ten schools employ a similar approach, integrating diversity into the curricula of pre-existing courses, Colin Gordon, chairman

of the department of history at the University of Iowa, said students can fulfill the university's diversity requirement by taking courses in history, sociology and even social work.

"Every course should encourage students to think about problems and issues relating to diversity," he said.

Stephanie Rivera, vice president of the Penn State Dominican Student Association, said having courses specifically about Latinos, their histories and their present experiences means a lot to her.

"Latinos may be a minority in this country, but I think we have a very powerful voice," Rivera (senior-journalism) said. "Having these types of courses allows us to contribute to the American voice."

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Game to make chemistry easy

By Marilyn Perez
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Starting Monday, Penn State chemistry professor Mary Shoemaker's students will have the chance to blast their way through CHEM101 (Introductory Chemistry).

ChemBlaster is a computer game designed by some members of the Educational Gaming Commons toward the end of last summer, said Brett Bixler, lead instructional designer and manager of education technology services. Teaching students basic identification of elements and ions, the game is expected to improve grades — and provide some entertainment.

"I do expect it to have an influence on the grades because it's not just a matter of memorizing the ions," Shoemaker said. "I think it will have an impact on the work they do throughout the semester."

This is the first time she has used an outside tool to help teach chemistry, Bixler said the designers run engagement initiatives every year, sending out a request for proposals to faculty who might be interested in using games to facilitate teaching.

"Mary came to us and she knew what she wanted," Bixler said. "She wasn't quite sure how to get there, but she knew she needed something else to reach the students."

Shoemaker asked the designers to have the students memorize about 50 of the most common elements.

"It's a fast-paced game, and it

"It's a very engaging game. The students seem to want to play it over and over. It's actually fun to do."

Brett Bixler
lead instructional designer and manager of education technology services

lets you move up to different levels as soon as you've mastered one level," she said.

IST Game Design Club Adviser Ibrahim Yucel said the game will be useful for 100-level chemistry courses.

"It has decent artwork and music in the game. I hope they spend some time to refine it and make it easier to play," Yucel said.

The game is currently in the assessment stage. Shoemaker said a few students served as a trial group, and it will be officially available to her students starting Monday.

Bixler said ChemBlaster will be available for other universities to modify for their purposes beginning next fall. Currently, however, he's very content with the game.

"We really hit on something between the graphics that we used and the game flow. The students seem to want to play it over and over. It's actually fun to do," Bixler said.

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Marissa Gutierrez/Collegian

Students walk around a barricade placed outside the East Halls bus stop in order to catch the Green Link last spring. There is now a bus-tracking application available for the iPhone and iPod Touch.

CATA? There's an app for that

By Zach Geiger
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Good news for Penn State students tired of standing in the cold, wondering when the next White Loop is going to show up: There's an app for that.

Released late last year, the new bus-tracking iPhone application from the Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) has already been downloaded 3,039 times, said Andrew Herman, co-owner and lead developer at software company Appek LLC.

The app displays the real-time locations of CATA buses through Google Maps, allowing users to check bus schedules, locations and the closest stop from their current position from their phone.

Appek LLC, a software development company founded by two recent Penn State graduates and

specializing in iPhone apps, approached CATA about developing a mobile version of the Web site for the iPhone.

Adam Ceresko, co-owner and project manager at Appek LLC, saw the opportunity to provide a service to the State College community.

"We wanted to see what we could do by taking the features from the web and putting it in an iPhone app," Ceresko said.

CATA currently tracks the location of every bus and displays that route information on realtime.catabus.com. The Web site updates bus locations every 30 seconds on the map and alerts users to any significant delays.

"The entire fleet is capturing data constantly," said Eric Bernier, service development manager at CATA.

Users can view this data online, outside of the CATA office, 108 E. Beaver Ave., or on the digital

marquee signs at the bus stops by Pattee Library.

The app allows the iPhone to display the same real-time information available online at CATA's Web site in mobile form. Users can select which routes they want to view, track the buses with live updates every 30 seconds and view the full bus schedule for each route, as well as customize which routes they want. Herman said.

Katie Trexler (sophomore-nutrition) downloaded the app while waiting for the White Loop and said it would be helpful, even though she hadn't figured out how to use it yet.

CATA's app is compatible with both the iPhone and iPod Touch, but works best when connected to the Internet.

Without an Internet connection, only the static text schedule for each route can be viewed.

Murtha remembered as advocate

By Peter Jackson
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

HARRISBURG — Rep. John Murtha, who said the Bush administration's handling of the war in Iraq was based on "flawed policy wrapped in illusion" and called for a withdrawal of U.S. troops there, is being remembered as an advocate on Capitol Hill for those serving in military uniform.

The Pennsylvania Democrat died Monday at a hospital after suffering complications from gallbladder surgery. He was 77.

Murtha's large intestine was

damaged during the surgery at a hospital in Bethesda, Md., said longtime friend Rep. Bob Brady, D-Pa. An infection and fever led him to be admitted days later, on Jan. 31, to the Virginia Hospital Center in Arlington, Va., where he died.

Murtha, a former Marine who became the de facto voice of veterans on Capitol Hill, was the first Vietnam veteran to serve in Congress and was "incredibly effective in his service in the House," said Rep. David Obey, a Democrat and chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

"He understood the misery of war," Obey said. "Every person who serves in the military has lost an advocate and a good friend today."

Murtha voted in 2002 to authorize President George W. Bush to use military force in Iraq, but his growing frustration over the administration's handling of the war prompted him in November 2005 to call for an immediate withdrawal of troops.

Murtha died with his family at his bedside, the Virginia hospital said.



Gene J. Puskar/Associated Press

Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., center, answers a reporter's question about Kuchera Defense Systems Inc. last year. Murtha died on Monday.

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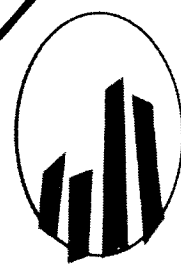
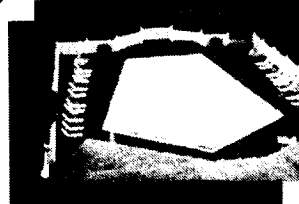
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