

Report on 2nd University Fair of Suchitoto

The three main university scholarship and loan programs in Suchitoto sponsored the second Feria Universitaria-University Fair Sunday morning, 29 June, 2008 in the Centro Arte para la Paz with the help and cooperation of the Municipal Council, Asporeducuar and the Centro Arte. There were about 160 participants including 86 high school seniors, 40 current university students most of whom are part of one or another of the three programs, and some 24 university representatives from 6 universities including the national University of El Salvador and five private institutions. The opening event included words from Mayor Javier Martinez, the Parish Priest Julio Cesar Martinez, a representative of each university, each of the programs, Asporeducuar and the Centro Arte para la Paz. The high school students visited each of the university stands, had a chance to talk with the current university students in the career area of their interest and picked up material on the scholarship and loan programs. There were refreshments for attendees and a lunch for the university representatives at the Centro.

The statistics of attendees is given in Table I.

Category	Program/ Institution	Location	# of attendees	Totals
High School students				
	INSU	Urban Suchitoto	16	
	C.E. Los Almendros	Rural Suchitoto	8	
	C.E. Las Americas	Rural Suchitoto	5	
	C.E. Guillermo Ungo (Ciudadela)	Rural Suchitoto	12	
	C.E. El Barrio	Rural Suchitoto	22	
	INDEC (students from La Colima)	Chalatenango	7	
	Total of Suchitoto students			70
	Morazan institutions	Cabañas	8	
	Instituto "San Francisco Lempa"	Chalatenango	8	
				16
	TOTAL			86
University Students				
	Palo Alto Friends		9	
	CRC/Atlanta Friends		2	
	Comité Parroquial de Becas		14	
	Other private programs		13	
	Total			40
	Non-scholarship students		5	
	TOTAL			45

The distribution of high school students had a much higher representation from the rural schools than in the 2007 fair and a lower representation from the INSU. Except for the case of El Barrio, most of the students attending also took the aptitude tests in early May.

There are about 260 high schools students expecting to graduate this year from the five institutions in Suchitoto. Thus, 24.2% of these attended the fair, which is also consistent with the number who previously indicated they expected to continue their studies after high school. Students from La Colima did not attend the fair in 2007.

The universities attending were the national Universidad de El Salvador, the Universidad Pedagógica, the Universidad Andres Bello, the Universidad Don Bosco and the Universidad Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero (UMOAR). The Universidad Tecnológica was confirmed but their team was not able to enter the office where their information packages were kept and thus came but were not able to distribute their information. The Universidad La Gavidia was invited, but was unable to send a team this year. This was the first year the UMOAR, located in Chalatenango, was invited.

The Fair was preceded by administration of an aptitude battery of three tests to all the seniors in the Instituto Nacional "Suchitoto", the INSU, as well as about 10 from each of the three rural high schools in early May by the testing office of the Universidad Francisco Gavidia. This was arranged through the efforts of the Fair organizers with the cooperation of the Director of the INSU. A fourth rural high school, El Barrio, was not able to send its students for this test but the Universidad Tecnológica has agreed to give an aptitude test in that school soon.

Preparations for the fair included 1) visits by Roberto Broz and Frank Cummings to each of the five high schools in early June as well as the Centro Escolares in San Francisco and La Colima to ask the help of the school directors in notifying former students, 2) e-mails to the contacts for the five universities who attended in 2007 in early April, 3) follow-up e-mails, calls, and contact through students to the universities who did not respond to the April e-mails during late May and early June, 4) contact through e-mail and telephone calls to the Instituto "San Francisco Lempa", 5) radio announcements, special letters of invitation, and an insert in 200 copies of the Diario de Hoy newspaper (La Prensa no longer allows inserts without their special permission). The Escuela Taller de Oficios Tradicionales and the local office of the Ministerio de Turismo were asked to send representatives, but, although they both expressed great interest, they were unable to be present.

No formal evaluation was done this year. The University representatives all indicated they were quite satisfied and one commented that the fair was well organized. There were fewer conversations between the high school and university students this year than last, perhaps because of the physical arrangements. But the fair did provide an opportunity for the university students to talk with each other. The Centro was very well organized and this is an ideal locale for this type of event. Contact information was collected from each of the universities to facilitate next year's planning.

The hope next year is to broaden the offering to include non-university options such as the Megatec opening in Ilobasco, the National Police Academy, the Escuela Taller, etc. The universities selected include the two largest in the country, the two with branches in Chalatenango and those where most of the current university students from Suchitoto are enrolled. If the ITCA is willing to come, they would be a good addition.