

P1.35 PROMOTION FOR AMS ONLINE WEATHER STUDIES AT DEL MAR COLLEGE

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1. INTRODUCTION

A vigorous, and perhaps unique, promotional campaign for the American Meteorological Society (AMS) *Online Weather Studies* course has nearly been completed at Del Mar College. Del Mar College (DMC) is a minority-serving, comprehensive community college located in the heart of Corpus Christi, a city of 300,000 people adjacent to the beautiful Gulf Coast of south Texas. The majority of the residents in south Texas are of Hispanic origin, reflected by Del Mar College's rank as the 12th largest Hispanic-serving community college in the nation. The student population, which reached an all-time high total of 12,033 for the Fall, 2005 semester, is about 57% Hispanic, 7% African American or other ethnicities, and 61% female. Many DMC students are the first in their families to attend college.

Our initial class of *Online Weather Studies*, which will be offered as Geology 1447, Meteorology, is planned for the Spring, 2006 semester. The class will be conducted as a hybrid face-to-face lecture and lab course worth 4-credit-hours. The Lecture class will meet Monday evenings, 5:30-8:20, in a multimedia-ready classroom. Lab will meet in our Geology computer classroom which features 25 Internet-accessible computers, allowing us to take full advantage of the real-time aspects of this course, especially the "Learning Investigations." Down-the-road, we may also offer the *Online Weather Studies* course as a strictly Online class, perhaps with multiple sections.

2. FRIDAY SCIENCE SEMINAR SERIES

To promote this course, the Del Mar College Department of Natural Sciences hosted three meteorology-themed multimedia public lectures during the Fall, 2005 semester as part of the Department of Natural Sciences Friday Science Seminar series. Friday Science Seminars are a tradition at Del Mar College that started about two decades ago. As the coordinator of the Friday Science Seminar for the last three years, I also find and schedule the speak-

ers, which greatly facilitated this promotional campaign.

The speakers that I scheduled for our three meteorology-themed Friday Science Seminars were Mr. Dale Nelson, Chief Meteorologist for KRIS-TV, a local TV station; Mr. John Metz, Warning Coordination Meteorologist for the Corpus Christi office of the National Weather Service (NWS); and myself, Assistant Professor of Geology, Del Mar College. I originally scheduled John Metz to lead off the series on Friday, September 23. These plans changed, appropriately enough for a series of talks on meteorology, because of the weather! On Wednesday, September 21, officials of the city of Corpus Christi ordered the first mandatory hurricane evacuation in the city's history in advance of Hurricane Rita, which was churning in the central Gulf of Mexico with 175 mph sustained winds! At the time, Rita was projected to make landfall uncomfortably close, less than one hundred miles north of Corpus Christi. This storm, of course, eventually veered fairly sharply north, and made landfall near the Texas/Louisiana border.

2.1 Dale Nelson

Dale Nelson gave the first Friday Science Seminar presentation on meteorology to a standing-room-only crowd of over 100 people, mainly DMC science faculty and students, on October 7. Students often receive extra-credit from their DMC instructors for attendance at the Seminars--that usually packs them in. We also draw students and faculty from the nearby campus of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Friday Science Seminars are well advertised in local media outlets, so folks from the community may be present, as well. Dale Nelson is arguably the most popular TV-meteorologist in the city, and a celebrity, which also helped boost attendance for his talk.

Mr. Nelson's talk, titled "The Christmas Eve Snowstorm," focused on a December 24, 2004 south Texas snowstorm. This storm dumped 4.4 inches of snow, the most ever recorded in 24-hours, on Corpus Christi, and even more fell in surrounding areas. It was also the first measurable snowfall in Corpus Christi since the early 1970's. For an area that typically has more than one hundred days each Summer when high temperatures exceed 90 de-

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grees, this snowstorm seemed almost miraculous.

Mr. Nelson gave a detailed explanation of the meteorological conditions which converged to produce this unusual weather event: Cold, Canadian air from the north; low-level moisture from the Gulf of Mexico; a jet stream positioned over south Texas; and an upper-level low that moved across the area at just the right time. His presentation was enhanced with many video clips of radar and visible satellite images.

During the Question and Answer period following his talk, I steered the discussion to hurricanes and the unusual level of activity of the past several years. Mr. Nelson fielded many questions about Hurricane Rita, and also talked about storms from other years, including Celia, which smashed Corpus Christi in 1970. This was the only time on record that the eye of a hurricane passed directly over the city. Mr. Nelson ended his presentation with a discussion of advances in technology that have affected both the meteorology and broadcast aspects of his job. (Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 are images taken during Mr. Nelson's presentation.)

2.2 John Metz

Mr. John Metz gave the second of our three meteorology-themed Friday Science Seminar presentations before an audience of about 60 on October 21 (rescheduled, because of Hurricane Rita, from September 23). His talk, titled "Weather Forecasting in South Texas," started with a short, introductory video about NOAA. Topics of the discussion that followed included an overview of the NWS; the mission of the NWS, both nationally and locally; data collection; the forecast process; severe weather operations; dissemination of NWS information, especially Online; education outreach; and careers with the NWS. In particular, Mr. Metz focused on weather forecasting and career opportunities.

He used Hurricane Wilma as an example of the forecast process, illustrating his points with current satellite data and computer models. And he used himself as an example of the required educational background and career opportunities for atmospheric scientists employed by the NWS. Mr. Metz presented these opportunities very capably and convincingly. Our Del Mar students seemed quite impressed by the salary that can be earned after a few years working for the NWS. Several students spoke to him after his talk, requesting additional information regarding career potential. (Figure 4, Figure 5, and Figure 6 are images taken during Mr. Metz's talk.)

2.3 Roger Steinberg

I gave the third and final meteorology-themed talk of the Fall, 2005 Friday Science Seminar series to an audience of over 50 on November 4. My PowerPoint presentation, titled "Online Weather Studies," consisted of over 100 slides. I focused on the *Online Weather Studies* course itself, of course, but also explained the reasons why I, who have a graduate degree in geology, am qualified to teach a meteorology course. I emphasized the week-long workshop at the National Weather Service Training Center (NWSTC) in Kansas City, MO, which I attended May 15-20, 2005, and the excellent course materials developed by the American Meteorological Society.

I also showed many examples of the content of the *Online Weather Studies* Course Homepage, including several "Learning Investigations." I provided each audience member with a map of pressure data from November 1, 2005, and gave them instructions for contouring that data, as an example of one of the first Learning Investigations conducted each semester. In addition, after finishing the PowerPoint presentation, I logged-on to the Course Homepage so the audience could experience the real-time aspects of the Homepage data. (Slides of my Friday Science Seminar PowerPoint presentation are posted at <http://www.delmar.edu/nsci/geology/>.) (Figure 7 and Figure 8 are images taken during my presentation.)

3. OTHER PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS

Several additional multimedia promotional efforts on behalf of the *Online Weather Studies* course at Del Mar College are noteworthy. I worked with Del Mar's Office of College Relations to create colorful flyers advertising all three of the meteorology-themed Friday Science Seminars, and posted the flyers around campus five to seven days in advance of each talk. (These flyers are included here as Figure 9, Figure 10, and Figure 11.)

We also videotaped (see Figure 4) the meteorology-themed Friday Science Seminar presentations, and have made these tapes available via streaming video on Del Mar College's website at <http://www.delmar.edu/sat/lecture.html>. This provides students who couldn't attend the Seminars, because of work or other conflicts, an opportunity to experience them, too. Plus, we show the videos on the Del Mar College Educational TV channel from time to time, which is available to anyone in the Corpus Christi area who has basic cable or satellite TV service. (See <http://www.delmar.edu/media/telelist.html> for a

schedule of telecasts.) Each of the Seminars was also featured in the College newspaper, the *Fog-horn*, the week after the presentation.

4. CONCLUSION

The promotional campaign for *Online Weather Studies* at Del Mar College is almost completed. Timing was a critical factor, especially since Hurricane Rita necessitated a change in the schedule of The Department of Natural Sciences Friday Science Seminars, the cornerstone of the campaign. We had to complete all Seminar talks before Monday, November 7, when early registration for Spring, 2006 classes began. At the time of this report, on the close of the first day of early registration, 6 students had already enrolled--an excellent start for a new class! I expect this class to be full, with 25 students enrolled, before early registration ends on December 2.



Figure 1. Mr. Dale Nelson's Friday Science Seminar Presentation



Figure 2. Mr. Dale Nelson's Friday Science Seminar Presentation: Standing-Room-Only



Figure 3. Mr. Dale Nelson Explains Hurricane Katrina



Figure 4. Videotaping Mr. John Metz's Friday Science Seminar Presentation

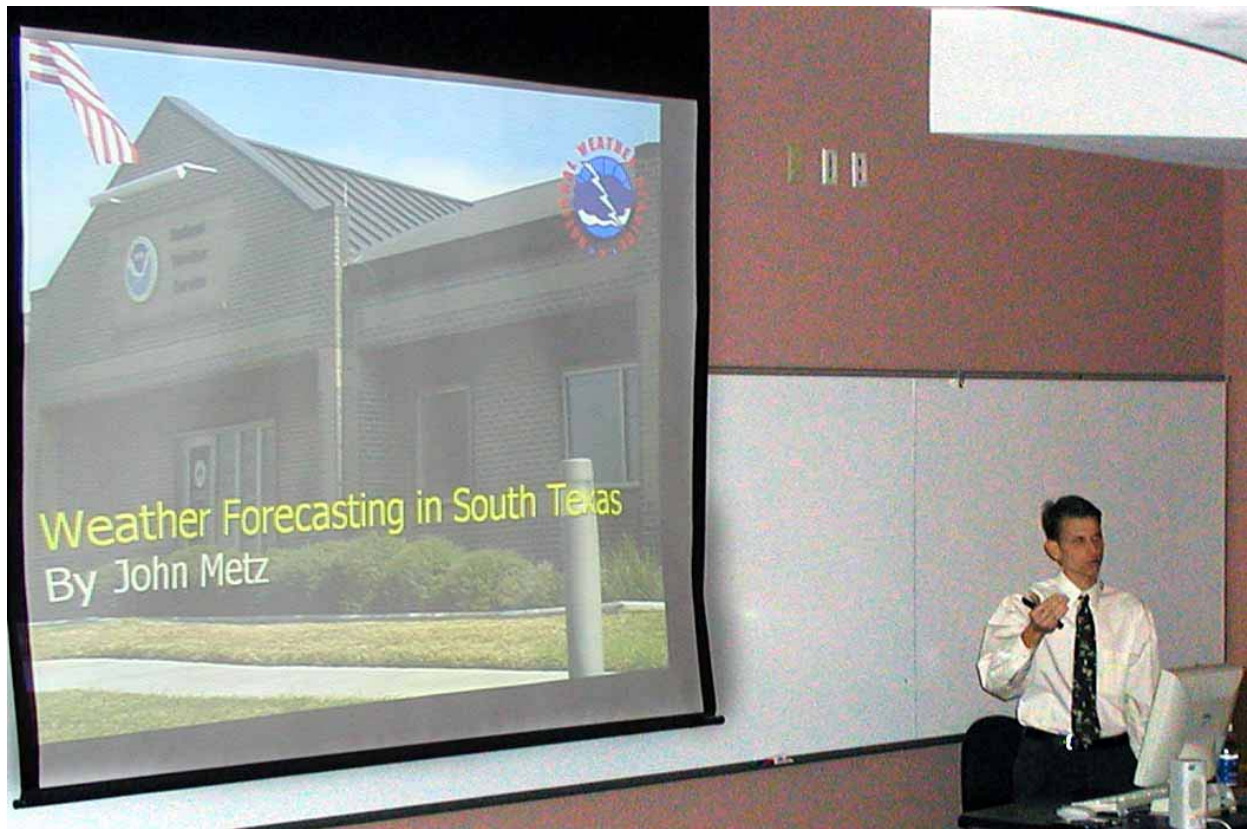


Figure 5. Mr. John Metz's Friday Science Seminar Presentation



Figure 6. Agenda for Mr. John Metz's Friday Science Seminar Presentation



Figure 7. Mr. Roger Steinberg's Friday Science Seminar Presentation



Figure 8. AMS Website: Mr. Roger Steinberg's Friday Science Seminar Presentation

The Christmas Eve Snowstorm of 2004 was the most snow ever to fall in a 24-hour period in Corpus Christi's recorded history. Learn about the meteorological elements that came together to make this historic event.

The Christmas Eve Snowstorm

A free presentation by Dale Nelson
Chief Meteorologist
KRIS-TV



Friday, October 7, 2005

1 p.m.

Coles Classroom Building Room 227

Question and answer session will follow.

Call (361) 698-1665
for more information.

www.delmar.edu

DEL MAR COLLEGE

What's *your* dream?

Del Mar College Natural Sciences Seminar Series

Figure 9. Flyer For Dale Nelson's Friday Science Seminar Presentation

Del Mar College Natural Sciences Seminar Series

Weather Forecasting in South Texas

Listen to a discussion of the forecasting process, the technology used to observe the weather, and how timely weather warnings are issued to protect lives.

A free presentation by John Metz
Warning Coordination Meteorologist
National Weather Service, Corpus Christi

Friday, October 21, 2005

1 p.m.

Coles Classroom Building Room 227

Question and answer session will follow.

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What's *your* dream?

Figure 10. Flyer For John Metz's Friday Science Seminar Presentation

Professor Steinberg will discuss Meteorology (Geology 1447), a course which will be offered for the first time by the Department of Natural Sciences during Spring Semester, 2006. In this highly innovative course, students will be introduced to the science of Meteorology by studying weather as it happens.

Online Weather Studies
A free presentation by
Roger Steinberg
Assistant Professor of Geology
Del Mar College

GOES-12 RGB-CH(1,4) 09/21/2005 12:45 UTC

Friday, November 4, 2005

1 p.m.

Coles Classroom Building Room 227

Question and answer session will follow.

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What's *your* dream?

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Figure 11. Flyer For Roger Steinberg's Friday Science Seminar Presentation