SU now features a newly renovated dining hall with extended hours and a new commons area for students, staff and faculty to gather in.
A Big Idea

BY AMY ARMSTRONG

The Center for Innovative Learning began in 2004 as a way to foster interdisciplinary learning. Now that seed, planted many years ago, has blossomed into the Big Idea.

While CIL—launched with a donation from the late Jeanne Slobod—serves a vital role on campus, Dr. Charlie McCormick, SU provost and vice president for academic affairs, saw a way to unify efforts and dig deeper into one idea.

“The Big Idea works with other CIL programs like Chautauqua and Monday Night Fiction,” McCormick said. “The idea is to be more proactive and think about issues over time not just one night, once a semester—be more in depth, which can be scary but exciting, too.”

Faculty chose this year’s theme of Rights and Responsibilities but next year’s theme will be selected with input from staff and faculty.

The Big Idea began in June with a summer read of the novel “World War Z” by Max Brooks. A panel discussion of the book took place this fall.

Matt Goodwyn, assistant dean for leadership and student engagement, is incorporating this year’s Big Idea theme and the novel into the annual Mountaineer Leadership Conference. Goodwyn said he has also taken the theme and created a Leadership Lecture Series—a monthly lecture built on a reaction to events from “World War Z.”

“We want to take students out of their comfort zone and make them think about their rights and responsibilities as students and graduates,” Goodwyn said. “We want to expand their horizons beyond just going to class.”

That is exactly what McCormick had in mind.

“Students want and need a place to think and talk about the big issues,” McCormick said. “You may only have 90 minutes in class but this is a way to keep it going and our students want and need that.”

William Woods, dean of the school of liberal arts and professor of English, said Schreiner has a strong tradition of lecture series, book clubs and guest speakers.

“What we are hoping to do with the annual Big Idea is have some controlling theme, a framework to organize events around,” Woods said. “This year’s theme asks our students to look closely at one of the traditional points of contention in society. At what point do your rights infringe upon mine? And what about the rights of the individual versus the needs of a society?”

A Chautauqua in November gave students a chance to talk about diversity and rights, an idea that faculty will touch on throughout the year. Another Chautauqua combined with a Constitution Day presentation to discuss the Second Amendment.

“This is the time and this is the place for students to find out who they are and what they believe and this is a great way to give them that chance,” McCormick said.

Start Planning for RECALL 2014

Spend the weekend of April 4-6 at your old stomping grounds. For more information, call or email Paul Camfield, associate director of alumni relations, at 830-792-7206 or phcamfield@schreiner.edu