‘Happiness’ is a One World topic

Peanuts creator Charles Schulz declared that “Happiness Is a Warm Puppy,” but it can be a lot more complex than that. This year, the Sacramento State community will delve into the many “Global Perspectives on Happiness” as its One World Initiative (www.csus.edu/oneworld) topic.

One World is a campus-wide initiative aimed at bringing students, faculty and staff together for the study of a single topic, exploring it from many different angles. “Global Perspectives on Happiness” will be included in some of the year’s curricula and will be studied through lectures, events and student projects. Past topics have included water and migration.

Happiness is a true discipline of study, says One World Director Lisa Hammersley. It can be triggered by physical or psychological changes. And you can approach it in terms of many factors, such as wellness, the environment, economics and creativity.

“There are so many ways to interact with it – it’s a really good subject,” Hammersley says.

There’s even a Gross National Happiness Index that measures the well-being of a country based on wellness in areas such as the economy, the environment, employment and politics. “It’s interesting to explore what the things are that bring happiness,” Hammersley says. “What effect does the environment have? What is the effect of physical fitness on your overall happiness? How do different cultures measure and express happiness?”

The focus also can be turned around, she says, by determining what factors cause a lack of happiness.

Sac State instructors already are incorporating “Global Perspectives on Happiness” into parts of their curriculum, in diverse fields such as sociology, communication studies, criminology and interior design.

Several presentations will explore “Global Perspectives on Happiness” from different angles:

- The English Language Institute (ELI), which introduces international students to American culture, society and the campus, will present “Miles of Smiles: International Perspectives on Happiness.” ELI students will display posters and discuss aspects of happiness in their home countries. That takes place from 1 to 3:30 p.m. Monday, Sept. 29, in the University Union, Redwood Room.
• Guest speaker Liz Bowen from the U.S. Geological Survey will present a colloquium on how animal happiness can be revealing with her address “Happy Otters: How Can Sea Otters Tell Us about Ecosystem Health?” The event will be held at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 30, in Mendocino Hall 1015.

• The First Year Experience, which is designed to increase student engagement with the campus and community, will present “Happiness in the First Year Photo Show,” an exhibit of photos of what made students happy in their first year. The exhibit runs Oct. 29-Nov. 21 at the Union’s second-floor gallery with a reception at 1 p.m. on opening day. Photos may be submitted on a flash drive through Friday, Oct. 10. Details: www.csus.edu/fye/PhotoShow.html.

• Professor Maria Jaoudi will present “The Noble Eight-Fold Path in Buddhism: May All Beings Be Happy” from noon to 1:15 p.m. Monday, Nov. 18, in Mendocino Hall 1024.

The overarching purpose of the One World Initiative is to foster engagement among the University’s community members.

Hammersley notes that last year’s ELI poster presentation was attended by anthropology students and led to the two groups of students meeting regularly throughout the year to discuss cultural differences. “This is exactly what One World is about,” she says.

Many more presentations and events will be added throughout the year, including an End-Of-Year Celebration in the spring, featuring a student symposium, a faculty panel and a keynote lecture.

For more information on the One World Initiative, visit the website or call Hammersley at (916) 278-7200. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156. – Craig Koscho