

Smith Betty
SHORT BIOGRAPHY – Betty E. Smith, Ph.D.

Betty E. Smith, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Geography in the Department of Geology and Geography and has taught at Eastern Illinois University since 1995. She has conducted research in Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina and Spain on urban topics, regional land use, indigenous textiles, ecotourism and human migration. In July 2005 she taught a graduate short course entitled “Understanding North American Cities” to Masters students enrolled in the graduate program in Urban and Regional Planning at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, Brazil. She is vice-president of the Latin America Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers 2004-2007 and served three times as president of the Midwest Association of Latin American Studies between 1999 and 2005.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT GRANT

PROJECT SUMMARY

Conference and Field Trip in Morelia, Mexico in October 2005

Dr. Betty E. Smith
Department of Geology and Geography
Eastern Illinois University

The faculty development support grant of \$400.00 contributed toward the cost of international travel for conference and field trip participation. I attended the Conference of Latinamericanist Geographers (CLAG) in Morelia, Mexico October 24 - 29, 2005. Morelia is located in central Mexico between Mexico City and Guadalajara. I presented in Spanish on a panel called “Plazas and Barrios: Heritage Tourism and Globalization in the Latin American Centro Histórico.” This panel was conducted Thursday evening in a small plaza called the Rose Garden in the historic center of Morelia. I collaborated with panel members who came from San Diego State University, London School of Economics, Colgate University and Virginia Polytechnic University. The panel was conducted in Spanish with English power point presentations to communicate with both Mexicans and Americans present.

On Wednesday I participated in a special field trip to nearby Lake Pátzcuaro to examine the land use and cultural changes that have occurred since the 1951 Smithsonian Institute research publication “Quiroga: A Mexican Municipio” by geographer Donald D. Brand. In addition to Quiroga, we visited the archaeological site of Tzintzuntzan, the most important Tarascan city in the mid-15th century. This field trip gave me the opportunity to meet and become acquainted with several geographers from other parts of the USA who are researching and publishing on various aspects of Latin America. Partly as a result of the field trip contacts, I received an invitation in December from the American Geographical Society to submit a pre-proposal for a new project they are supporting in Bolivia. I also attended sessions of the conference.

The field trip, my presentation on the panel, and attendance at conference sessions have enhanced my ability to teach multi-cultural awareness and social responsibility to large general education sections of GEG1100G Cultural Geography, as well as GEG3065 Geography and Cultural of Latin America, and GEG 3780 Land Use Planning. The new knowledge is particularly useful during the three weeks when I teach Folk Geography (about traditional cultures), Popular Culture, and Ethnic Geography in Cultural

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Geography. The new knowledge also benefits my upper level classes, enhancing the discussion of cultural, social, economic, historic and environmental issues of southern and central Mexico.

Participation in the field trip improves my instruction and content of on campus classes as well as short term study abroad courses. The faculty development support grant benefits the College of Sciences Study Abroad Initiative for which I have been selected to develop a new short term study abroad course to Yucatan and Cozumel, Mexico to be offered to Eastern students. As a member of the EIU Latin American Studies Committee, my new knowledge and skills also benefits our EIU Latin American Studies Minor and contributes to the internationalization of our campus through my improved understanding of the people and places of Mexico. In conclusion, the conference in Mexico has enhanced my knowledge of the history, culture and geography of Mexico.