A Message from the Chair

Studying languages pays. In our increasingly internationalized world command of more than one language can be a great asset to career development in business, international affairs, social work, government, legal studies, public service, and a host of other fields. Opportunities abound.

Most recently, an article in The Wall Street Journal by Lauren Weber (May 15, 2014) highlighted “2014’s Top-Paying Liberal Arts Majors.” Her research found that, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, “the top-paying liberal arts majors for 2014 graduates are foreign languages and literature (average starting salary $46,900).” This conclusion was “based on job offers that students accepted earlier this year and were reported by employers in February 2014 primarily through a variety of government surveys.” The study did not take into consideration those students who had minors in a second language, or certificates in translation and interpretation in addition to their major, both of which increase employability and salaries for bilingual people entering other professions.

Similarly, an article by John Benson in the Huffington Post on May 19, 2014, relied on research data from the Center for Applied Linguistics to conclude that “The results generally show the more language kids get, the more striking the results are. They score better on all sorts of standardized measures, whether it’s first language literacy, mathematics and more. And there’s lots of other data on socio-economic outcome. People who speak a foreign language tend to make more money. Something like 3 percent on average regardless of the field, assuming they also speak English.”

The conclusion is simple. Interested in a better career and a better life? Study languages.

Emelina Amores Awarded Juan A. Soto Scholarship

Emelina Amores, a native of Quito, Ecuador, who came to the United States five years ago, has been awarded the Juan A. Soto Scholarship. She will be graduating cum laude with a B.A. in Cultural and Deviance Studies and a minor in Spanish. She is also enrolled in the certificate programs in translation and interpretation. She has been accepted into the New York University Fellows Program to study to be a bilingual teacher in the New York City public schools.

The Juan A. Soto Scholarship was established in 2004 by Prof. Liliana Soto-Fernández of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures in honor of her father. It is given each year to a student who excels in Spanish.
Students Visit Conversation Café

Students in Japanese 201 visited the Japanese Conversation Café event held at The Nippon Club and hosted by the Japan Foundation. Led by Prof. Keiko Miyajima, the students learned about Japanese New Year’s traditions and rituals, chatted in Japanese with native Japanese speakers and fellow learners, all while enjoying a hot cup of tea and Japanese sweets.

Above, Prof. Miyajima’s students interacting at the Conversation Café. Left, some of the Japanese treats enjoyed by the students while they practiced their language skills and learned about Japanese holiday customs.

Students Tour Hispanic Society of America

Prof. Carmen Valenzuela took a group of Spanish students to visit the museum and library of the Hispanic Society of America which specializes in the cultures, literatures, and fine arts of Spain, Portugal, and Latin America. The students viewed two exhibitions that were then displayed: “Convergence and Diversity, Art of the Hispanic World,” which included exceptional pieces of Renaissance-era silverwork, and “Splendors of the Spanish Renaissance.” Following the visit the group went to the Salvadoran Restaurant “La Libertad” to enjoy authentic ethnic cuisine.

In the photo on the top left, students gather for their visit to the Hispanic Society of America. On the bottom left, the groups enjoys a Salvadoran meal. The activities were led by Prof. Carmen Valenzuela, second from the right at the table.
Prof. John Sorrentino’s Intermediate French I class visited the Museum of Arts and Design on March 27 in conjunction with a textbook chapter on arts and culture that they were studying. Located at Columbus circle, the museum features contemporary works in a variety of media, including clay, glass, metal, fiber, and wood. One of the featured exhibitions was “Out of Hand: Materializing the Postdigital” which explores artistic creations using advanced computer-assisted production known as digital fabrication.

The students were tasked with answering three questions about one of the works of art that drew their attention: (1) What do you know about the work of art? (2) What do you want to know? (Who is the sculpture of? What is the inspiration? How did the artist create the sculpture or painting?). (3) What surprises you? What details do you notice? Following the visit the students were asked to upload the images they took from multiple perspectives to the course website (Blackboard Wiki Module), along with the responses to the above questions. This will then form the basis for further classroom discussion.
News

Students Visit New York State Supreme Court

A group of Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez Gómez’s first-semester students in the Certificate Programs in Legal Translation and Interpretation visited the Supreme Court of the State of New York in May. Besides a general tour of the facilities, where they learned about the history and present activities of the New York State Unified Court System, they were able to observe part of an ongoing trial where two Spanish interpreters were working.

Pictured are, from the left, Jorge Guerrero, Johanna Brand, Francisco Rodríguez, Sherlyn Wong, Chrystal Damon, Maricel Zambrano, Connie Velásquez, Maria Macias, Alejandro Henao, Nathaly Gómez, Yanelvy Batista.

Students Participate in Cervantes Center Conference

Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez Gómez arranged for students registered in the Legal Translation and Interpretation Certificate Programs to be invited to the 5th International Conference “El español, lengua de traducción,” held at the Instituto Cervantes in April, 2014. At the conference, students learned about a wide array of issues related to the use of Spanish in the United States and translation in different fields and international organizations. Social events during the conference also allowed them to network with practicing translators and interpreters from a variety of countries.

Pictured kneeling are Jendelis Quiñones (left) and Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez Gómez; standing from left, Yudelkys Rodríguez, Ruth Toledo, Francisco Rodríguez, Evelin Ramírez, Connie Velásquez, Radhelyne Polanco, Maria Macías.
Prof. Hiroko Miyashita took students in her Japanese 102 class to Terakana Ramen, a Japanese ramen restaurant, where they practiced ordering their meals in Japanese using expressions they learned in class such as “Tonkotsu ramen o kudasai (Can I have Tonkotsu (pork broth) ramen noodles?),” “Miso ramen to gyooza, onegaishimasu (Miso (soy mean past taste) ramen noodle and gyooza (pork dumpling), please),” and so on.

Above left, Lina Jiang looks as if she is going to enjoy the meal she ordered. Above right, are students (from left) Bo Lee, Sunnie Chiu, and Randy Marte. Below, from left, are Maxi Cruz, Sydney Smith, Randy Marte, Bo Lee, Prof. Hiroko Miyashita. Lina Jiang, and Sunnie Chiu.
Prof. Irma Romero’s students have had a very busy semester. Her students practice their language skills through student-made video presentations in which they often involve friends and family. This semester they went on two cultural filed trips to The Hispanic Society of America (above left) and El repertorio Español (above right).

The first visit to the museum was an amusing experience. The students were impressed by the overview of the early history of Spain, Portugal, and Latin America. At the same time they had the opportunity to admire the architecture, archaeology, decorative arts, paintings, and sculptures. The most captivating moments of the trip was being able to see the sculptures of Mio Cid, and the Archangel Gabriel. Lastly, they admired the Talavera de España and from Puebla, México.

The second trip was to El repertorio Español. There they viewed the play “La nena se casa” written by Carlos Ferrari and directed by José Zayas. This cruel comedy is about a father who will do anything he can to have one of his daughters get married. Throughout the entire play, love and humor become intertwined, resulting in a tragic ending. In the end, the students concluded, as one of them said, that the moral of the play was “people will do anything to cover their social appearance.” The play and the following discussion also provided them opportunities to add to their Spanish vocabulary, especially phrases of Spanish slang.

Prof. Raúl Romero took his Portuguese 102 class to the Brazilian restaurant “Rice & Beans” on May 14 to celebrate the end of the semester by practicing what they learned in class and enjoying a typical Brazilian meal.

The students included Luis Vale, Diang Severino, Olga Rose, Jose Mercedes, Michell Harriot, Jeffrey Fernández, Rafael Domínguez and Michael Oliva.
In March, John Jay College hosted thirteen students from Japan who were participating, along with Prof. Keiko Miyajima’s Japanese language class, in the 2014 Kakehashi Japan-United States youth exchange program. During the program, the Japanese students from Fukui University performed two wonderful, hilarious sketches about Japanese culture — one on hospitality and the other on fireworks. In return, two John Jay students who participated in the 2013 Kakehashi project, Anjelica Camacho and Maxi Cruz, gave a presentation about their visit to Japan. The hall was virtually filled with laughter and cheers during the presentations. Both the John Jay students and the Japanese visitors seem to have really enjoyed each others’ presentations.

After the event, the John Jay students who are taking Japanese classes had an opportunity to practice their communication skills with the students from Japan. They had a great experience in being able to use the expressions and greetings that they have learned this semester. It seems that this event motivated them to think about studying Japanese as a form of practical communication, rather than simply as a college requirement.
On May 23 the Department hosted a reception to recognize the academic achievements of students and announce its adjunct faculty of the year award. Thanks to funds provided by the Provost’s Office, the tops achieving students from the Translation and Interpretation Certificate Program and the Spanish Minor received certificates and vouchers that could be used at the John Jay College Bookstore toward the purchase of their textbooks. The department also wishes to thank Ms. Erica Class Wise for her work in arranging the reception.

The photo below includes, from left, Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez Gómez, Connie Velásquez, Prof. Silvia Dapia, Julinda Karamuca, Prof. Raúl Romero, Prof. Peter Van Suntum, Jendelis Quiñonez, Prof. Hyon K. Kim, Emelina Amores, Prof. Sergio Andruccioli, Prof. Carmen Valenzuela, Prof. Irma Romero.

Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez Gómez presents awards to Connie Velásquez (left) and Julinda Karamuca (right), students in the Translation and Interpretation Certificate Program.

Prof. Raúl Romero presents a award to Emelina Amores, a Spanish Minor.
Silvia G. Dapía attended the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association in Chicago and served as an interpreter for members of the Uruguayan National Police during a training seminar at John Jay College. She also served as a manuscript reviewer for Purdue University Press and the scholarly journal Varaciones Borges.

Aída Martínez-Gómez presented a paper entitled “Reshaping Theory in Dialogue Interpreting: Collaborative Participation Patterns in the Construction of Meaning” at the 7th Biennial Conference of the American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association. She was invited to participate at the opening roundtable of the 5th International Conference “El español, lengua de traducción” where her presentation addressed the current situation of Spanish and Translation programs in U.S. universities, their challenges and future perspectives. She also served as an interpreter for a delegation of members of the Uruguayan National Police during a seven-day training seminar on best practices in policing and received a PSC CUNY grant for her project “Challenging Norms in Interpreting in Prison Settings: The Role of Non-Professional Interpreters.”

Liliana Soto-Fernández was elected Vice President of Circulo de Cultura Panamericano, an independent, non-profit cultural organization founded to promote Hispanic cultures, as well as vice president for the CUNY Council LOTE (Languages Other Than English). Her essay “Gabriel García Márquez y la tradición literaria colombiana: El realismo mágico” (Gabriel García Márquez and the Colombian literary Tradition: Magic Realism) was selected for posting on the website of the Columbian Consulate in New York City. She also attended the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association in Chicago.

Marlenys de la C. Villamar served as a moderator for a World Book Day discussion titled “Antonio Muñoz Molina: A Classic Writer Between Two Worlds” held at the Cervantes Institute on April 23. The author was the 2013 recipient of the Prince of Asturias Award, is a member of the Royal Spanish Academy and a living genuine “classic” of Spanish language and literature.

Irma Romero Honored as Adjunct of the Year

Please join the department in congratulating Prof. Irma Romero who has been presented with its 2013-14 Adjunct of the Year Award. Prof. Romero is noted as a very committed instructor who is always there for her students. She frequently takes her students to experience off-campus opportunities, such as those noted on page six of this newsletter. Prof. Romero received her Baccalaureate degree from the Gral Juan Crisóstomo Bonilla in Puebla, México, and her M.S. from St. John’s University in New York. She is also holds a Certificate with Advanced Standing as a teacher of Spanish.

Prof. Silvia Dapía (right) presents Prof. Romero with her award certificate as “Adjunct of the Year.”
Want to Increase Your Career Opportunities?

Adding a credential in interpretation and/or translation is a wonderful way for students in various majors to enhance their employment possibilities. The U.S. Department of Labor projects a 42 percent employment growth rate in these fields as opposed to the general growth rate of 14 percent. Students completing this option will be prepared to take the State and Federal legal interpreter certification exams, the American Translators Association (ATA) certification test, and be well-prepared for a career providing high quality interpretation.

Students interested in more information on the programs should contact the coordinator, Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez Gómez at amartinez-gomez@jjay.cuny.edu or 212-621-3755.

Foreign Languages is Now Modern Languages

In keeping with a nationwide trend to eliminate vestiges of ethnocentrism, the department has received permission to officially change its name to The Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. The new name more clearly demonstrates the department’s commitment, and that of John Jay College, to equity.

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News

Experiencing Gabriel García Márquez

Thanks to funds provided by the Provost’s Office, students from the Modern Language Club were able to see “El amor en los tiempos de cólera,” a play by Caridad Svich based on a novel by Gabriel García Márquez, at the Repertorio español on Friday, May 16, 2014. Arranged by Language Club president Emelina Amores, the group was led by Prof. Raúl Romero.

In the photograph at the left are, from the left, Marco Guzmán, John Beltrán, Jendelis Quiñonez, Prof. Raúl Romero, Julinda Karamuca, Mayra Guncay, Emelina Amores, and Diana Cadmen.