Greetings, all! I hope this edition of our newsletter finds you engaging in exciting, fulfilling language opportunities and adventures this summer. LLC faculty are traveling, pursuing research and presenting their work at a variety of interesting destinations, including Russia, Cambodia, France, Sweden, Finland, Turkey and Tunisia.

I’ll quickly highlight some LLC updates here (see more inside). Many thanks to our past chair, Lotfi Sayahi (SPN), who provided excellent leadership the last three years and is getting a well-deserved break from chairing the department. Likewise, many thanks to Maurice Westmoreland (SPN), who will chair LLC for the next three years starting in August. This spring saw the transitions of Spanish program Assistant Professor Julio Torres to UC Irvine and Spanish program lecturer Meredith Jeffers to Metropolitan State University of Denver, Colorado. Multiple LLC graduates are moving on to great opportunities: Gabriel Guadalupe as a tenure-track assistant professor at Westfield State University, Alice Krause as tenure-track assistant professor of Spanish at SUNY Delhi, Kathryn Ringer-Hilfinger as visiting assistant professor at Williams College and Karina Walker has accepted a position as visiting assistant professor at Hartwick College. Latin’s Mary Lou Vredenburg transitioned to new opportunities, and Angela Commoto, from the University of Michigan, is stepping in to teach our Latin students. Best wishes to them all as they share their scholarly enthusiasm for languages with new generations of students. We welcome this fall as visiting assistant professors in Spanish: Yaima Centeno, Selma Cohen, and Diana Aldrete. Hearty congratulations to Joan Savitt (LLC lecturer in French for thirty-eight years and associate director, Study Abroad and Exchanges) on her retirement. Finally, kudos and heartfelt gratitude to Cynthia Fox (FRE) who was elected as UAlbany Faculty Senate vice-chair and will serve the following year as its chair, a great honor and responsibility!

This fall LLC is providing two seminar courses, World Cinema and Spanish as a World Language, designed to introduce freshmen to the joys of language study. In addition, LLC is engaged in an ongoing process of reworking the curriculum to best meet the needs of today’s students, including courses like French for Business, Business and Legal Spanish, and Medical Spanish.

We are looking forward to the new semester with new students, interesting events, engaged clubs, and a vibrant fall seminar series. Check our website (www.albany.edu/llc) for details throughout the year and like us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/uallc) for updates. If you’re in town, come take advantage of LLC-hosted talks and events and catch up with us.

LLC Mission Statement

The Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures helps students to develop communication skills in foreign languages—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—and also to understand the linguistic phenomena, literatures, and cultures common to the speakers of those languages. The department regards proficiency in foreign languages as not only a professional and intellectual asset, but also as the key to effective citizenship in a globalized and multicultural world.
When the events in Crimea and Sevastopol hit the news, LLC’s Henryk Baran suggested to colleague Timothy Sergay that LLC host a forum on the issues. Sergay agreed that LLC and the university have a wealth of expertise that could be tapped and organized the event with the help of LLC staff, especially Amber Stephens. The result was a panel of five UAlbany scholars moderated by LLC’s Charles Rougle, all with expertise in Ukraine, Russian media, history, Russian culture and/or political science. The panel met on April 17, 2014, in Campus Center room 375 for over three hours. The audience of students, faculty, staff and members of the public numbered over 70. Panelists spoke 10 minutes each, and then Professor Rougle moderated questions and answers with the audience.

Dr. Liudmyla Slobodianyk, a medical doctor and World Health Organization (WHO) consultant from Ukraine currently studying epidemiology at UAlbany, gave an eyewitness account of events on Maidan and provided background for the unrest in the area. She discussed Ukraine’s attempt to enter into an agreement with the European Union and the failure of Ukraine’s parliament, under pressure from Russia, to pass the necessary motions.

Timothy Sergay, associate professor of Russian, a scholar and translator of Russian literature and former translator and editor for The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press, spoke about media coverage. He described the contradictory accounts from Ukraine and Russia about the sniper attacks on Institutskaya Street in Kiev this January and February. Sergay described this as one of many skirmishes in an electronic propaganda war over Ukraine and concluded, “No solution seems to me ethically tenable or even remotely politically viable that is not based on an internationally supervised forensic investigation of well over 100 murders directly linked to this crisis, especially the sniper attacks on Institutskaya Street.”

Allen Ballard, professor of History and Africana Studies, with an extensive knowledge of the Soviet period in Russian history, described the USSR in which Putin came to power. He gave an animated reading of one of Stalin’s speeches about the west beating and encircling the USSR and explained that Putin would have grown up in a Russia heavily influenced by Cold War politics and fears of western encroachment on Russian territory, while pointing out similarities between this Stalin speech and one recently made by Putin.

Henryk Baran, O’Leary professor emeritus of Russian and a specialist in Russian literature and culture who taught an overview of the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia for many years, told the audience, “History plays a very great role in shaping the consciousness of Soviet citizens or Russian citizens to a much greater extent than history shapes the consciousness of their American contemporaries.” He said that the centralized education system brought a “greater potential for using that historical material to manipulate contemporary issues” and cited Putin’s use of phrases like national traitor and fifth column in his speech from March 18th as examples.
Commencement is a fitting time to recognize students’ academic achievements, celebrate the relationships they’ve developed while at UAlbany, and toast new beginnings. LLC congratulates all graduates and their families! Each year LLC is honored to present special academic achievement awards made possible by ongoing support from our generous alumni and friends.

Of special note for Commencement 2014, UAlbany alumni Joyce Leavitt Zanchelli and Joan R. Barron (graduates of what was then called New York State College for Teachers) presented this year’s Class of 1952 Award for academically outstanding students. The award, given annually, recognizes distinguished teaching faculty associated with the college from 1948-1952—honored this year were language faculty Mary G. Goggin and Edith O. Wallace (namesake of our Edith O. Wallace Humanities Building). Student awardees were:

- Joshua DeClerck, SPN major, ITA-Linguistics major, FRE-Linguistics major
- Michael Maneen, RUS-Linguistics major, FRE-Linguistics major, International Relations major

The Guy Enfanto Memorial Award for Excellence in French language or culture:  
Spencer Turner  
FRE minor

The Anthony M. Gisolfi Scholarship for academically outstanding ITA or SPN undergrads:  
Joshua DeClerck  
SPN major, ITA and FRE-Linguistics major

The Frank G. Carrino Scholarship for outstanding academic performance in LLC:  
Alease Holden  
SPN major, Linguistics major

The Mildred L. Schmidt Award recognizing academic achievement in Latin:  
Ariel Ross  
Latin student

LLC Teaching Assistant Award  
Leonardo Correa  
SPN PhD student

For Professor Emeritus of French Studies Jean-François Brière, retirement means more time to pursue your passions! Professor Brière sits on the selection committee for the Boucher and Heggoy Book Prizes. The awards recognize the best books in French colonial history and are awarded every year by the French Colonial Historical Society, of which he is a member. Professor Brière presented a paper, “The Cost of Independence: Haiti’s Claim for Restitution of the 1825 Indemnity Imposed by France,” at the November conference of the Council for European Studies in Washington, DC.
At the annual meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies in Montreal in April, he co-organized a roundtable on the teaching of French history and society in departments of French Studies. He also chaired a panel at the annual meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society (FCHS) held in Siem Reap, Cambodia in June.
Most recently he was working in Paris on an article about how French school textbooks have for the last two centuries misrepresented the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804).
On March 26, 2014, LLC hosted the Olympiada of Spoken Russian for the 19th consecutive year. Russian speaking faculty, upper level students, staff from LLC and other UAlbany departments volunteered to judge high school students from all over the Capital Region. Participants prepare in advance to compete and are judged in three categories; spoken Russian, culture (area studies) and reading (prose and poetry). Each year, regional winners participate in a summer study program in Vladimir, Russia, where they learn more about Russian language, culture, history and literature. Finalists who go on to win top honors in the national contest are then invited to compete in an International Olympiada in Moscow, Russia.

Seventy-six students from five high schools (Shaker, Doane Stuart, Staten Island Technical, Tamarac and West Babylon) participated in this year’s event. Students demonstrated their Russian language skills and in the process interacted with people in a variety of fields who speak Russian. Students show their enthusiasm by spirited recitations of stories or poems and others have used music. As part of his reading portion of the competition, Kyle Seniw (Shaker HS), pictured above, gave a beautiful a cappella performance of the song “Slept the Golden Cloud” with text by Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov and music by Pyotr Tchaikovsky. The competition and judges inspire students to continue studying the language and consider possible job opportunities. Many of these students return to compete in the Olympiada in subsequent years and some have shared their interest in Russian with siblings who then also compete.

This year’s winners by category were: regular category finalists Simran Rastogi (Shaker) and Melvin Thomas (Staten Island Tech), regular category runner-up Katherine Zaniewska (Staten Island Tech), heritage finalist Gary Dreyer (Staten Island Tech HS), and heritage runner-up Eric Makarov (Staten Island Tech). Congratulations to all!
Véronique Martin, LLC French lecturer and University in the High School French liaison, coordinates an annual Francophone Day organized to provide New York State high school students a full day of French immersion activities. Events promoted the language program at UAlbany and offered potential students a campus tour and preview of campus life. Undergraduate student volunteers taking language classes participated and provided personal perspectives on college level language courses.

Activities this year included a treasure hunt in French, live traditional Canadian folk music and dance lessons with Homespun Occasions (local performers). An afternoon of roundtable sessions in which students engaged in conversation with native speakers from a variety of French speaking locales such as Morocco, Québec, Togo, Cameroon and Haiti was also part of the day’s events. The annual dessert contest in which students prepare a traditional French dessert that is judged by a panel of French speaking university faculty was delightful with such selections as Spéculoos, Basboussa (a Middle eastern dessert), Macarons Chocolat-Amade, Tarte au sucre, Meringue au chocolat et noix de coco and Moelleux au chocolat. Thanks to UAlbany’s Renée Lucier DeCelle, Susan Cummings and Lee Bickmore for assisting with judging.

For Professor Martin, planning Francophone Day has a dual purpose: “This is an excellent opportunity to celebrate and support French and Francophone Studies at the high school and university level. Our colleagues who teach at the high school level get to witness their classroom instruction in action as their students participate in immersive activities that force them to practice and speak French outside the classroom. It helps students realize that French is not just in books and in France, it’s everywhere! More importantly, students get to practice using the language skills they’ve learned outside the comfort of the classroom.”

As part of the week-long celebration, Professor Cynthia Fox, in collaboration with University Auxiliary Services, also hosted a Mardi Gras luncheon. Professor Fox shares, “In addition to our students, there are many faculty and professionals on campus who speak French, but who don't necessarily know about each other. I had been mulling over the idea of seeing whether the Patroon Room (a more up-scale dining facility in the Campus Center) would be interested in offering a French menu sometime to bring everyone together.

The idea took form when we realized the day chosen for the Journée francophone fell during Mardi Gras week. We then decided to make it not just a Journée francophone, but a Semaine de la francophonie. We hope to make the francophone lunch celebration an annual activity. Thursday that week Le Cercle français (the French Club) hosted a French film night and made and sold crêpes, a traditional Mardi Gras fare in France.”
LLC hosts the following clubs and tables, offering students additional opportunities to practice and use their language skills outside the classroom.

**Russian Learners Club**

If you’ve ever taken a foreign language, you know the feeling of when you start speaking to someone who is a native speaker or has more experience in the language than you do. Thoughts go through your mind like “Oh no, did I just use the wrong tense?” or “Did I misuse that word? Did I forget to use the polite form?!” What *is* the word for …?” It can be frustrating, even embarrassing, so you’re less inclined to take risks and keep trying. The Russian Learners Club, advised by Timothy Sergay, associate professor of Russian, is a good place to forget those worries and any other hang-ups about using Russian.

Although the general idea is unstructured conversation, Professor Sergay gets things moving by posing questions that generate spontaneous exchanges in elementary Russian. During meetings when new vocabulary comes up, he might write it down on a clipboard for everyone to see and later transfer the list to an MS word file to share with all club members. One way or another, obstacles to communication are overcome. If a student can’t think of a word, they simply ask ‘как по-русски X?’ (how do you say X in Russian?) or try to come up with alternative ways to communicate what they want to say. Sergay’s approach to making everyone more comfortable using their Russian with others is summed up in his invitation to the club meetings “Come ready to leave English at the door and make all kinds of language mistakes.”

The group will be meeting in UAlbany’s Campus Center on Wednesday afternoons this Fall from 4:00-5:00pm for a cup of tea or coffee and lively exchange of conversation in Russian. All students of Russian are welcome!

*See <www.albany.edu/llc/news&events_clubs_tables.shtml for meeting times and locations.*
Students Meet the Author

Spanish assistant professor Carmen Serrano coordinated a Q&A session in which students taking ASPN 322, Los Latinos en Estados Unidos, were able to speak directly with Hispanic author Ernesto Quiñonez who wrote Bodega Dreams, an assigned novel for the course. Meeting with and speaking to the author of an assigned reading bolsters student motivation, engaging them further in their studies especially when students can identify with the author.

Kirali Genao, biology major and Spanish minor, said it “...was truly an amazing experience.... His novel told a remarkable story that many Latinos can relate to. Being able to speak to someone who grew up in a very similar neighborhood and later wrote a story about the struggle in Spanish Harlem was a moment I will always treasure. Ernesto Quiñonez inspired me to keep pushing myself to be successful.”

According to Jannelys Mercedes, political science major and Spanish minor, meeting the author, “...was an honor! I’ve always read amazing novels and have never gotten this opportunity. Getting a chance to ask him about the open ending of the book and all the themes made me connect with Bodega Dreams even more. He was very down to earth and that really touched me. The most notable moment was when he told us he was proud of us for being in Albany pursuing our education because we are not only lifting ourselves up but the whole Latino community. Meeting him definitely inspired me to not only continue my education but also to encourage my friends and family members to do the same. Seeing him follow his dreams and become an author encourages me to never allow being a Latina to hold me back from anything I do.”

Paola Brito, English major and Latin American and Caribbean studies minor, shared that she had not heard of the author or his work, but after reading Bodega Dreams; “I looked up to him for allowing me to relate to his texts, and for his being so understanding of what us Latinos do to make it here in the United States.

It’s amazing to have an author be proud of us for doing what we do, and for recognizing us as he did. I was touched when he told us how proud of us he was for being in school and not becoming part of a statistic.

His saying he was proud and happy for us felt like I had the world in my hands.

The statement he made that has resonated with me was in order to become who I want to be tomorrow, I have to follow my dreams and live with the struggles that come with that. He made it pretty clear that becoming the author he is wasn’t easy, but the struggles were worth it. Being in college has made me understand that I have to stand up for myself, for my people, and for all Latinos who don’t receive the opportunities I have.”

Comments, Feedback and Updates

LLC thanks everyone who has taken time to write to us.

We always appreciate your feedback!

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French PhD student Komla Amegashie wrote an article for the first Symposium on West African Languages 2014 (SyWAL 2014) held at the University of Naples, L’Orientale, in Italy. The paper was later sent in for publication in Studi Africanistici, Serie Ciado-Soudanese - ISSN 1825-5910, a journal published by L’Orientale that is comprised of the papers presented at the symposium. He has also reviewed a book “Sense and meaning in the French – speaking world: The Discursive Construction of the Concept of Francophonie,” co-edited by Olga Galatanu, Maria Miron Cozma and Virgina Marie. His review can be found on linguistlist.org, an online community for linguists.


Last year Bouhet participated in the University of Oxford’s week-long workshop on immigrant communities in Paris. A collaborative book project, Voices and Images from the Banlieue, evolved from the workshop involving all participants sharing their photos and observations. According to Bouhet: “Research stemming from workshop activities was compiled to show how well the project encapsulated the plight of immigrant neighborhoods in France. Quite a few took an active role in the publication process, helping to edit and correcting parts of the book online. Oxford Brookes University students helped edit and translate the bilingual book. The book was presented and sold at the related exhibit at the university in April. A review of the book will appear in the next issue of Francosphère (a journal based in Liverpool, UK). The exhibit will tour France, stopping in Paris’ La Goutte D’or neighborhood, at the Echomusée, and will continue its tour of European cities. The Banlieue Network (www.banlieuenetwork.org) is expanding and will continue its interdisciplinary collaboration.”
Yaima Centeno presented a paper at Georgetown University’s Graduate Spanish and Portuguese Student Conference in Washington DC. Centeno says: “It was a good opportunity for me to gather up-to-date information about what’s happening with research in the Spanish language. Participating in this conference was a good challenge for me, it helped me to feel more confident talking about my research.”


J. Leonardo Correa Velasquez shares “My responsibility as a University in the High School Liaison is to act as a link between LLC and UHS high school teachers who offer intermediate Spanish college courses in high schools throughout NY State. I review teacher application materials, provide recommendations and assistance as needed to teachers, helping them to improve their courses. Through a series of on-site classroom observations, I help make sure that LLC’s curriculum standards are met at the high schools ensuring the integrity of university credits earned is maintained. I stay busy traveling around NY State, providing feedback to 20+ teachers per semester while teaching two courses myself, writing my dissertation and balancing family life. Ultimately taking UHS courses makes the transition to college level language coursework easier for high school students. Overall my experience working with UHS has been very rewarding. I enjoy being in constant communication with other educators who have varying teaching styles and classroom ideas which in turn helps me enrich my own courses.”


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Graduate Student News

Thank You! ¡Gracias! Merci! Grazie! Danke! Toda! Spasibo! Shukran! Obrigado! Gratus!

LLC greatly appreciates our supporters’ generosity! Funds help LLC provide conference travel grants for grad student scholarly presentations, scholarships to undergrads, guest speakers, and special events. Every gift makes a difference. Interested in partnering with LLC to promote languages? Here’s how:

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3. Or donate online at www.albany.edu/giving.

For more information call: 518-956-7953 or mmahon@albany.edu.
LLC congratulates Spanish graduate student Ashley LaBoda on being awarded the Karen R. Hitchcock New Frontiers Fund scholarship award, from the Initiatives for Women (IFW) at UAlbany. The award was established to provide scholarships to doctoral-level female students at the university who show great promise for making a positive, transformational difference in our society.

LaBoda used the award to help fund her trip to Madison, Wisconsin where she presented her paper, “Limonese Creole and Spanish in Contact: Code-switching in Puerto Limón, Costa Rica,” at the 7th International Workshop on Spanish Sociolinguistics (WSS7). LaBoda remarked, “This paper focused on the different types of code-switches in bilingual speech, so I had to extract all code-switches from my previously collected data. My data consists of both formal interviews (where I ask participants direct questions) and natural conversations (where participants are free to speak with each other about the topic of their choice). For the presentation I discussed the differences in code-switching in these two types of speech. While engaging in the research for the presentation, I found my hypothesis confirmed that intra-sentential code-switching (longer switches between languages in the middle of one sentence or utterance) is really only found in natural conversation, whereas in formal interviews speakers might insert a few words from Spanish but will mostly speak in English or Limonese Creole. The findings from this paper are an essential section of my dissertation. The most challenging part of preparing a paper for presentation is to condense all of the information into a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation -- not easy when you have so much to say. Attending the conference was a great experience!”

Jordan Lavender, teaching assistant and graduate student of the Spanish PhD program submitted an abstract to the annual Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Languages Graduate Student Conference. The title of his presentation, “Variation in the realization of word-final /d/ in a Catalan-dominant community,” was based off research he conducted at UAlbany. Jordan shares, “The experience was very helpful for my academic career. I was able to meet a number of graduate students from CUNY and other schools. It was encouraging to discuss our areas of research and to listen to their suggestions for improving my own research and presentation. The faculty at CUNY were also very helpful in offering additional suggestions for improvement and acknowledgement of where I was successful in my presentation.”

Calling all alumni!

LLC loves to hear from you and to share with fellow alumni, current students and friends how you’re using your language skills! What are you doing with your degree? Are you working abroad? Are you seeing new opportunities for those with language skills? When was the last time your language skills came in handy? Send us an e-mail: language@albany.edu
Congratulations to Associate Professor Cynthia Fox on her election as Vice Chair of the University Senate. The University Senate governs policies that are implemented on campus, ensuring that faculty as well as student interests are well represented. This three-year commitment involves rotating through three Senate positions, each with different responsibilities. Professor Fox says, “As Senate vice chair, I will head the Governance Council (GOV) which is responsible for tasks such as designating/approving faculty representatives on Senate councils and committees, conducting Senate elections as well as assessing the effectiveness of governance and consultation. I will also be the ex-officio faculty representative on the University Council, a 10-member board composed of prominent community leaders appointed by the governor who supervise the operations and affairs of the university. In year two, the vice chair becomes the Senate chair, and in year three, as immediate past chair, s/he chairs the University Planning and Policy Council (UPPC) which advises on the resource implications of changes to the university's education, research and service programs. I will also serve on the Senate Executive Committee all three years.”

Assistant Professor Carmen Serrano wrote and received a 2014-2015 Diversity Transformation Fund Award which will be used to help coordinate and support a Hispanic Heritage Day with UHS liaison and Spanish lecturer Leonardo Correa. Planned for spring, the day will be a celebration filled with a variety of Hispanic cultural activities.

Assistant Professor Ilka Kressner’s presentation on philosopher Michel Foucault's two-year stay as a visiting professor at the University in Tunis, Tunisia took place in Paris, France in June 2014. “It was at the University of Tunis that Foucault conceptualized his book The Archaeology of Knowledge (L’Archéologie de Savior). During Foucault’s stay, Tunisia was racked by serious political violence following the Arab protests of the Six-Day War. Foucault supported the protesters (he even hid their printing press in his garden). In many interviews, he later mentions that the student movements started not in May of 1968 in Paris, but in March of 1968 in Tunis!” Her talk, “Critical Travels, Discursive Practices: Foucault in Tunis (1966–68)” was hosted by the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, University of British Columbia & Institut d’études avancées.

Associate Professor Lotfi Sayahi’s book, Diglossia and Language Contact Language Variation and Change in North Africa, was published in April as part of the Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact series, a collection of thirty-six publications that focus on varied topics in language contact research. In his book, Sayahi explores the concept of diglossia, the existence of more than one variety of the same language, each serving a set of communicative functions in a given speech community. The book gives a detailed analysis of language contact in North Africa and explores the historical presence of the languages used in the region, including the different varieties of Arabic, Berber and European languages.
While at UAlbany Thomas Deveny (Spanish BA, 1972) participated in the inaugural year of UAlbany’s study abroad program in Madrid. After leaving Albany, he went on to do graduate work at the University of Florida and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is currently Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature at McDaniel College in Westminster, Maryland, where he is passionate about teaching language, literature and culture. He loves to travel throughout Spain and Latin America. The author of numerous articles on Spanish literature and Hispanic film, his books include *Cain on Screen: Contemporary Spanish Cinema*, *Contemporary Spanish Film from Fiction*, and *Migration in Contemporary Hispanic Cinema*. His advice to undergraduates in LLC is: “Study abroad! Go for a whole year if possible. You not only improve your language skills and learn about another culture, but you also learn about yourself and gain insights into your own culture. I would say that the single most important component of my professional formation was my junior year with Albany in Madrid. Go for it!”

Alice Krause (Spanish PhD, 2013) will be an assistant professor at SUNY Delhi in fall 2014 teaching Spanish language with the opportunity to develop new courses in the future. When asked what sort of advice she would share with current graduate students she stated, “Because many faculty positions in foreign language programs are focused on teaching, I would advise grad students to experiment with new approaches and technologies in their teaching. Even if it doesn't work out how you expected, you've gained experience. It's also important to gain experience outside of your research area. You can do this by organizing and/or attending cultural events, workshops, and lectures in fields that are related to, but different from your own. It's important to appear well-rounded.”

Sherez Mohamed (Spanish BA, 2013) will pursue a combined MA/PhD program at Florida State University in fall. She was granted a teaching assistantship and awarded a full scholarship to complete her degree. Her concentration will be in second language acquisition in Spanish. She shared, “I hope to someday do research comparing Second Language Acquisition (SLA) of Spanish to Arabic for heritage speakers of both languages here in the US.”
LLC enjoys receiving updates from all our alumni, especially when they share how they continue to use language in their lives. In this issue we share this correspondence from Elizabeth (Mascari) Norfrey (Spanish BA, 1977).

“I graduated from SUNY Albany in 1977 with a major in Spanish and a minor in Sociology. After reading your newsletter and enjoying the reports about people who studied in Spain, I decided to write with an update about how I have continued to use my fluency in Spanish.

I spent my junior year (1975-76) at SUNY Madrid at the Instituto Internacional, an experience I have never forgotten. The classes were excellent! Some of the professors were published authors. A most memorable highlight for me was the art history classes at the Prado Museum. The excursions every few weeks to other parts of Spain were invaluable. History unfolded before my eyes when General Francisco Franco died during my time there, marking the end of his 40-year Fascist dictatorship. I had a very positive living experience in the home of a gracious widow in a prime location and by the end of the year, I was quite fluent in Spanish.

When I graduated from Albany, my main goal in life was to return to Spain. Almost immediately, I was hired as a bilingual secretary at the Spain-U.S. Chamber of Commerce in midtown Manhattan. Originally I had hoped that I would find connections to American companies that had offices in Spain. However, after about a year, I became restless and needed a better paying job, so I moved on to the Latin American division of a large international bank on Wall Street. I spoke Spanish with coworkers and clients on a daily basis. I did return to Spain in 1978 for a two-week vacation, but it would be many years before I would get back there again. As much as I enjoyed being in an international atmosphere during those first few years after college, I realized that I was not happy in business and administration. After much soul searching, I returned to school to pursue a second bachelor’s and then a master’s degree in music. I continued to be actively involved with internationals, reveling in the fact that my Puerto Rican roommate and I spoke Spanish all the time.

When I married my American husband in 1984, I knew that my life would take a different course and that living overseas would probably not be an option. I have always sought out ways to use my Spanish; I have tutored, taught some courses, and have done some freelance work as a community interpreter. For two years, I worked for a counseling agency as a bilingual in-home worker, assisting therapists in counseling Hispanic families and also did intake screening for potential Hispanic clients. For “fun” I have volunteered to translate documents and reports for missionaries. What is amazing to me is that although there have been long seasons when I have not spoken Spanish on a daily basis, it comes right back when I do. Both our daughters studied Spanish and did very well. The younger one went on a one-week mission trip to Honduras in 2011 and decided to do long term mission work after completing her associate’s degree in 2012. She was researching opportunities to work with the poor in Latin America when missionaries visited.

She learned that the organization was looking for missionary interns, and the only Spanish speaking country where interns were accepted was... Spain! She would be heading for Madrid, and, apart from sharing my enthusiasm for Spain and Spanish, I had nothing to do with it!

Continued on page 14
After a lengthy application process and a 9-month wait for the visa, in April 2013, Crista, not quite 19, was ready to leave for Madrid. After all these years, I had the opportunity to return to Madrid with her and spend a week there to help her get settled. It was such a joy to retrace my steps and show her some of my favorite spots. I was amazed that over 35 years later, I still had my bearings in the city. I fell in love with Madrid and the people all over again! Crista is still there, living and working alongside marginalized women coming out of drug and alcohol addiction. She works at a second-hand store that supports the organization's work. She is now fluent in the language and seems "at home" there, just as I felt.

When I returned from Madrid after that week last year, I found myself homesick for Spain. When I shared this with my husband, he said that he would be interested in a new adventure! He took an online ESL class and is getting some experience as an ESL tutor. He is building on his high school Spanish from years ago. He wrote to an English-speaking school in Madrid, and they immediately responded that they could use his skills as a pianist and ESL teacher. We don't know if this particular connection will lead to anything, but it is exciting to think that a longer term stay in Spain may be in our future.

Thank you, SUNY, for giving me the opportunity of a lifetime all those years ago. I hope to be able to give something back in the not-too-distant future."

LLC alumnus, John Teevan III (BA, MA French Studies) went on to study for an MA in TESOL in UAlbany’s School of Education. Teevan’s enthusiasm and dedication to academic enrichment has led to him being a recipient of the Dr. Anna Maria Bonaventura Memorial Scholarship at the School of Education Awards and Scholarships Ceremony in May 2014. The Dr. Anna Maria Bonaventura Memorial Scholarship Fund was established by family and friends in honor of her dedicated service to teaching foreign languages. It is awarded to School of Education majors who pursue an MS or PhD in TESOL.

Kathryn Ringer-Hilfinger shared how her career is progressing after accepting a position at Williams College. “Next year will be the second year of my visiting assistant professorship at Williams. They have given me a new class to teach in the fall and there is a lot of support for new faculty members. This July I will attend a faculty writing workshop at the Mount Greylock Lodge - a get-a-way to get some much-needed writing done! This past spring I was able to direct a Spanish linguistics independent study and I was very impressed by the quality of work achieved at the undergraduate level. Each year I give a colloquium presentation to my colleagues in the language department on practical classroom application of language pedagogy. Last fall I shared my experience of using i-Pads in the beginner language class. It’s going very well.”