Chair Report

Academic year 2009-2010 has been the most challenging for the Department of Modern Languages in, perhaps, the past 30+ years. The state budget crisis has had a profound impact on higher education in general & the department will look very different in the years to come.

One immediate change in our appearance will be through the retirement of Prof. John Janc. For many years, John was a driving force in French at Minnesota State, & we’ll be sorry to see him go. We sincerely wish him all the best in his retirement. Also leaving the department at the end of this academic year is Prof. Maria-Claudia Tomany (Scandinavian Studies), who has accepted a position as Assistant Vice-President of Undergraduate Studies & International Education at Minnesota State Mankato. We wish her all the best in her new endeavors. The department has already begun a search for her replacement to continue the program. Prof. Esther Smidt will be moving to the Department of English, Prof. Karl Heise is planning to retire next year, & we may lose a position next year in German. All these departures are having, and will continue to have, a significant impact on our programs. We are working hard to plan for a future where we continue to offer a variety of languages in an ever-increasingly diverse, global society.

One enhancement of our offerings will be the addition of Mandarin Chinese. The department has an arrangement to bring in a teaching assistant who will be instructing students in Beginning Mandarin this coming fall. Based on our past experience with Chinese, we anticipate an enthusiastic reception by students.

Another enhancement has been the ability to award a distinguished TA a special assistantship by virtue of the Nadine B. Andreas endowment. This year, a Spanish TA, Mauricio García, will be our first recipient of the award, and we extend our congratulations to Mauricio on his receipt of this special honor.

Other Teaching Assistants and grad students have distinguished themselves as well. Yenny Ahumada-Quimbay (Spanish) defended her Master’s thesis this year as did Jonathan Olson (Spanish), Brenda Stelter (Spanish) & Nicole Johannson (French).

Priscilla Mudd (Spanish) presented “Getting-To-Know-You Games for the Classroom” under the mentorship of Prof. Cecilia Pick at the annual conference of the Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures in October 2010. Rachel Stori (German) has been informed by the Austrian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture that she has been offered an English language teaching assistantship for the 2010-2011 academic year. The department is proud of the excellent work that all of the TAs and grad students are doing!

The department was also able to give scholarships to some of the excellent undergraduates in our programs. Melissa Do (French) received the Sponberg scholarship, awarded to an exceptional female modern language major, Erik Romsdahl (Spanish) received the Waldorf scholarship, Kurtis Malecha (German) received the Kaufmanis scholarship & Marysol Sanchez received a scholarship for her work in French. Modern Language majors continue to be exemplary students at Minnesota State Mankato.

Despite the economic difficulties & the loss of faculty positions, the Department of Modern Languages continues to offer excellent programs & produce exceptional students.
Dr. Nadja Krämer presented several papers at national conferences, among them “What is Torture? Reflections by Jean Améry and the Contemporary Debate in the United States” at a symposium entitled After Auschwitz: The Memory, Meaning and Representation of the Holocaust at Augustana College, Sioux Falls, as well as a paper on pre-fascist, Anti-Semitic urban planning and Theodor Fritsch at the German Studies Association Conference in Washington D.C. and at the Kentucky Foreign Language Conference, University of Kentucky, Lexington. She also had an article accepted for publication in a German Cinema anthology regarding German film of the 1950s and the re-armament debate in West Germany. During summer ’09, Profs. Kramer, Pick & Tomany attended a workshop on international studies at the University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis.

Dr. Cecilia Pick published the article, “Credit and Grade Transfer Equivalencies from Germany to the United States” in the Minnesota Language Review. As the Minnesota representative of the Goethe Institut Trainer Network, she also participated in the workshops, “So ein Theater”- darstellendes Spiel im handlungsorientierten Deutschunterricht” and “Moodle and Rap to Goethe & Schiller” (Goethe Institut-Chicago; September 2009 and February 2010). Prof. Pick also received training to conduct ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interviews (Bemidji, MN; August 2009). Dr. Pick contributed the poster “Goethe and Schiller for Generation Y” to the annual conference of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and Schiller for Generation Y” to the annual conference of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and

Two student papers were accepted for presentation at the Undergraduate Research Conference 2010: Daniel Schmitt’s (’09) work is based on his capstone project “The Limbo of Identity: Representations of Division in a Reunified Germany” and Drew Nelson’s (’09) presentation “Crossing Borders: Fatih Akin’s Transnational Purpose” originates from work in the German Cinema course.

The Kearney International Center announced that German major Nathanael Rhody ’13 was awarded the Maverick Momentum Scholarship in the amount of $1,000 as outstanding Minnesota State Mankato student representative to the Friedrich Alexander University in Erlangen, Germany. The second year of the Minnesota State Mankato direct exchange program has sent a number of students for the academic year or the spring semester to Erlangen. They report that their academic development and their acquisition of German language skills is progressing fabulously, that they have settled into their life abroad and have had a chance to travel throughout Europe. In the past year, Shelley Fromm, Wendy Hoffmann, Scott Jindrake, Benjamin Koster, Jonathan Pischner, Jenna Tatro, Michael Tatro and Lance Renberg have been studying in Erlangen. Lance Renberg has returned to Germany this spring semester as the first student at Hochschule Karlsruhe/University of Applied Sciences where he studies technical writing in German.

The German Club started the academic year with a picnic to welcome the German students from Minnesota State Mankato’s partner university in Erlangen. Throughout the year, they organized a number of activities, including the weekly conversation hours, film evening, a visit to Oktoberfest in New Ulm, sledding in Sibley Park (new!) and the always popular bowling night when they try to beat Dr. K aka “Sunshine” – usually with overwhelming success.

If you are interested in joining the club’s e-mail list or want to contact them, send an e-mail to deutscherklub@mnsu.edu

Anna Brovold and Joshua Salwey will graduate with a minor and Nicole Anderson, Scott Jindrake, and Ida Clark with a major in Scandinavian Studies. Congratulations and good luck to you all!

Three students will study in Scandinavia next fall: Paige Wiesend is going to Dalarna, Sweden, and Matt Johnson and Matt Navejas will be studying in Telemark, Norway. We wish them a great experience and look forward to their return.

Dr. Maria-Claudia Tomany is presenting three papers in connection with her book project on The Saga of the Earls of Orkney this spring, at the ACMR's Conference on the natural world in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in February in Tempe, AZ, and in April at the Graduate Conference at Minnesota State Mankato and at the SASS (Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies) Conference in Seattle, WA.

Dr. Tomany has also joined the Board of Directors for the annual Nordic Lights Film Festival in Minneapolis in November, and she has been nominated to be the advisor for area studies on the SASS Advisory Board.

The Scandinavian Club participated with 15 members at the annual Midwest Scandinavian Retreat, and the Minnesota State Mankato delegation won the axe-slinging contest: Nathanael Roderick and Dylan Smith won first and second place for the men, and Tiffany Hanson and Jamie Loyland won first and third place for the women. Charlie Meissner prepared and delivered a successful and much-discussed plenary presentation on Black Metal at the retreat. Dr. Tomany was very proud of her students.

The annual Leif Erikson Day celebration in October featured three well-attended events: a lecture on Scandinavian design by Dr. Claire Selkurt (U of St. Thomas), a slide show about photographic records of Norwegian women immigrants to the U.S. by Prof. Lori Lahlum (History), and an information evening on study abroad options in Scandinavia. Scandinavian Studies also co-sponsored and co-organized the History Department’s Spring Forum Lecture on Swedish women immigrants to the U.S. by Prof. Joy Lintelman (Concordia College).
French Program

Last summer, fourteen students participated in the twenty-ninth year of the Minnesota State Mankato Summer program, nine of whom spent the entire six weeks in France. Mindy (Marks) Oman (2007) and Constance (Theis) Rettig (2005) and her husband participated in the first two weeks of the program. This summer, three people are going for the first three weeks, 12 for the full six weeks.

The French program is pleased to announce that five of our students are graduating with Bachelor’s degrees this Spring: Amanda Kack, Sara McLaughlin, Peter Mielke, Mandi Bingham, and Kelly Blodgett. In addition, Nicole Johannson, our graduate teaching assistant, will receive her MS degree. We are so proud of you and wish you the very best in your future endeavors: Bravo!

The French honorary society Pi Delta Phi initiated eight members this year: Melissa Do, Megan Gelhar Anna Irestone, Tiffany Lam, Marysol Sanchez, Joseph Scheller, Sodjine Ketika and Amanda Williams.

Peter Mielke is the 2010 recipient of the American Association of Teachers of French “Outstanding Senior of French Award” for outstanding academic excellence and his exceptional commitment to the study of the language.

In February, Eric Luhmann, a French major and 1987 graduate of Minnesota State University, Mankato gave a series of lectures on campus as part of the Nadine B. Andreas endowment in the Arts and Humanities. With over twenty years of international finance, marketing and business development experience, Luhmann’s public lectures and class visits were very well-attended and thought-provoking. Drawing on insights gained from work in the public and private sectors, as well as extensive personal contacts, Mr. Luhmann spoke on a variety of issues related to international education and employment.

After 31 years of dedicated service to Minnesota State Mankato and his students, Prof. Janc will be retiring this summer. All donors to the John J. Janc Summer Study in France Foundation account should rest assured that the Paris/Normandy-La Rochelle program will continue under the capable direction of Prof. Bibbee.

The French Club sponsored a picnic last fall, a trip to see the Louvre exhibit at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the annual holiday party, and will close out the academic year with the annual Dîner de Gala, a picnic, and participation in the Mankato International Festival.

Spanish Program

The Spanish program began the year with an Andreas guest scholar, Dr. Michael Seidman, who gave a variety of presentations to students, faculty & the public, commemorating the 70th anniversary of the end of the Spanish Civil War. His presentations included several on the rhetoric of war as illustrated through Falangist & Republican posters of the period.

The Spanish club members started off in the fall by fundraising and planning for the annual “Vive el Español” event. The event brought together nearly 100 students and community members under one roof by engaging them in activities in the Spanish language, culture, history, geography, games and various dances. Spanish club members also participated in “Rake the Town” last fall, where they collaborated with Habitat for Humanity to rake the yards of elderly people in the community. This spring, the club earned enough money through fundraising events to fund a trip to the Minneapolis Institute of Art to view Francisco de Goya’s “Self Portrait with Doctor Arrieta.”

Alpha Mu Gamma will induct 6 new students into the honor society in April. They are: Andrew C. Kuettel (Spanish), Chelsea Hinrichs (Spanish education), Elise Resemius (Spanish education), Elizabeth Koontz (Spanish), Mark Gorecki (Spanish) & Claire Bergman (Spanish).

This was another successful year for the Spanish study abroad programs, with students traveling to Mexico, Costa Rica, Ecuador & Spain. David Rochelero, who spent a semester in Mexico, was featured in a Guadalajara newspaper for his volunteer work in a local hospital. Numbers for study abroad continue to grow for this summer, too: to date there are 4 who will go to Mexico, 5 to Spain, 6 to Ecuador, and 3 to Costa Rica.

ESL Program (Prof. Esther Smidt)

It is a bittersweet experience to bid farewell to the Department of Modern Languages as I move into the Department of English next year. I have had a wonderful three years here and will be sad to leave.

It’s a little daunting trying to remember what I’ve done in my three years here. I’ve taught 11 different courses, of which 4 were totally online. I have to say that I love online teaching, as indicated by the Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) research study I conducted last year and another I’m investigating with Dr. Evan Bibbee and Dr. Vladimir Lazar this year. We hope to conduct yet another CALL study, focusing on our Global Learning Lab, next year.

Another new thing that occurred this year is the implementation of AccuPlacer ESL as the English Placement Test for international students, and the collection of data to validate the use of the test for this particular population.

And finally, I’m always learning more about what my ESL licensure and TESL students are experiencing. Because of my own international TESL experience, I’ve always been very comfortable and invested in the experiences of my international TESL students. This year, I’ve focused more on the experiences of my ESL licensure students and how the needs of K-12 English language learners can best be met. To this end, I’ve been very privileged to work with the Department of Elementary Education on a possible TESL course for all elementary education majors.