Welcome to the Department of World Languages & Cultures! The Department of Modern Languages changed its name this year in order to alert students and the broader community to the fact that World Languages and Cultures is so much more than a department in which to learn a language. It is a place to study the cultures and civilizations in which the six languages we teach are spoken. It is a place to learn to become more culturally aware, to be able to recognize and resolve difference, to immerse oneself for weeks or months in 1 or more cultures through our study abroad programs; it is the center for a host of unique learning experiences that prepare students to meet the challenges of a global society. Welcome to the Department of World Languages & Cultures!

WLC co-sponsored the fall presentation by Anthony Appiah, Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor of Philosophy, entitled “Ethics in a World of Strangers.” During the spring, Fulbright Professor in Puerto Rico Cristina Salgado spoke on teaching and learning languages outside the U.S. WLC likewise sponsored the annual poetry recital held during diversity week on campus and where more than 20 languages were represented, and during the spring, the Millenium series of films in support of CADA was attended by more than 130 people.

In support of our enhanced program offerings, the department will have Smartboards installed in our classrooms. They’ll be up and online by the time fall semester 2011 begins. The department had 3 flatscreen monitors installed, 2 in Armstrong Hall and 1 in the lower level of the library, to share our news and offerings with students.

The changes to the department have been challenging, as well as invigorating. Last year, French Professor John Janc retired. This year, we’ll be saying goodbye to Prof. Karl Heise, after 35 years of service to the university. One of our study abroad partners, Estudio Sampere, chose to honor Prof. Heise with the Karl H. Heise Scholarship for Summer Study in Spain. We’ll also be saying goodbye to professors Cecilia Pick in German and Paula Chiara in Spanish. We wish them both the best of luck in their future endeavors. This loss of faculty to the department has created significant challenges to our programs and the faculty is working hard to develop new programs and new program models in order to serve more than 200 majors.

Our students continue to make significant contributions to the academic community. David Rochelero and Maria Middleton, both Masters students in Spanish, were invited to present their research during the Graduate Research Conference at Minnesota State Mankato. Jenna Tatro, Scandinavian Studies and German, presented at the Undergraduate Research Conference. Tom Lyon, Mauricio García Vargas, José Genaro Parra Wilches, Jeannie Feldkamp and Greg Mellas, all in Spanish & Melissa Siebke, French, were awarded their Master’s Degrees. Awarded scholarships for their academic excellence were Gina Caruso, French, receiving the Sponberg award, Michael Tatro, German, the Kaufmanis scholarship, Megan Prosen, Spanish, received the Waldorf scholarship, Megan Gelhar received a scholarship in French and David Martin received a scholarship in Scandinavian Studies. The Karl H. Heise Scholarship for Summer Study in Spain was awarded to Thomas Stang, and 4 students will be initiated into the honor societies of Alpha Mu Gamma and Pi Delta Phi. Congratulations to all of these students for their excellent work!
The past year has been very trying for the Department of Modern Languages and the German program in particular. Through retrenchment, we have lost the full-time faculty position held by Dr. Cecilia Pick. This means that as of fall 2011, the program will be led by one faculty member, Dr. Nadja Krämer. This has been a tremendous and discouraging setback in our attempt to build the program over the past five years, especially through our reforms and expansion towards a German Studies curriculum and the establishment of our direct, thriving exchange program with Friedrich-Alexander University in Erlangen, Germany. We are continuously committed to our students, our field and Minnesota State University, Mankato, while trying to make adjustments to the new situation.

Dr. Nadja Krämer presented several papers at national conferences that deal with her book-length project on urban planning and domestic colonization with a focus on “Theodor Fritsch: Urban Planning and the Transformation into Völkisch Life in the Heimland Settlement” in Oakland, CA and “Theodor Fritsch: Urban Planning and Anti-Semitism” at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. She also published a chapter in an anthology regarding German film entitled A Companion to German Cinema. The chapter deals with German film of the 1950s and the re-armament debate in West Germany and is called “Models of Masculinity in Postwar Germany: The Sissi Movies and the West German Wiederbewaffnungsdebatte” (Wiley-Blackwell Publishing; forthcoming 2011). Dr. Krämer has also applied for tenure. The outlook is positive and final confirmation pending in April 2011.

Dr. Cecilia Pick, in her last year in Minnesota State Mankato’s German Program, offered upper-division classes on two of her favorite topics. The fall ’10 course was on the Grimm Brothers’ collection of fairy tales and more modern literary tales. She also has the pleasure of teaching literature and culture of the Middle Ages, Reformation and Baroque periods, which were the focus of her graduate studies, but which are not often taught at the undergraduate level. Dr. Pick has applied for tenure to serve as a record of achievement during her five years at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She hopes to continue advising students in an administrative role in higher education in Minnesota’s southeastern region, where she makes her home.

The German Club:
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, and a visit to the Oktoberfest in New Ulm. 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

Student News:
The third year of the Minnesota State Mankato direct exchange program has sent a number of students for the academic year or the spring semester to Friedrich Alexander Universität in Erlangen.

Nathanael Rhody, who is also the winner of the Maverick Momentum Scholarship for Study Abroad and Shane Gewerth who are enjoying their academic experience and life abroad. We look forward to witnessing how their German skills have grown in leaps and bounds and to hearing about the new friendships they have made.

Kurtis Malecha, Chemistry and German, and a student in the Minnesota State Mankato’s Honors Program won a prestigious German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) summer internship in the RISE (Research Internships for Science and Engineering) undergraduate program. Kurtis will join a research group in chemistry at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany this summer.

Alumni News:
Tysen Dauer ’09, German, Humanities and Music, is the recipient of the summer internship of the Hans Jooh’s Cultural Exchange of New Ulm to the sister city of Ulm in Germany.

Scott Jindrake ’10, German and Scandinavian Studies, who is now a graduate student in the TESL program here at Minnesota State Mankato, received a 12 month CDS International Internship in the Lake Constance region of Germany to teach German and English as a Foreign Language starting this summer.

Kimberly Nickel ’10, German and Education, graduated in December during a blizzard and managed to move and start her new job as German teacher at La Crescent High School the following Monday. Quiet a natural in the classroom, Kim has already settled in and enjoys her appointment.

Jonathan Pischner ’10, German and International Business, recently began a one-year internship in Sonneberg, Germany with Lauscha Fiber International.

Lance Renberg ’10, German and Political Science, is teaching English at a privately-run language institute in Changhua, Taiwan.

We would like to encourage all of our alumni to send us updates about their adventures and activities. Please contact “Dr. K” at nadja.kramer@mnsu.edu.
New faculty presentation

Dr. Suzanne Martin, our new Director of Scandinavian Studies, had big shoes to fill in the fall of 2010 as Dr. Claudia Tomany moved into a new position as Assistant Vice President of Undergraduate Studies and International Education. Dr. Martin recently completed her Ph.D. in Scandinavian Languages and Literatures at the University of California at Berkeley after receiving her M.A. in Scandinavian Studies and B.A. in Piano Performance from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Dr. Martin’s research specialties include representations of the indigenous Sami of Scandinavia, Scandinavian languages and literatures, women’s history, the politics of representation of gender and sexuality, immigrant literature, Scandinavian film and Scandinavian crime fiction. This year, Dr. Martin won a grant of $9,000 from the Coordinating Committee for Nordic Studies Abroad to develop two new online courses in Scandinavian Crime Fiction and The Sami, and she looks forward to offering these courses in the 2011-2012 academic year. She enjoys running, knitting, reading, learning languages, traveling around the globe, and of course, she loves all things Nordic.

Scandinavian Club

The Scandinavian Club has enjoyed a very vibrant year, with regular meetings, film screenings, field trips and other activities. A couple of highlights were the artist visit and the Scandinavian Retreat. In November, students visited Gustavus Adolphus College to view an exhibition by multimedia artist Sandra Binion. Binion’s exhibit focused on heritage and representations of place, and students enjoyed seeing her film of the making of Swedish bullar and her photos and paintings of her family homestead in Sweden. At the yearly Midwest Scandinavian Retreat in February, Minnesota State Mankato had a fantastic showing of fourteen Scandinavian students. We took home the “gold” in ax-throwing in both the men’s and women’s divisions, and two Scandinavian majors, Deanna Almquist and Dylan Smith, gave interesting and engaging presentations of their research. The students enjoyed meeting students from other institutions, viewing cultural presentations, practicing their Scandinavian language skills, and learning Scandinavian crafts of woodcarving and band weaving. The Scandinavian Club is looking forward to a service project related to the Millennium Marathon Benefit Event on April 6-8 and will wrap up the year with a reunion at Dr. Tomany’s in late April.

Program News

The Scandinavian Program is going strong with five new majors and four new minors so far in the 2010-2011 academic year. We invited Dr. Ivy Cooper from Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville to speak for our Leif Erikson Day celebrations in October, and she presented a multimedia presentation on Danish-Icelandic artist Ólafur Elíasson to more than 200 students and community members. We are also very happy to receive a week-long visit from Mario Antonio Lopez Cordero, Professor of Spanish at our exchange partner in Dalarna, Sweden, whose time in Mankato not only strengthens the exchange of students, scholars and ideas but also the intradepartmental connections between Swedish and Spanish. Also in April, with the assistance of numerous programs and departments on campus, Dr. Martin, has coordinated an event benefiting CADA, the Committee Against Domestic Abuse. The event focuses on awareness of the far-reaching effects of domestic violence and features Stieg Larsson’s wellknown Millennium trilogy: The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, The Girl who Played with Fire, and The Girl who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest. Co-sponsoring this event with the Scandinavian Studies Program are the Department of World Languages and Cultures, the Kearney International Center, the LGBT Center, the Department of Gender and Women’s Studies, and IMPACT/Stomper’s Cinema. Student activities fees also support this event. We expect a great turnout for the films and the subsequent receptions and look forward to strengthening connections both on campus and in the community at future events.

French Program

The French Club was very active during the academic year, sponsoring a fall and spring picnic, movie nights, a holiday party and the annual “Dîner de Gala.”

Recent graduates Amanda Kack and Peter Mielke returned to the program as graduate teaching assistants. Along with fellow graduate student Gina Caruso, they have done an excellent job teaching our beginning-level French courses and contributing to French Club activities and events. In particular, they have hosted a popular weekly French conversation table.

The French program also organized a series of events for the annual Quinzaine de la Francophonie, hosting a special presentation of a French film on campus and a series of poster sessions prepared and presented by students in our 100 and 200-level courses. Many of these students worked very hard on their poster sessions, and we are very proud of all they did to learn more about French-speaking cultures.

In Summer 2010, fourteen students participated in the Study in France Program. Eleven individuals went for the entire six weeks and three additional participants for the first two. The students made a genuine effort to raise money, selling candy bars and cookies, as well as crêpes at the Mankato International Festival. They also organized a raffle. Former French majors, minors and program participants were very generous with their donations to the Foundation account, allowing the French Program to offer scholarships to the students who went abroad. Currently, a total of 16 students (13 undergraduates and 3 graduates) are enrolled for the six-week program in Summer 2011.

Mr. Peter Mielke was recognized as the 2010 Outstanding Senior in French at Minnesota State Mankato by the American Association of Teachers of French, and Ms. Melissa Do has been nominated for the same award in 2011.

The following students will be initiated this Spring into the French honor society, Pi Delta Phi: Megan Brown and Emily Coon.

Professor Bibbee completed a book chapter in collaboration with Professor Esther Smidt (TESOL). Entitled “Teaching Phonetics in a Digital Language Lab,” it has been accepted for publication and will appear later this year. In February, he presented “Unseen Voices: Sight and Speech in le Garçon et l’aveugle” at the Arizona Center for Medieval Studies Conference.
The Spanish program continues to send dozens of students abroad year round in order to help them develop their intercultural competency. Emblematic of their experiences may be the comments sent to us by Lorial Roballo who studied in Madrid this year: “Traveling to Spain was one of the best decisions I have ever made. When you study a language in another county, you get more out of the culture and the language than you would in a classroom in the United States. Putting yourself in a foreign country really forces you to speak the language and understand its culture fully. When I went to Spain, I studied in Madrid. There I went to school, took many tours of the city, ate at popular restaurants, and took part in many of the cultural traditions that Madrid has to offer. I also visited many other Spanish cities like Segovia, Toledo, Seville, and Granada just to name a few. I highly recommend studying abroad to anyone planning on learning a new language. Here at Minnesota State Mankato, the possibilities are endless.”

In a new arrangement with Clinical and Field Placement in the College of Education, students pursuing the BS(Teaching) are now completing a teaching clinical experience in Guadalajara, Mexico and taking courses in Spanish at the same time! Our students continue to study in Mexico, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Spain.

In order to enhance student possibilities, the Spanish faculty spent many hours developing a new program that will be available for the first time next fall: BS Spanish for the Professions prepares students to work in a variety of careers where a high level of Spanish language and cultural competency associated with the Spanish-speakers of the 21st century is required. The coursework emphasizes the development of communicative competency, cultural competency and literacy (reading skills, cultural understanding, translation of documents for the professions, internships, etc.) for professions in the US and in the global marketplace.

The Spanish program also inked a 2+2 relationship with Normandale CC. Under this agreement, students receiving their AA degree from Normandale will be able to take courses on their home campus and complete a Bachelor’s degree in Spanish through Minnesota State Mankato. We will be offering our first classes there this fall.

Another means to reach more students and to give them a leg up on their entrance to the university is through concurrent enrollment. This year we offered concurrent enrollment courses through St. James, and St. Peter. We’ll add Chaska and Jordan to the list next year.

You are invited to reacquaint yourself with old friends or make new ones through our Facebook page: Spanish (MSU, Mankato), or communicate with us via email at languages@mnsu.edu. We always look forward to hearing about the adventures of our alums & our current students, too!