Modern Foreign Languages & Literatures

Annual Newsletter - Fall 2010

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A MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT

Dear Friends, Students, and Colleagues:

The 2009-10 academic year was challenging for us in MFLL, as I am sure it was for many of you, but I have been truly inspired by what members of our academic community have accomplished in these difficult economic times. Our faculty continued its extraordinary record of scholarly productivity, while continuing to teach and mentor our many students, graduate and undergraduate. In this department, there is no divide separating teaching and research: the faculty continues to find ways in which those two activities mutually inform one another.

It is a pleasure to report that once again members of the MFLL faculty received broad recognition for their many achievements. Three of our faculty were honored at the College or Arts and Sciences Convocation: **Luis Cano**, Associate Professor of Spanish, was an A&S Advising Award; **S►bastien Dubreil**, Assistant Professor of French, an A&S Teaching Award; and **Stephen Blackwell**, Professor of Russian, an A&S Senior Research Award. This range of awards exemplifies our faculty's commitment to excellence in research, teaching, and service. **Greg Kaplan**, Professor of Spanish, not only received the 2010 UT Alumni Association's Outstanding Teacher Award for his innovative use of technology in creating a stimulating learning environment, but he was also honored with the conferral of a prestigious Lindsay Young Professorship for the current academic year. **Stefanie Ohnesorg**, Associate Professor of German, was the recipient of the Tennessee Foreign Language Teachers Association's Jacqueline Elliott Award, the most distinguished honor that the TFLTA confers on foreign language faculty. The Knoxville Metropolitan Planning Commission recognized the East Tennessee Veterans Memorial with a 2009 MPC Excellence Award. **John Romeiser**, Professor of French, led the effort to create that memorial and currently serves as the ETVM Association president. Finally, **Chris Holmlund**, Professor of French and Cinema studies, began her term as President of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS), the foremost international organization in film studies.

It also a pleasure to report that our colleagues **Dawn Duke** (Spanish and Portuguese) and **Millie Gimmel** (Spanish) were both tenured and promoted to associate professor; **Stephen Blackwell** was promoted to full professor. We also want to welcome a new colleague to MFLL: **Awa**

Sarr, Assistant Professor of French and Francophone studies. Professor Sarr joins us from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she earned her PhD in French studies. Her dissertation on postcolonial engagement in the new generation of francophone African writers already promises to be an important contribution to Francophone studies, and we are delighted to have her bring an important new dimension to our undergraduate and graduate programs. Professor Sarr's teaching will be divided between the French and Africana studies programs. And last but not least, it is a pleasure to welcome back **Noriko Horiguchi**, Associate Professor of Japanese, who served as a visiting associate professor of Asian studies at the University of Pennsylvania in 2009-10.

Our students' accomplishments have been impressive, as always. Graduate students **Juan Gomez** (Spanish) and **Carrie Ottsen** (French) received, respectively, the J. Wallace and Katie Dean and Herman Spivey fellowships. **Catherine Greer**, a graduate student in German, was awarded a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) Stipendium this past summer. **Joy Essigman**, also a graduate student in German, received a $1,000 scholarship from the Huguenot Society of the Founders of Manakin. For the graduate scholarship contest, she wrote a 25-page essay titled "I'm Fighting for That Child: A Huguenot Tradition in American Literature," which examined the heritage of Huguenot descendant Paul Revere in two novels by Esther Forbes. The essay will be published in the society's publication *The Huguenot*.

Among our undergraduates, **Emily Shifflette** (Hispanic studies and English) and **Brittany Turner** (Spanish) were named a top graduates in the Spring 2010 graduating class of the College of Arts & Sciences. This honor is conferred on those students who achieve the highest grade point averages within their respective divisions. Arika Dean, Kayla May-Marsh and Genny Petschulat received Summer Undergraduate Internships from the Office of Research. The first two students worked with Professor S[?]bastien Dubreil, and the second with Euridice Silva, Associate Professor of Portuguese. **Devlyn Tedesco**, a German major, was awarded the prestigious DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) Undergraduate Scholarship to Germany for the academic year 2010-2011. The scholarship covers two semesters of study at the University of Saarbr[?]cken. **Alex Tullock**, a graduating senior in Russian received a Fulbright grant for the 2010-11 academic year. You will find more detailed information on our faculty's and students' accomplishments in the pages that follow.

It is also a pleasure to relate some late-breaking news. The National Research Council (NRC) has recently published its long awaited rankings of doctoral programs. The NRC rankings are the gold standard for the assessment of those programs. It is a great honor for me to report that **the NRC ranks the MFLL PhD program in Spanish among the top programs in the nation!** We will explore this news item in a more

thorough-going manner in the next newsletter, but we invite you to explore further details at http://chronicle.com/article/nrc-spanish/124661/.

I would like to reserve some space in the column to deliver some less welcome news. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) has identified our majors in Russian and Italian as 'underperforming' because they produce fewer than 10 majors per year. Unfortunately, this has resulted in launching UTK's process for program discontinuance: we face the marked possibility of the termination of those majors. We find this possibility deeply troubling. The THEC threshold of 10 majors is an absolutely arbitrary and hardly a one-size-fits-all standard. In fact, with one or two exceptions, no American university in the nation meets the THEC standard for the production of majors in Russian and Italian. (I will add that through the efforts of our faculty, the number of Russian majors is rapidly approaching that threshold.) The elimination of those majors means that they would no longer be offered in any public university in the state of Tennessee. Our faculty believes that it is important for our students to retain this possibility at the flagship research university of the state, especially in this age of globalization and as UTK launches a campaign to become a top 25 research university. Students at UTK deserve to have the possibility to be majors in Russian and Italian. If you would like to make your own opinion known on this issue, we urge you to contact Provost Susan D. Martin (provost@utk.edu) and Chancellor Jimmy Cheek (chancellor@utk.edu).

As always, I, too, would welcome your email: erkoch@utk.edu

Erec R. Koch
Professor of French and Head
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