Russian Flagship launches language across curriculum

BY STEPHANIE OLIVER

“See it as a wonderful opportunity for our students to continue improving their language skills and using their language and cultural studies as useful in the development of their careers,” said Natalia Gunther, curriculum specialist at Kelly Elementary School. Gunther began this year two of the Kelly program with kindergarten and first-grade classes, seventy percent of which is conducted in Russian.

The PSU Russian Flagship program is open to residents at all levels with intermediate to advanced level proficiency in Russian. It leads to a Certificate of Advanced Proficiency in Russian, but its key emphasis is the integration of language with other curricular instruction. The NSEP grants are all poised on ensuring “global” professionals in both the business and diplomatic sectors for work in regions critical to U.S. interests.

“We are very excited about the program,” said Subhwant Singh, Director of University Studies, who emphasizes the changing global market in the twenty-first century. The proposal was presented to NSEP with the full support of University Studies. Jha said, allowing the university to address a key need: the incorporation of language instruction into the general education program.”
News Briefs

AWARDS ALL AROUND
Attendance was high at the First Annual Awards Reception of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. But this is business as usual for the department with the largest enrollment in the University. There to honor recent graduates in undergraduate and graduate language and literature programs, Stephen Fuller, professor of German, opened the ceremony, noting that through the study of language and literature, students develop a tolerance for ambiguity and an understanding of nuance. Beyond that, Fuller said "language study is a good thing in and of itself and that is what liberal education is all about." Among those honored were: Christopher Price, Russian, with a Study Abroad scholarship; Dawn Stanfield, Spanish, with a Fulbright and University Club fellowship; Sarah Freiser, Michael Liebman and Josef Burton, Turkish, with Critical Language Scholarships from the U.S. State Department; Rachelle Beadle, with the Italian Businessmen Club Scholarship, Anna Marie Brown, French, the McNair Scholarship and Giorgio Lee, the Japanese Speech Contest winner. Included in the foreign language society honorary Sigma 1eta were: Savannah Now and Noah Clark, French; Fatema Alju, Natasha Milosevic, Amanda Gerk and Aliya Isela, Spanish; Anisa Gabriel, Alexander Soremn and Jeffrey Mack- ger. German.

FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS
The following joined the department as Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTA) from abroad: Greentajh Joshi (India) teaches Hindi; Melike Yucel (Turkey) teaches Turkish; Ekaterina Gerasheva (Russia) teaches Russian.

ONLINE LEARNING
Patricia Wetzel, professor of Japanese, and Murami Nishihara, assistant professor of Public Administration, will head up a project to develop online training in Japanese interpretation and Arabic translation. The project is made possible through a three-year, $500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s International Research and Studies program. The team will develop skill-based modules for interpreting spoken Japanese and Arabic written translation at a pace determined by the learner. Exercises will be tied to proficiency levels, with an eye to creating a multimedia, web-based template capable of expansion to other critical languages, such as Chinese, Persian and Hindi-Urdu. Neuberger Hall 444 recently is being used as an interpreting facility with booths that can be used for instruction and also to support international conferences.

PROMOTIONS
Congratulations to Jennifer Prillmutter, who was promoted to associate professor of French with indefinite tenure.

TEACHER EXCELLENCE
Among the teachers recognized at the 11th annual John Eliot Allen Outstanding Teaching Awards in June 2008 were two from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Steven Fuller (German) and Patricia Wetzel (Japanese).

CONGRATULATIONS
Italian instructor Angela Zagarrella-Chodosh entered the doctoral studies program in Romance Languages at the University of Oregon, Eugene. The following graduate students were recipients of 2008 Maria Bose Graduate Student Travel Awards: Natasha Milosevic, Spanish; Laurence Weber-Laurence, French; Anisa Gabriel, German.

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Reinauguration of the Finnish Classroom

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY is a college of many classrooms. Yet one of them stands unique. Cremer Hall, Room 124, the Finnish Classroom, designed and furnished through a fund drive of the Columbia-Pacific Chapter of the Finlandia Foundation, the Finnish Classroom will celebrate its Finnish anniversary at a rededication May 2, 2009. On Nov. 1, the Finlandia Foundation’s national Board of Directors met in the room. They were the first to view the results of a capital campaign to revitalize the room’s original and elegant furnishings, all constructed in the Finnish design and of native birch.

David Alford, who headed the two-year campaign to revitalize the room, tells the story of how the room came into being. The brain child of Portland State College’s first president, John F. Cremer, the room is a singular testament to the only ethnic community within Oregon that responded to his invitation to bring Oregon immigrant populations into the university.

In 1955, John F. Cremer had been impressed by the classrooms at the University of Pittsburgh whose ethnic groups had refurbished rooms in the architectural style of their “Old Country,” useful rooms that were the artistic bridge between cultures. State Hall, later named for Cremer, was then under construction.

According the Alford, the plans called for a room at the center of the building.

“Where are the windows?” the fund-raising group asked. “In Portland, you wouldn’t put students in a room without windows.” Room 124 was selected a “choice room” according to Pia Gill, former executive director of the University of Michigan Heritage Foundation, which worked closely on the project.

The Finnish community received impetus for the classroom’s creation through a visit by dignitaries of the Finlandia Foundation in 1957, and raised funds through a variety of events and petitions. The May 2, 1959 dedication ceremony was attended by Governor Mark O. Hatfield, Ralph Ennsb, Finnish Ambassador to the United Nations, Bradford Miller, Ph.D. President of Portland State College and Mary Ellen Vincent, Miss Oregon of 1958.

For years, the classroom was staffed by community members who introduced students and visitors to Finnish culture. The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures has continued to use the room to its best advantage as the classroom for Scandinavian language instruction as well as other languages.

The refurbished room continues to accentuate Finnish design and materials. “For the technical equipment necessary for today’s classrooms,” said Alford, “we are looking to PSU for support.”

>> RUSSIAN FLAGSHIP CONTINUED

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The Flagship’s Fall 2008 launch included a Freshman Inquiry seminar conducted by Eugenia and Russian language expert, professor and student Alina Blajz.

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