Greetings from the chair

SANDRA FREELS

Sign up to alumni news at www.fll.pdx.edu and tell us about your continued connections with language learning. Join our listener: click on "alumni" and follow the prompts.

DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES:

At the 2008-09 academic year proceeds through Spring term, I am struck by how much the department has grown during the last several years as we strive to meet the needs of PSU’s increasing student body.

Hiring a new faculty member represents a considerable commitment on the part of the department and the university. Since 2001, we have hired Robert Sanders (Spanish), Eva Nader (Spanish), Jennifer Perlmuter (French), Oscar Fernández (Spanish), Nila Friedberg (Russian), and Annabell Delson (French) to fill positions vacated by retiring faculty. We have also added new positions in the department: Anouchka Sedigheh (Persian), Fernando Sánchez (Spanish), and Silvia Bonesi (Italian) — and this coming Fall we look forward to expanding further with additional positions in Arabic and Russian.

Sometimes, new positions are created in order to permit the department to offer new language programs, such as Persian, or to expand existing programs, such as Italian and now Arabic, to meet student demand.

The addition of new faculty and new programs, of course, has been accompanied by an increase in students. Last Fall there were nearly 4,000 students registered for foreign language classes — a remarkable achievement and a remarkable responsibility. As we all wrestle with economic woes, we are more committed than ever to providing financial aid to our students — please join us for the Spring awards ceremony if you can — and in providing them with the finest possible education in the languages and literatures of the world to enhance their lives and their future careers.

Keep in touch,

Sandra Freels, Chair

Japanese interpretation class stresses professionalism and civic engagement

BY DIANE HOPLAND

BEFORE ENTERING the classroom, a young Japanese woman pauses and politely bows her head. She seems to personify the respect and dedication that Masami Nishioka’s students bring to their Japanese interpretation workshop. On this evening, the class had been formally sanctified as the students could work on their upcoming team presentations. Attendance was entirely optional, and yet almost all of the 23 enrolled students were there. The students said that they wouldn’t miss the opportunity to come to an extra class, another chance to study with their inspirational professor. Minh Nguyen, the tech-support assistant for the class, put it this way: Professor Nishioka “brings a wealth of professional experience to the class and encourages the active use of the practical skills involved in interpretation.”

Masami Nishioka’s professional background commands notice, indeed. She has interpreted for President Jimmy Carter, Bill Gates, Phil Knight and many others. She is also an active member of the local community and is a faculty member of PSU’s Division of Public Administration.

Masami adeptly translates these experiences and teaches the component skills of interpretation. Her students learn about shadowing — repeating what has just been heard; quick response — hearing a word in one language and producing the word in the target language; note taking and consecutive interpreting; and sight translation — reading a text and simultaneously translating it. Her students also learn what to do when their mind suddenly goes blank while in the midst of interpreting. “This happens and you have to learn how to maintain a bit of a poker face and then resume interpreting,” Masami remarked.

“Japanese interpretation class stresses professionalism and civic engagement in unfamiliar and ever-changing settings, as well as using specialized vocabularies and topics.”

Ellen Boomer
Master of Education student

Clockwise from top right: Assistant Professor Masami Nishioka; Quill Anderson, Kathryn Box (right) and Ellen Boomer. Native Japanese-speaking students and Japanese language students alike expressed insightful appreciation for their "hands-on" interpretation class that is conducted in the PSU television studio.

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Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures

2009 Spring Newsletter
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Foreign language capstone classes forge real-world connections

"MY FAVORITE PART of the Spanish capstone program is going into the elementary school to volunteer and work with the kids," Kat Sandor bubbled enthusiastically. That's precisely what capstone advisor Ann Wiley and Suwako Watanabe had hoped to hear. Ann and Suwako are both thoughtful advocates for the community-based learning requirement that all PSU students must complete before graduation. Ann and Suwako's two-credit capstone courses provide their students with a very practical bridge between worlds of college and work.

Kat Sandor (left), a capstone student in the Spanish program, confers with instructor Ann Wiley on a "ready to go" curriculum and the capstone program designed by the International School.

French language capstone students typically meet one day a week at PSU and discuss the theoretical issues they've read about concerning bilingual education. On another day, the students go into the elementary schools to assist the children with their reading. This is the best part, according to Kat. Students also prepare a final project that combines the major lessons learned from their academic and volunteer work. Students in the Japanese program write papers and make a class presentation about their capstone experience. Those in the Spanish program design a "ready to go" curriculum to be used in the elementary school.

Kat has enjoyed her volunteer experience so much that she has decided to continue working as a classroom volunteer after completing her capstone class. She smiled and said, "Not only is it fun, but it's a really practical way to use what I've spent the last five years studying."

When asked what kind of work she wanted to do after graduation, Kat responded, "This capstone class helped me realize that I'm interested in working in education, not necessarily in the classroom, but definitely want to do something that supports education.

This class has also increased my interest in the political discussions surrounding education ballot measures. Both Ann and Suwako would describe that as a very positive outcome of the capstone bridge to the "real world."

Alicia Grimm, Kindergarten teacher, The International School

Foreign language capstone students have numerous opportunities to pull all their skills together, and they do team interpretations of contemporary speeches by figures of local and national prominence. Several guest speakers also visit the classroom during the term and provide additional interpreting opportunities. Case in point: Masami turned this reporter's request to observe her class into a learning opportunity for her students. She directed the students to take turns interpreting the questions and each other's answers. Unscripted educational creativity is impressive in any language.

>> JAPANESE INTERPRETING continued from page 1

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News Briefs

TRANSITION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Nick Miller’s friendly presence will likely be missed in the FLL office, and another familiar presence, Golnara Bresdor, has assumed additional responsibilities. The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures extends a fond farewell to Nick, our Office Specialist for the past three years. Nick accepted a promotion offered by PSU’s Urban Studies & Planning Department.

When asked about the Doanes of Hazzard lunch box displayed in front of his desk, Nick said, "Dr. Fuller [associate professor of German] gave me this lunch box as inspiration to help keep me young in spirit."

Golnara added to this portrait, "Nick has a wonderful, subtle sense of humor and he is gifted at making everyone in the office feel comfortable. He set a high standard of service to both the department and university."

Golnara has capably assumed many of Nick's former responsibilities. She will also continue working with the department's Russian Flagship program. Golnara, a native Russian speaker, has a background in economics and statistics. Equally important, she personifies Nick's general observation about the department staff. "This is a great group of folks to work with. Everyone is courteous, friendly, and very engaged in their job, and with the students and staff. I’m going to miss this department. The feeling is mutual.

STUDENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The academic award season has begun! Two graduate students in the Japanese program have been accepted into Ph.D. programs. Hironori Nishid will attend the University of Wisconsin, and Kanako Yas will be going to Ohio State. Third year student Jessica Cosimano received a Critical Language Scholar scholarship to study Russian in Astana.

M.A. candidate Chad Stevens was hired to teach Japanese to Navy personnel at the John C. Umstorf aircraft carrier for the Spring term. While teaching, he will be finishing his thesis.

SAVE THE DATE

Many more student awards and achievements will be celebrated at the upcoming Annual Awards Reception of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. You are invited to attend this festive event on June 11 from 4:00-6:00 p.m. in SMSU 238.

HOT OFF THE PRESS


Translated by Gina Greco, Associate Professor of French

Co-authored by Christine Rose, Professor of English

The first modern English translation of this medieval text also known as La Ménière de Paris (the Parisian household book), a book long recognized for its unique insights into the domestic life of the bourgeoisie during the later Middle Ages.

Gina Greco

SUWAKO WATANABE

Professor of Japanese

PERSONAL: Grew up in Yokohama, Japan. She and husband Osamu focus on their cat Yuta, which means "stray" or "homeless.

CREDENTIALS: Ph.D. in Japanese Language & Linguistics, Georgetown University.

SPECIALIZATION: Sociolinguistics with an emphasis on discourse analysis and cross-cultural communication.

COURSES TAUGHT: Third and fourth-year Japanese language classes, plus a capstone class.

AMERICAN SOJOURN: 25 years in the U.S., 19 years at PSU.

WHEN NOT AT PSU: Has studied Japanese Tea Ceremony for the past nine years.

ABOUT HER CAPSTONE CLASS: "In foreign language classes the primary focus is on communication and academic content. In my capstone classes we address real world issues in English, and I come to know my students so much better. The capstone experience provides an invaluable opportunity for students to better prepare themselves for the next chapter after graduation. In this class I stress the importance of advocacy and the impact a single person can have."