American Sign Language program expands dramatically with enthusiastic move to WLL Department

DEAR FRIENDS OF WORLD LANGUAGES!

There is nothing more exciting than the start of a new school year and nothing more likely to give one pause than the assumption of a new role as chair of a department as large and diverse as ours. The general good-will of my colleagues has made my choice easier and the transition smoother. I am particularly grateful to my predecessor Sandra Freels for her tireless advocacy on behalf of the department, her continued support of my professional development, and for her inimitable example of what it means to be an effective chair. Our department has flourished under her leadership of the last ten years, and it is an honor to pick up where she left off in continuing to strengthen and grow our programs.

We are indeed proud of the quality and range of programs we are able to offer through the vision and tireless efforts of our faculty. This is the inaugural year of the introductory track of the Russian Flagship Program. Geared towards students with little or no prior experience in Russian, this program builds proficiency from the ground up. Developed under the leadership of Sandra Freels, the curriculum includes language and culture study, study abroad, and immersion living. In their third year, students merge with the advanced track to complete the last two years of the program, earning a Certificate of Advanced Proficiency in Russian and completing a double major as well.

This also marks the first year of our partnership with the French American International School (FAIS). Through this program designed by Annabelle Dolidon, select undergraduate French majors participate in a fifteen-week cooperative education program that includes classroom observations, student tutoring, and development of pedagogical materials under the guidance of their FAIS mentors. Along with valuable teaching skills, students will come away with credits towards the major as well as a certificate of recognition from the department.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge our role in the sustained success of PSU’s Challenge Program directed by Sally Hudson. Established approximately thirty years ago, this program provides the opportunity for advanced high school students to take college-equivalent classes at their schools and earn college credit. WLL offers second-year language sequences in Spanish and French, coordinated by Cynthia Sloan and Annabelle Dolidon who help ensure the rigor and effectiveness of these off-site classes.

Keep in touch,

Jennifer R. Perlmutter

Sign on to alumni news at http://www.pdx.edu/wll/ and follow the prompts.

Greetings from the chair

JENNIFER R. PERLMUTTER

Signs of the times:

Marie Fernstrom signs the letters A-S-L

BY DIANE HOLTMAN

SOME CHANGES JUST MAKE SENSE,
and the recent move of the American Sign Language (ASL) program into the Department of World Languages and Literatures was both timely and warmly welcomed. Estimates vary, but ASL is now considered by some researchers to be the sixth most widely used minority language in the United States, while others believe the ranking may be as high as fourth. Any way the numbers are construed, the trend is clear: interest in ASL is at an all-time high. That interest is clearly evident at PSU, and enrollment in ASL classes has increased dramatically.

Seven ASL classes are in session this term, whereas in years past, only two to three ASL classes were scheduled in the Speech and Hearing Sciences Department. Even with approximately twice as many class offerings, there were waiting lists of eager students hoping to enroll in each of the seven classes should space become available. Two new instructors, Christopher Palais and Justin Coleman, were hired to help veteran instructors Marie Fernstrom and Sherry Andrus meet the increased demand for ASL classes. “We deeply appreciate our collaboration with the Speech and Hearing Department, but it was just made sense for the program to be housed in the Department of World Languages and Literatures,” Marie Fernstrom observed.

ASL’s move to the WLL Department came about because of the recognition that American Sign Language is a foreign language. Like spoken languages, ASL contains phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics. The departmental move also allows the ASL program to expand and offer more opportunities to students. ASL can currently meet the requirements for foreign language credits, because the WLL Department offers a two-year program in this language, but as Marie observed, “We hope to eventually offer a full four-year program in ASL.”

“All our ASL classes are taught using a functional approach, and there is no vocal communication used while we’re teaching. We also discuss Deaf culture in depth and require students to attend a variety of outside activities in the Deaf community,” Marie commented. PSU also actively facilitates the transfer of credits from Portland Community College’s ASL program. Marie continued, “We make it easier for PCC students to work concurrently towards a four-year degree at PSU, which is required for a person to work as a professional interpreter for the Deaf.”

The academic year is off to a robust start, and we are pleased to welcome the dynamic ASL program into the family of world languages taught in our department.
Donor gives wings to Hellenic Studies program

A MAJOR $250,000 DONATION from E. John Rumpakis, a long-standing supporter of Portland State University, has given wings to the long-held dream of establishing a Hellenic Studies program at PSU. “We’re so excited about the opportunities that this donation opens up for PSU students. It allows us to plan and build a Hellenic Studies program that will integrate the study of Ancient and Modern Greek civilizations and give students who are studying Modern Greek an appreciation of the historical continuity of Greek culture,” observed Laurie Crogiff, Assistant Professor of Ancient Greek. Louisa Kondillas, Instructor of Modern Greek continued, “Modern Greek culture is important because it is a crossroads civilization that spans both East and West.”

The planning for a full-fledged Hellenic Studies program will be a long-term process, and the Rumpakis donation will be used to help fund a tenure-track position in Modern Greek. The second step will be to establish a minor in Modern Greek Language, Literature, and Culture, with the ultimate goal of establishing a major in Hellenic Studies. The WLL Department plans to conduct a national search this year for a Hellenic Studies scholar who will teach new courses in the program and will also establish and strengthen contacts between the local Greek-American community and the university. “We anticipate that this new faculty member will join the program at the beginning of the next academic year,” Laurie said. “We’re also seeking additional grants to help fund library acquisitions, scholarships for student travel in Greece, and to supplement the program’s instructional budget.”

Paul Mortimer, Assistant Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, expressed his vision for the program this way: “The Hellenic Studies program will combine classes in language, history, culture, and current affairs with internships, study abroad, and lectures and performances by visiting scholars, authors, and artists.” Exciting prospects, indeed.

The Hellenic Studies program will combine classes in language, history, culture, and current affairs with internships, study abroad, and lectures and performances by visiting scholars, authors, and artists.

Paul Mortimer
Assistant Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

New face in the WLL office

Karen Hullman joined the WLL Department at the end of June as the Scheduling Coordinator and Graduate Specialist. She is new to PSU and “really enjoys working with people from so many different cultures.” Welcome aboard, Karen!

Karen Hullman

FALL 2010

News Briefs:

Awards ceremony honors academic excellence and exemplary service

Students and faculty celebrated academic achievements and exemplary service at the annual WLL Graduation and Award Reception held on June 9, 2010.

HONORED FACULTY:
Warm tributes and a standing ovation were offered to outgoing WLL Chair Sandra Freels (Russian) for her ten years of hard work and inspiring leadership at the helm of the WLL Department.

Maggie Elliott (French) received an Outstanding Teaching Award for the 2009-10 academic year.

STUDENT AWARDS:
Alex Sorensen – Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst Scholarship, Josiah Exell – Russian Flagship Scholarship, Christina Lenamond – Dean’s Flagship Scholarship, Luba Polozova and Linna Vukoretozikh – American Council of Teachers of Russian National Russian Essay Contest Award, Diane Holland – Chair’s Award for Outstanding Service to WLL.

PUBLISHED:
Fernando F. Sanchez (Spanish) – Two books: Artful Assassins. Murder as Art in Modern Mexico. Translated by Stephen J. Clark. La luz y la guerra: el cine de la Revolution mexicana (Light and war: the cinema of the Mexican Revolution) by Fernando Sanchez et. al.

PROMOTED:
Raven Chakerian – Instructor of Spanish
Maggie Elliott – Instructor of French
Oleyna Kisselev – Instructor of Russian

NEW HIRES:
Yameen Hanoush – Arabic
Jon Holt – Japanese
Emiko Konosumi – Japanese
Isabel Jacin-Porrillo – Spanish
Steven Thorne – Second Language Acquisition
Kyuangshik Soon – Korean

LEAVING FACULTY:
Anu Wales (Spanish) will be sorely missed.

Sheena Sharma
Kelsey Lundgren
Alex Sorensen
Hiroko Kusuta
Allison Faris
Nick Gammom

Karen Hullman

A woman in a white shirt and blue pants is standing in front of a white background. She is smiling and holding a book in her hand. The book has a red cover with white text. The woman is wearing glasses and has her hair in a low ponytail. Behind her, there is a large window with a view of trees and buildings. The sky is blue with some clouds.

Karen Hullman

Focus on Faculty

Steven Fuller

Associate Professor of German and International Studies

Personal:
Grew up in Chicago, IL, and spent his teenage years in Sacramento, CA.

Credentials:
Ph.D. in German Studies from Stanford University, with extensive coursework at the Free University in Berlin and Humboldt University in Berlin.

Professional:
Served as a scholar of German Fascism and anti-Semitism, and then switched to nineteenth-century German cultural history. Currently writing a book about German revolutionaries who fought in the American Civil War and helped found the Republican Party.

Courses on the PSU Docket:
German Intellectual History; Ancient Greek Myth in German Literature; Nazi Culture; Nietzsche; and Marx. Also teaches a section of Sophomore Inquiry using a Great Books format.

The Appeal of Teaching at PSU: “I truly believe in the importance of the teacher in the classroom, and I’m known for my low-tech, relationship-based approach to teaching. I deeply appreciate and share the university’s dedication to getting people out of intellectual isolation.”

When Not at PSU: In addition to raising his two teenage children, Dr. Fuller is a passionate flower gardener and umpires youth baseball games.

Karen Hullman

Pictured is a group of people standing together, appearing to be enjoying a social event. They are dressed in a variety of colors and styles, suggesting a casual and friendly atmosphere. Some individuals are holding cups, possibly containing beverages, indicating that drinks may be served at the event. The setting seems to be an indoor space, possibly a banquet hall or conference room, given the presence of tables and chairs in the background. The lighting is bright, enhancing the cheerful ambiance of the gathering. The overall mood appears to be celebratory and convivial, with people engaged in conversations and interactions.