DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES!

For the last ten years it has been my privilege to serve the faculty and students of the largest, most diverse, and most exciting department at Portland State. It has been a joy to be part of the growth of the many fine programs within the FFL Department, but all good things must end, so at the end of my current elected term I will return to the full-time faculty.

As I look back, it truly has been a remarkable decade. We have added new programs (Swahili) and strengthened and increased the capacity of many others. We have added new M.A. programs (Japanese, new B.A. programs (Arabic), and new undergraduate minor (Italian) and, most importantly, we have added brilliant new faculty who will be our future. We have created new scholarships to support student learning, and we have competed successfully for national funding with awards ranging from the Pew Grant Program in Costa Rica for the most recent Russian Flagship Partner Program. And we’re just getting started.

Looking forward, I also truly believe that we are about to embark on another period of intense growth. The next decade in our development will start with a new public-private partnership to develop Halsman Studios. In another welcome development, American Sign Language will join our Department this coming fall. At the same time, we will add a new specialist in Computer Assisted Language Learning, a position that will considerably increase our ability to develop, deliver, and assess online language instruction. We have moved to a new and larger location in Neuberger Hall, and in recognition that many of the languages that we teach and study are not really “foreign,” in 2010 we will adopt a new name: World Languages and Literatures.

As I assess where the Department has been and where I think that it is going, I am immensely grateful to my immediate predecessors Linda Parkhall and Luisa Eletto who set the Department on its current course of excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. I also want to express my profound gratitude to newly elected chair Jennifer Polmutter who has agreed to take the helm, and then to serve the needs of our Department. I wish her with a heart of steel, infinite patience, and a healthy sense of humor.

Keep in touch,

Sandra Freels

Sandra Freels

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 listserve: click on “alumni” and follow the prompts.

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Language immersion housing – a first at PSU

I love the Russian Teas that are held in the dorm every Friday afternoon. They’re a great way to end the week: interesting guest speakers and activities, relaxed Russian conversation and, of course, tea and cookies. These gatherings are open to the entire PSU community.

Christina Lamendos
PSU Russian Flagship student and dorm resident

BY DANE HOPLAND

LAUGHTER AND ANIMATED RUSSIAN conversations spill out into the fifth-floor corridor of Stephen Epler Hall on Friday afternoons. The new Russian dorm is the place to be for students interested in the Russian language and culture, and the Russkia Gostinaia (Russian living room) provides an ideal setting for these lively gatherings. Comfortable socializing is the idea behind this room, along the lines of “Build it and they will come.” Or, in this case: Furnish it with accommodate amenities like a big-screen television and a kitchen; then, organize lots of interesting activities, and they will come. The plan is working spectacularly, and PSU’s Russian living room is often filled to capacity on Fridays. On other days, visiting students drop by for language study sessions or to watch Russian videos.

On all days, Russian is the language spoken.

Dorm rooms in this Russian Immersion Living/Learning Community are available to all students who have completed at least two years of Russian. Currently, five women live there: Christina Lamendos, Asoba (Dunny) Peneter, Luba Polozova, Yergenia Tsvetova, and Marina Taylina. Marina is a visiting Fulbright teaching assistant from PSU’s partner university in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia. The other four women are enrolled in PSU’s Russian Flagship Partner Program and are pursuing a Certificate of Advanced Proficiency in Russian.

Living in the language-immersion dorm makes a difference. Dunny Peneter described her linguistic epiphany this way: “There was a moment last fall when it hit me and I realized just how cool the whole thing was, living in the Russian dorm: I woke up one morning and spontaneously started talking with my roommate in Russian.” Very cool, indeed.
News Briefs:

HELLENIC STUDIES TO BE ADDED: The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures is beginning a new initiative to develop a program in Hellenic Studies. This program will expand our current course offerings in Ancient and Modern Greek, and eventually will lead to a new major in Hellenic Studies. To further that goal, a prominent member of the local Greek American community, B. John Rumpakis, has made a very generous donation of $25,000 to PSU. We shall be seeking additional funding through donations and grants to enable us to establish a new tenured-track position in Modern Greek language, literature, and culture.

FACULTY GRANT RECEIVED: Anousha Sadigh (Pentax) was awarded a $13,000 grant from Boscan Cultural Heritage Institute to complete her first-year Pentax language textbook and to organize a film series entitled On Iranian Women. By Iranian Women.

FACULTY SEARCHES COMPLETED: Three faculty searches have been completed. In Fall 2010, Jon Holz (University of Washington) will join the Japanese Section; the Spanish Section is pleased to be able to welcome our new colleague Isabel Jain-Portillo (Purdue University); and Steven L. Thoms (UC Berkeley) will join the faculty as Assistant Professor of Computer Assisted Language Learning.

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGES JOINS FLL: Effective Fall 2010, American Sign Language will be housed in FLL. New colleagues Mazie Franklin and Sherry Andrews will join FLL Instructor Alicia Broek in program development and language instruction.

NEUBERGER LEGACY CONTINUES: Mary Jane Sills, who worked as an aide for Senators Richard and Maurice Neuberger, died in January, 2010, and bequeathed a table to PSU in honor of Maurice Neuberger with instructions that it should permanently reside in Neuberger Hall. It now serves as the conference table in the FLL Department Chair office. Sandra Freels, Department Chair, commented, “We are honored to provide a home for this beautiful table.”

NEW HIRE: The FLL office staff was delighted to have Amanda Dodds sign on for the Winter term as the Requirements Specialist and Administrative Assistant. Amanda enjoys the many conversations conducted in different languages in the office and said, “It’s really beautiful!”

STUDENT PAPER RECEIVES AWARD: Congratulations are in order for French major Allison Pariz. Her paper on the representation of women’s power in a seventeenth-century fairy tale won the award for Best Foreign Language Paper at the Northwest Undergraduate Conference on Literature this March. Congratulations, Allison!

NEW BABY ARRIVES! Congratulations to Nila Friedberg (Russian) on the birth of her son Joseph Shaya Baratz on December 2, 2009. Welcome Orkai!

DEPARTMENT NAME CHANGE: The Department has voted to change its name to World Languages and Literatures, effective Fall 2010. The new name reflects national trends.

GRADUATION AND AWARD RECEPTION: The FLL Graduation and Award Reception will be held June 9, 4:00-6:00 p.m. in SMU 238.

FOND FAREWELL: FLL Scheduler Suza Veller will be leaving us at the end of March to join family in Eugene. She will be greatly missed.

Senior FLL auditors challenge themselves, offer perspective to younger students

Eileen Zniefer used to live adjacent to the PSU campus, and one day a young man walked by her apartment and told her that she could take classes for free as a senior auditor. Her first reaction was: “I can’t do that!” This response, however, was quickly replaced by: “What an opportunity!” Since then Eileen has enrolled in a wide variety of foreign literature classes taught in English plus numerous art history classes. Eileen’s face lit up when she talked about the classes she took during the Fall 2009 term: Russian Culture and Civilization and a class that focused on films made by Swedish directors Ingmar Bergman. “I love hearing what the younger students have to say. Eileen observed, “and they are genuinely interested in my perspective as well. I enjoy the intellectual exchange.” Eileen also enjoys the close friendships that she has developed with several other senior auditors over the years.

It was a surprise to Ed Connelly as well when he discovered he could enroll tuition-free in Japanese classes if he registered via PSU’s Senior Adult Learning Center. Ed is quick to point out that auditing a foreign language requires a lot of work, but he appreciates the structure and focus that his Japanese classes have provided during his retirement years. The classes also allow him to reconnect with some of his earlier life experiences. Ed served in the U.S. Navy during the early 1950’s and was sent to Japan and Korea, and at a later point he worked for three years at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo.

Ed Connelly and Eileen Zniefer both enthusiastically agree: “Auditing foreign language and literature classes at PSU is fun, even addictive. They are good company. 289 FLL class seats were filled by senior auditors during the 2008-09 academic year. Ed concluded his comments by saying, “It’s important for seniors to understand that they need the instructor’s permission to enroll in a class and can enroll only after regular students are assured of seating.” Senior auditors must also be at least 65 years of age. For more information, readers should visit www.pdx.edu/isa/senior-auditor-learning-center.

Ed Connelly and Eileen Zniefer