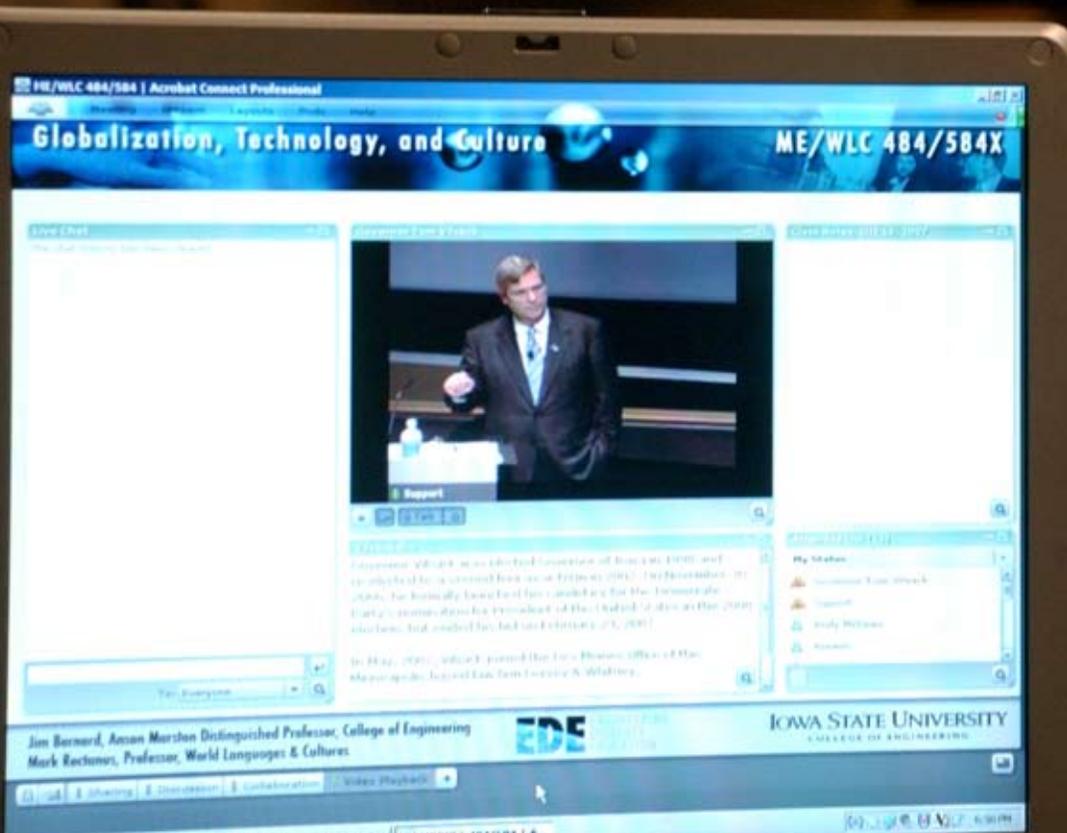


Department of World Languages and Cultures
Alumni Newsletter

Winter 2007



**Globalization,
Technology,
and Culture
course brings
impressive
speakers to
campus.**

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College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

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IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

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This newsletter is published twice a year for the alumni, friends, students and faculty of the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Iowa State University, an academic department in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

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On the cover

Former Iowa Governor Tom Villsack was one of the speakers on the impressive list of guests to appear at the Globalization, Technology and Culture course co-taught by Mark Rectanus, professor of German.

Photo by Dave Gieseke

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Each academic year brings change: both fond farewells and new beginnings. In 2007 the faculty, students, and alumni of the department commemorated the end of an era with the retirement of Joanna Courteau, professor of Spanish and Portuguese at Iowa State for over 35 years. In honor of Joanna's decades of teaching, advising, mentorship, and involvement in the greater Iowa State community, we hosted a reception during homecoming in October. Many of Joanna's former colleagues, as well as students past and present, were in attendance. It was wonderful to see so many of our alumni return to campus for the celebration, including Kim Contag, Jeanne Poore, Gary Stahl, and via video, Theresa Satterfield.

In speaking with alumni I am consistently struck by the bond that many maintain with their former professors and classmates. During Homecoming and VEISHEA celebrations, we are fortunate to welcome back alumni who make it

back to Ames for the festivities.

However, we welcome our former students to return to Ames at any time of the year to renew their connections with the department, to check out our new Language Studies Resource Center, or to share their professional expertise with our current students. Our undergraduates benefit tremendously from interaction with our graduates as they seek out advice on combining academic majors, recommendations on study and work abroad, and first-hand information on graduate studies and career options.

We welcomed several new faculty members to Pearson Hall this August. Eric Shepherd is our newest assistant professor of Chinese with expertise in Chinese language pedagogy and performance/folklore studies. His substantial experience with study abroad and internship programs is serving him well as he works to establish our first-ever study abroad program in China! Cristina Pardo-Ballester, assistant professor of Spanish applied linguistics, comes to Ames from Granada, Spain, via the University of California-Davis. Cristina works in the rapidly-expanding field of on-line language learning. She is coordinating our elementary and intermediate Spanish language program while developing on-line delivery methods for elementary Spanish. Finally, I should mention three visiting Fulbright foreign language scholars who are spending the academic year at Iowa State teaching in our language programs. Anwar Mohamed (Egypt) is teaching elementary Arabic; Xiochu Li (China), is teaching elementary Chinese, and Ekaterina Shcherbokova (Russia) is working with our heritage and elementary students in Russian Studies. Our students are very fortunate to be learning language and culture from these talented and enthusiastic linguistics ambassadors!

The department was saddened this fall semester to learn of the deaths of two former faculty members. Harry Kahn, faculty member in French until his retirement in the late 1980s, passed away in October at his residence in Duluth, Minnesota. Jaime Lacasa, emeritus associate professor of Spanish, died suddenly in November. Jaime had retired in 2004, after more three decades as a teacher and scholar. At the time of his death, Jaime, and his wife, emeritus professor of Spanish, Judith Noble Lacasa, were actively engaged in their research pursuits in linguistic and Latin American studies. We mourn the loss of these colleagues and extend our sympathy to their family and friends.

Let me again encourage our alumni to visit campus and to share their wisdom and experience with our undergraduates. We look forward to seeing you in 2008!

Global perspective

As a 15-year-old high school student from Brooklyn, Dawn Bratsch-Prince's worldviews were limited.

Then she went on a school-sponsored study trip to Puerto Rico and her eyes were opened - and not just because she had to pay for half the trip's cost on her own.

"I saw there was a different way to communicate and a different way to view the world," she said. "I almost became addicted to traveling abroad after that."

International experiences to Spain, Mexico and Russia helped fuel that addiction. And now Bratsch-Prince will be assisting the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' students to enjoy some of those same experiences.

The professor of Spanish and chair of the Department of World Languages and Cultures has been named the director of LAS International Programs as part of her duties as an LAS intern associate dean. She replaces Steffen Schmidt, University Professor of political science, who has previously served in that capacity.

"Steffen has done a marvelous job of promoting international activities to LAS faculty and staff," said Michael Whiteford, LAS dean. "He has helped move the program forward by relentlessly communicating the need for our students to have an international experience."

"Dawn will continue our push to ensure that students obtain knowledge about cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as participate in international learning opportunities."

Bratsch-Prince will coordinate the LAS international studies major in addition to overseeing the college's study abroad efforts and international research and outreach activities.

"We would like to create a broadly supported international program in which all academic units in the college are able to participate and not just a few," she said. "We want all of our faculty to have the opportunity to engage in international studies."

She says that faculty in each of the college's three major disciplinary divisions - humanities, math and sciences, and social sciences - have distinguished international research programs that entail collaboration and engage LAS students. A range of diverse international academic opportunities are currently available to students, including mastering a world language and putting it into practice through study or work experience abroad.



The college has as a goal to increase, diversify and find new ways to fund study abroad opportunities for its students. There should be a range of international programs offered from week-long study trips during semester and spring breaks, to summer, semester or year-long experiences.

"We want to broaden the geographic range of our programs as well as strengthen the many outstanding international opportunities we already offer," Bratsch-Prince said.

"Today's students and their parents recognize the need for an education that includes a global dimension," she continued. "The classes we offer here at Iowa State are one thing, but we need to continue to increase the number of students we send abroad, not only to study, but also for internships, service and other learning opportunities." **DG**

Duo honored by Iowa Distance Learning Association

Two individuals in the Department of World Languages and Cultures were given the Iowa Distance Learning Association's Points of Presence Award for specific, outstanding distance education programs and initiatives serving learners within, but not limited to, Iowa.

Iowa State's "Online Elementary Latin" program was the recipient in the higher education category. The program is coordinated by Madeleine Henry, professor of classical studies, and Julio Rodriguez, director of the Language Studies Resource Center.

Through an innovative design, Henry and Rodriguez created an on-line elementary Latin sequence (Latin 101 and 102) to benefit the increasing audience and positively impact learners in Iowa. The pilot version of the course was offered last summer with subsequent courses offered each semester afterwards.



The online Latin courses offer on-campus students a web-based delivery option while also serving underserved audiences including students throughout the state who no longer have the option to study Latin in secondary school.

Faculty obituaries

Harry A. Kahn

Harry A. Kahn, 84, of Duluth, Minn., died Saturday, Sept. 8, at Franciscan Health Center in Duluth. He was born Oct. 30, 1922, in Brainerd, Minn., and graduated from Denfeld High School. He attended Duluth State Teachers College before serving in the U.S. Army in Italy during World War II.

After his military service, he returned to Duluth and graduated with a bachelor's degree. He then attended the University of Iowa, receiving his master's degree and also was working on his doctorate. He worked as a French professor at Iowa State University until his retirement in 1988.

His academic specialty was Gérard de Nerval, a 19th century poet claimed by both the Romantic and Surrealist movements. Professor Kahn was a member of the Phi Sigma Iota Honor Society and various other professional organizations. He was adept at presenting the culture of France in its many manifestations (food, art, music, literature and history) to his students. He was an ardent Francophile, admired and respected by both the French staff and the students.

Jaime Lacasa

Jaime Lacasa, associate professor emeritus of Spanish, passed away suddenly Nov. 17, 2007. Dr. Lacasa had retired from Iowa State University in May 2004.

Professor Lacasa earned his Ph.D. in sociology at Iowa State University and worked in the Department of Foreign

Languages and Literatures for 34 years. During his tenure in the department, Dr. Lacasa taught a remarkable variety of language courses, among these Latin, Classical Greek, Classical Hebrew, Quechua and his native Spanish. Many of these courses were developed and taught for the first time under his initiative.

Throughout the years, Dr. Lacasa was engaged in scholarship focusing on foreign language pedagogy. During the 1970s and 1980s, Dr. Lacasa, together with his collaborator Dr. Judith Noble Lacasa, authored several pedagogical books for Spanish language learning, as well as a textbook that used extensive audio materials, an innovation at this period of time in the discipline. The latter part of Dr. Lacasa's career was dedicated to language in cultural context, primarily study of the languages, literatures and cultures of the indigenous peoples of the Andes. His encyclopedic knowledge of multiple Andean languages and cultures allowed him to engage in scholarship in an often ignored sector of Hispanic studies.

At the time of his death, Dr. Lacasa was finalizing his work on a multi-language encyclopedic Quechua dictionary, as well as a revision of his *Introduction to Quechua: Language of the Andes*, co-authored with Judith Noble Lacasa. His dedication to linguistic research and his body of published scholarship remain a valuable legacy to the discipline of Hispanic studies.

High school Spanish teachers improve skills during summer seminar.

It was a trip high school Spanish teachers wanted and needed, and Julie Wilhelm should know.

Wilhelm, Spanish lecturer in the Department of World Languages and Cultures, led a group of five high school Spanish teachers in June on an intensive seminar to Cáceres, Spain. Wilhelm spent 16 years teaching Spanish to Iowa high school students before coming to ISU. She said language teachers need a professional development opportunity like this.

“Many high school Spanish teachers want to earn graduate credits in Spanish, but they’re not taking the courses because they’re not available, especially in rural areas,” Wilhelm explained.

So world languages and cultures offered the two-week graduate-level seminar to the historic city of 80,000, located in western Spain about halfway between Madrid and Lisbon. The participants - four Iowans and one from Omaha - had varied Spanish language skills. All benefited from the trip, Wilhelm said.

“We focused on communication and culture because we know a lot of high school Spanish teachers have few opportunities to talk with native speakers,” she said. “Their language skills can deteriorate.”

The teachers lived in homes with Spanish families and attended special classes during the day at a university. They spoke almost exclusively in Spanish.

“We wanted them to speak the language in a comfortable, non-threatening environment,” Wilhelm said about staying with Spanish-speaking families. She said a key to improving language skills is practicing without fear of making mistakes.

The teachers also gained curriculum ideas for use back at their schools, said Wilhelm, who previously has led high school groups to Spain.

“It’s nice to go back to your classroom and tell the students what the Spanish teenagers are like - what they’re wearing, what they’re eating and the music they’re listening to. Those are the things the students want to know.”

The teachers learned about bullfighting, the Spanish educational system and current issues impacting the nation.

Teachers to Cáceres



“They will be able to offer a lot to their students about the Spanish culture,” Wilhelm added.

Dawn Bratsch-Prince, professor and chair of the Department of World Languages and Cultures, said ISU has a long history of preparing K-12 language teachers for the state and elsewhere.

“Our commitment to K-12 world language teachers extends beyond conferring a degree,” said Bratsch-Prince, also director of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences International Programs.

“Elementary through secondary school teachers look to the university to provide discipline-specific professional development opportunities that immerse them in the target-language culture. Our program in Cáceres was designed to provide just this type of opportunity in an intensive, but manageable, summer experience.”

One Cáceres participant said she benefited a great deal from the seminar beyond improved language skills, cultural knowledge and grad credits.

“I gained a much better understanding of myself and of what people can accomplish by stepping outside their comfort zones,” said Jennifer Savery of Humboldt High School. “I hope that is something that I will be able to transfer to my classroom and to my students.”

The seminar (the teachers paid for their airfare, tuition, room and board) included a weekend trip to Madrid and day trips. A 2008 seminar is in the works, Wilhelm said. **SJ**

Technology is important tool in language learning

Technology is enhancing instruction throughout Iowa State, and it's especially true in the Department of World Languages and Cultures.

Although language learning is all about interaction with other humans, Dawn Bratsch-Prince, professor and chair of world languages and cultures, says technology is playing a larger role in helping students speak and understand new languages.

"It's an investment in the future because our students are so comfortable with technology," she said. "They expect certain technologies to be used."

Bratsch-Prince said the department's goal is to use technology that engages students and targets language learning. The key is using technology effectively to enhance instruction.

The department has invested in computers and other forms of technology and added staff to incorporate the hardware and software into the language curricula.

Julio Rodriguez is an instructional support specialist for the department and the director of the Language Studies Resource Center (LSRC). He said technology should not be used only because it is available. "Technology must be integrated with a meaningful purpose."

The LSRC is the instructional technology hub of the department providing language students and faculty access to audio, visual, text and electronic files. "It supports autonomous learning so students can work at anytime they want because the amount of time they spend in class in a week is not all that much," Rodriguez said.

"Technology can promote interaction and expose students to native speakers, which is important in language learning," he added.

For example:

- Satellite feeds of television programs in different languages from other nations can be recorded and made available to students.
- Podcasts allow students to listen to languages anytime, anywhere after downloading the audio files from the Internet.
- Voice tools (which can be integrated into WebCT, ISU's online course software) allow students to send and receive audio voice mails, participate in audio discussion boards and subscribe to podcasts.

The department's Cargill Digitally Enhanced Classroom in Pearson Hall was specifically created for language instruction. It's equipped with computer workstations for each student and the instructor, Internet video conferencing capabilities, VHS and DVD equipment to play worldwide video formats, software that

facilitates classroom management and interaction, and a smart board.

A smart board is an interactive white board that acts as a touchscreen monitor that can be linked directly to a faculty member's personal computer. Among its many features, the device allows instructors to write notes on the board and save them into computer files and make them available via the Internet.

For other classrooms in Pearson Hall, the LSRC gives faculty easy access to four tablet PCs (laptops) that also allow them to draw or write content directly on the screen. The tablet PCs can be connected to the projection system of any Pearson Hall classroom.

The Cargill Classroom was used in a recent joint distance



education language program with the University of Northern Iowa and the University of Iowa. The Regents universities provided on-line instruction in three Eastern European languages and cultures.

Technology use within the Department of World Languages and Cultures resulted in an award for Rodriguez and Madeleine Henry, professor of classical studies. They received the Iowa Distance Learning Association's Points of Presence Award (higher education category) in April 2007 for creating and coordinating ISU's "Online Elementary Latin" program.

They developed the on-line elementary Latin sequence (Latin 101 and 102) to meet an increasing demand for the language. The course's pilot version was offered last summer 2006 with subsequent courses provided each semester afterward. **SJ**



Globalization

Impressive list
of speakers
highlights
globalization
course.

Take technology and global issues, add some cultural topics and expert guest speakers, and you have the makings for an innovative cross-disciplinary Iowa State course for senior and graduate students.

“Technology, Globalization and Culture” (mechanical engineering/world languages and cultures 484/584) is an examination of the present and future impact of the internationalization of society. It’s designed, say course organizers Jim Bernard and Mark Rectanus, to prepare students professionally, socially and culturally for leadership roles in a diverse world.

Bernard is an Anson Marston Distinguished Professor in engineering and Rectanus is a professor of world languages and cultures who teaches German.

Bernard and Rectanus designed the elective course for students to be “more aware of the threats and opportunities” facing them in a global society. The course is now in its third year and has about 140 students.

What separates the course from other globalization classes is an impressive lineup of guest speakers.

“The speakers really give very diverse perspectives,” Rectanus noted.

Scheduled to speak this academic year are former Iowa governor Tom Vilsack; Ambassador David Gross, a U.S. State Department official; CNN reporter and host and ISU alumna Christine Romans; Jim Duderstadt, president emeritus of

the University of Michigan; and an all-star list of corporate executives, professors, entrepreneurs and others.

Newt Gingrich, speaker of the U.S. House from 1995 to 1999, was a late addition to the slate. He and Robert Reich, Secretary of Labor in the Clinton Administration, both spoke in 2006.

Another course feature is its wealth of student diversity. Many of the students are in engineering, but they also come from a number of other majors. Also included are international students and graduate students, some of whom are employed and taking the course online from afar.

Video of each of the speakers is online for the off-campus students. However, some of those students view the class in real time on the Internet, and can even ask questions of the speakers.

“Those students fully participate in the class, including the projects,” said Rectanus. “They’re fully integrated.”

The class culminates with student-chosen group projects. Topics have included outsourcing issues, fast food chains in India and a look at which language could become number two in the world behind English.

Rectanus and Bernard choose the student groups themselves to ensure diversity among majors, seniors and graduate students, U.S. and international students, and those on and off campus.

“This simulates real life because engineers will not just work with other engineers,” Bernard said.

Group members experience working with persons from various backgrounds and cultures. They have to accommodate everyone else’s schedules, including those employed far away. Use of networking technology is important.

“We thought students would learn a lot more if they were not working with their friends,” Bernard added. “And they have to work on a professional’s schedule, not just a student’s schedule.”

For example, one time a graduate student in the course who was employed in another state was called out to work on an offshore oil rig. Students in his group had to find ways to communicate with him.

“Globalization is fueled by technological change,” Bernard said. “Technology is making things possible globally that were not possible not very long ago.”

To see a list of the course’s speakers and access video of lectures, go to www3.me.iastate.edu/me484/. SJ



Delayed retirement



Peggy Johnson involved in multitude of activities since leaving Iowa State.

Officially Peggy Johnson retired as a professor of German after 35 years at Iowa State in 1997.

Realistically, Johnson has been actively working in the decade since leaving the classroom.

Some of the activities she has been involved in include:

- Serving two terms on the ISU Retirees Committee including one term as the group's secretary;
- Member of the Ames Town and Gown Music Association Board of Directors;
- Member of the Ames Community Arts Council Board of Directors.

"I'm not a musician. I just like good music and art," Johnson says. "I'm mostly an observer and a listener."

"I like to be engaged in a number of activities for personal reasons but I think it's important to contribute a little bit back to the community."

The arts aren't the only thing that has piqued Johnson's interest in retirement. For the past seven years, she has served as a court-appointed "special advocate" (CASA). This program is not affiliated with the Iowa Department of Human Services.

CASA is a volunteer program with individuals like Johnson

serving as impartial observers and advocates for one child at a time. The children are often referred to the judicial system due to neglect and/or abuse by their parents – many times due to drug use.

Johnson has undergone extensive training to be a part of the program.

"It's interesting to get a closer look at the court system," she says. "We serve as an extra pair of eyes and ears, so to speak, for the judge. We're required to submit a written report back to the judge on the child and their home situation before each court hearing."

"We're there for the best interest of the child," she continued. "We keep tabs on the child and make sure the child is safe."

Typically the child for whom Johnson advocates resides in Story County. Johnson will not only make regular home visits, but also will get acquainted with teachers and other adults in the child's life.

"The first case I had, had a happy ending and the children in that case are thriving," Johnson said. "I think that was a good thing for me because that isn't always the way it ends."

In addition to her community service work, Johnson continues to keep her hands in her academic discipline. She regularly travels to Germany to visit friends and maintains her language skills – although in a much different way than she used to while she was a classroom instructor.

"My opportunities are slim to speak the language on a regular basis," she said. "I do correspond by e-mail with my German friends and that keeps my skills up."

Johnson is also helping out a fellow professor emeritus from Iowa State. She is translating letters that Hanna Gradwohl, who is the wife of retired anthropology professor David Gradwohl, has from family members who lived in Germany during the Holocaust.

Most of Hanna's family did not survive the Holocaust and these family correspondences give a glimpse into that time period.

"The letters are everyday correspondence that tend to be more informal than literary," Johnson said. "They also reflect the language of the 1930s. In the case of translating personal correspondence, it is important to keep the idiom appropriate to the times in which they were written."

"I'm glad this opportunity and others that I'm working on are available to me," Johnson continued. "The alternative of doing nothing is not very interesting." **DG**

Chinese storytelling

Melodic sound part of Chinese language professor's storytelling art.

Listening to Eric Shepherd speak Chinese, one hears a melodic sound.

“Chinese is a tonal language,” said the assistant professor of world languages and cultures. “There’s a rise and fall to it. That’s the most difficult aspect for students learning Chinese.”

The soft-spoken Ohio native has mastered the sing-songy, rhythm and rhyme of the language. That helped his popularity in China doing Shandong kuaishu – traditional storytelling.

Shandong is a northeast China province where Confucius was born. Kuaishu translates to “fast tale.” The long narratives are punctuated by vivid gestures and expressions and the cadenced clicking of ban, two small flat pieces of brass held in one hand for rhythm keeping.

Shepherd has performed for crowds from 12 to 35,000, part of popular Chinese variety shows featuring many acts. He could have been a celebrity in the province of some 90 million people. Instead he chose academics.

Shepherd was studying political science at Ohio State University when he took his first Chinese course. Only fulfilling his language requirement for graduation, he knew nothing of the language or culture. He had not even been to a Chinese restaurant.

Shepherd also was a page at the Ohio State Capitol. Knowing a few Chinese words, such as “hello” and “goodbye,” he often escorted Chinese visitors. He discovered that beyond a few pleasantries, conversations between Chinese and Ohio officials were all in English.

“That’s when I decided we needed more Chinese-speaking people in the U.S.,” he explained.

He immersed himself in Chinese and spent time with native speakers. Upon graduation he went to China in 1995, teaching English. In 1997 he started going for long stays establishing business internships for OSU students. The work often involved lavish and lengthy banquets with various forms of entertainment. That is how one networks in China.

“We would eat, talk and watch performers. Then eat more, talk and watch more performers,” Shepherd said.

Included was Shandong kuaishu, which fascinated him. He became acquainted with entertainers and sometimes joined the acts, like the time in 2000 when he and a Chinese entertainer actually practiced their lines in the restroom minutes before performing. It turned out Shepherd was very good at storytelling.

“It went from there,” he explained. “That opened up a whole new world.”

Shepherd appeared on local TV shows, wrote articles for the



newspaper and guest hosted a weekend TV program well liked by young people. His popularity soared because of his excellent language skills, knowledge of the culture and foreign face, which attracted audiences.

He decided to write his Ph.D. dissertation on Shandong kuaishu. To best learn it, he took a leave of absence from Ohio State and began a one-year apprenticeship under one of the masters of the art form, Wu Yanguo.

Shandong kuaishu originated more than 200 years ago. In the 1930s the Communist party began using it to promote its ideals. In the next three decades the party trained many masters, which raised their status and turned Shandong kuaishu into a national phenomenon, especially in northern China.

One of the outstanding apprentices in the 1960s, during the Cultural Revolution, was Master Wu.

Shepherd was trained in a traditional method that included learning to use the brass ban and memorizing and repeating Master Wu’s stories. The work was intense. Go too long without practicing and Master Wu might yell, “Not practicing enough!”

Soon Master Wu was taking Shepherd to his performances. Later they began performing together, often doing multiple shows in a day. The apprenticeship ended in late 2005. Master Wu took no pay for his work, as is the tradition in China.

“I use the process of teaching Shandong kuaishu that Master Wu used on me every day when I teach Chinese,” Shepherd said. It begins with memorizing a script, adding context to the discussion and including the all-important tones.

Shepherd omits some things from Master Wu’s training: “I don’t yell at students to practice more.” **SJ**

In the Footsteps of the Inca

The Iowa Regents' universities offer a summer Spanish language and culture program with community development and service-learning in Cusco, Peru.

In the Footsteps of the Inca is eight weeks in duration. Students study Spanish intensively for seven weeks and engage in service-learning throughout the program. All participants live with a Peruvian host family selected by ProPeru and are provided with three meals per day and laundry service.

Students leave Iowa for Lima, Peru on May 22 and return home July 16, 2008. Excursions included in the program are to Machu Picchu and numerous Inca ruins in the Cusco area.

Students enroll in Spanish language courses appropriate to their level. Six credits for Spanish language and Peruvian history/art/architecture and two credits for service-learning may be earned (eight total credits).

Students must be able to function in a Spanish-language environment. ProWorld's local NGO, ProPeru, will provide

service-learning experiences at selected sites in consultation with community leaders to assess community assets and projects that they want us to work with them to accomplish.

The program fee is estimated at \$3,995, with airfare (not included in the program fee) from Cusco, Peru. A portion of the program fee goes to fund community development projects of ProPeru and their partner communities. Incidental and personal expenses need to be budgeted individually.

Students must have completed at least four semesters of college-level Spanish with a minimum 2.5 GPA. Application deadline is Jan. 20, 2008. Interviews will be conducted to screen for linguistic ability and assess service-learning interests.

Iowa State students can complete the program on-line application at www.studyabroad.iastate.edu/Application/Application.html.

Additional information is available from Nancy Guthrie at nguthrie@iastate.edu or 515-294-6792 or 294-8036.



Spain today

The Department of World Languages and Cultures annually offers two separate study abroad experiences in Spain. Semester-long programs are offered in Caceres, Spain, during both the fall and spring as well as a summer program. An additional summer program is offered in Valencia, Spain.

Exiled

A hidden story lies in every family history. The tale of Iowa State alumna Kimberly Contag's family became an award-winning book she and her husband authored.

Contag, professor of Spanish at Minnesota State University, Mankato, earned a B.A. in Spanish and International Studies from ISU in 1980. She received the Department of World Languages and Cultures Alumni Educational Achievement Award in 2007.

The Minnesotan is from a family of Iowa Staters, including her father, Carlos Contag, who earned a master's degree in veterinary medicine in 1956. Before coming to Ames at age 24, he spent his early teen years on a perilous trek from his Ecuadorian roots to war-torn Germany to a French refugee camp before returning to the Americas.

Kimberly and husband James Grabowska researched the story for the book, *Where the Clouds Meet the Water* (2004 Inkwater Press, Portland, Ore.).

"The book is creative nonfiction," said Contag. "It's very historical, but it's written like a novel."

It traces her grandfather Ernst's forced 1942 expatriation from Ecuador to Germany in a little-known piece of World War II history.

Ernst Contag's parents had emigrated from Germany to Ecuador in 1900. After the United States' entry into WWII, "The U.S. wanted to restrict the activities of what they considered potential enemy aliens around the world especially in the Americas," Kimberly Contag said.

The U.S. pointed at persons of German, Italian and Japanese heritage.

FBI agents came to Ernst's home April 21, 1942, giving him nine days to ready himself to leave the only country he knew. Despite being born and raised in Ecuador, Ernst (then a widower) and his four young children were forced to move to Germany in the middle of the war. Ernst's oldest child, Karl Heinz or Carlos as he has been known in the U.S. and Ecuador, is Kimberly's father.

The Contags were among thousands of Latin Americans of German ancestry (and hundreds of Germano-Ecuadorians) who were basically traded in a diplomatic exchange of foreign citizens. Taken to New Jersey, Ernst's family sailed to Lisbon before being separated in Germany.

"Since my grandfather was a widower, the children had to be split up and put into different places," she explained. "So he did not live with his children for those four years."

Spanish alumna authors book on family's perilous WWII journey.



Photo: *The Free Press*, Mankato, Minn.

Family members endured wartime Germany including Allied air raids. Ernst eventually reunited the family, except for Kimberly's father, and when the fighting ceased, they walked from Berlin to Paris and were placed in a large refugee camp at Beaune-La Rolande where hunger flourished. Ernst soon convinced French officers to retrieve his eldest child, 15-year-old Karl Heinz (Carlos), from the American sector of occupied Germany.

Sneaking into France in an ambulance, Kimberly's father was reunited with Ernst in 1945. "That was a wonderful moment," Contag said.

Eventually, the Contags traveled to New York and gathered enough money to return to Ecuador and rebuild their lives. Of the four children, two eventually settled in the U.S., one in Venezuela and one remained in Ecuador, where Ernst also lived.

Although poor, Kimberly's father became a veterinarian and applied for scholarships to pursue graduate degrees. He enrolled at ISU where he met Kimberly's mother, ISU student Ann Schwermann.

Kimberly Contag looks at the book as a symbolic reconnection of a family separated by politics and war. "I think it was important for our family because the family had been divided and it was never really pulled back together."

The family's ties to Ecuador remain strong. Contag, Grabowska and their three sons spent the 2006-07 academic year in Cuenca, Ecuador, where Kimberly's great grandfather first settled. Kimberly studied Ecuadorian literatures as a Fulbright scholar. **SJ**

Language man

Computer engineer uses languages well after graduation.

The official Iowa State University records say that Christopher Sorensen has a bachelor's of science degree in computer engineering.

In reality, it's been the languages, and French in particular, that have propelled Sorensen through this academic and professional careers.

In high school, he took French for four years, worked in a language camp in Minnesota, and went to France on a Rotary exchange program for a year after graduating from high school.

His interests in languages continued at Iowa State where he got minors in both French and German. He spent two summers interning in Germany and also spent part of another summer in Italy.

But when it came time to get a job out of college, Sorensen looked toward the United States. Even then he wanted to utilize his language skills.

"I went to work for Microsoft in Seattle," he says. "It was the company's growth spurt time and I was able to use my language background by adapting software to the French and German markets."

But after seven years, Sorensen decided life with Microsoft wasn't all it was cracked up to be – even for a computer engineer. So he took a year off and spent a year at Aristotle University in Greece.

"I discovered Greece was a great place to vacation, but I didn't want to work there," Sorensen said.

But he didn't want to return to the United States either and soon took advantage of Y2K and the need in France for IT experts. Since 1999, Sorensen has worked for France Telecom where his group manages telephone and videoconferencing for international corporations in over 50 countries.

He recently received the France Telecom regional Bonne idée (Good Idea) award for creating a software solution to automate processing and programming to the firm's videoconferencing orders.

And he still uses his language skills – writing or speaking French, English and also Spanish, on a daily basis.

He has also grown to love living, and working, in Europe.

"For me there is a much higher quality of life in France," he says. "Workers have much more time off and I get to pursue my hobbies."



Those hobbies include the piano, travel and continuing to learn new languages.

"I love living in France. I'm always learning new things. There is more of a balance of life in Europe than in the United States," he says.

That said, Sorensen enjoys returning to the U.S. and to his family in Iowa. This past October, he returned to campus to accept the Department of World Languages and Cultures' Alumni Professional Achievement Award during Homecoming.

While he was on campus he spoke to several of the department's classes.

"I hope I was able to show students what the possibilities are – how they can use a foreign language in their lives," he said.

"Knowing and using another language can make a difference in their lives. I know it has made a difference in mine." **DG**

Alumni recognized during Homecoming 2007

Recipients of Department of World Languages and Culture awards were:



Alumni Educational Achievement Award

Susan Sandholm-Petersen
1973 BS English
West Des Moines, Iowa

A world languages teacher in the Waukee Community

(Iowa) School District, Sandholm-Petersen has earned National Board Certification in World Languages other than English (German). This rigorous assessment process involved hundreds of hours of work to demonstrate knowledge and skill in the art and science of teaching other languages. She was one of only two Iowa teachers who achieved the certification in the first year (2002) it was offered.

Sandholm-Petersen is active with the Iowa World Language Association and the American Association of Teachers of German. She holds a master's degree from Drake University.



Alumni Educational Achievement Award

Kimberly Contag
1980 BA Spanish
1980 BA International Studies
Mankato, Minnesota

A professor of Spanish at Minnesota State University,

Mankato, Kimberly Contag is the author of an award-winning book about her unusual ancestral ties to Ecuador. *Where the Clouds Meet the Water* tells the story of her father's family who were blacklisted by the Ecuadoran government as an enemy alien and sent back to their native Germany. Eventually returning to Ecuador, Contag's father came to Iowa before moving to Minnesota where she was born and raised.

She is also the author of the book *Mockery in Spanish Golden Age Literature* and is the co-editor of *Don Quixote Across the Disciplines*. A recipient of two Fulbright Awards, her current research on new voices in Ecuadorian literature allows her to connect with Ecuadorian writers, editors and professors of literature. She has taught at Minnesota State, Mankato since 1992, and served as Modern Languages chair from 2000-2006. Before that she taught at the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma's study abroad in Spain program, the University of Minnesota and Carleton College.

One alumni was recognized with an Alumni Professional Achievement Award:



Alumni Professional Achievement Award

Christopher Sorensen
1991 BS Engineering
Paris, France

Christopher Sorensen has worked for France Telecom since 1999 where his group manages telephone and videoconferencing for international corporations

in over 50 countries. He recently received the France Telecom regional Bonne idée (Good Idea) award for creating a software solution to automate processing and programming to the firm's videoconferencing orders.

With a background in computer engineering, French and German after graduating from Iowa State, Sorensen secured a position at Microsoft in the International Productions Group where he worked from 1991-98. There his team managed the translation and localization of Microsoft software products for the French and German markets.

Three Iowa State graduates with academic records in world language study were honored with the Department of World Languages and Cultures alumni achievement awards during Iowa State University's Homecoming celebration this fall. The department annually recognizes alumni for their achievements in either educational or professional pursuits.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences cross-disciplinary Program in Classical Studies also recognized an outstanding alumnus with its Outstanding Achievement Award during the 2007 homecoming celebration:



Classical Studies Outstanding Achievement Award

Paul Mitchell
1990 BA History
1999 PhD Economics
Madison, Wisconsin

Paul Mitchell's research emphasizes understanding the

role of information and uncertainty in technology adoption and input use to improve environmental policies for agriculture. Specific applications include using contract theory to assess fines, subsidies, and insurance to encourage/enforce compliance with Bt corn refuge requirements and evaluating insurance to encourage adoption of nutrient best management practices and integrated pest management.

Mitchell's other research in pest economics includes improving econometric models for estimating pest damage functions with experimental data and using population-genetics simulation models to evaluate insect and weed resistance management strategies.

In addition to the departmental awards, Judith Brandlin ('64) received the ISU Alumni Association's Alumni Merit Award for "outstanding contributions to human welfare that transcend purely professional accomplishments and bring honor to the University":



Judith (Goetsch) Brandlin
BS 1964
Modern Languages
Los Angeles, California

When Judith Goetsch Brandlin arrived in Los Angeles in 1978, she was ready to make a difference. Today, the before and after-school program she developed for children in low-income communities stands as a representative of the legacy of caring she has created and nurtured

for generations of children.

Brandlin founded Stone Soup Child Care Programs in Encino, Calif., in 1986. The not-for-profit organization provides safe, affordable, and dependable care for more than 4,000 children daily in some of southern and central California's lowest income neighborhoods. Stone Soup has made school fun and interesting for children by providing a healthy contrast to the drugs and gang violence many of its participants encounter on a daily basis.

Vice President Al Gore cited Stone Soup as a model program in 1998, and Brandlin was the 2000 recipient of the Silver Achievement Award in Education from the YWCA of Greater Los Angeles. A recipient of numerous volunteer leadership awards in the Los Angeles community, Brandlin served on the board of directors for the United Way of Greater Los Angeles for 20 years and served 28 years with MUSES, the auxiliary for L.A.'s Museum of Science and Industry.

Making a Difference

The Department of World Languages and Cultures at Iowa State University is committed to providing outstanding opportunities for the university community. In order to have the resources necessary to take these programs into the future, support for the department is essential. Funding is required to aid the program in developing new opportunities in technology, continuing and advancing outreach activities, maintaining and expanding current performance and educational opportunities, and supporting students and faculty. These services are crucial as the Department of World Languages and Cultures strives to keep up with the student demand for these experiences. To help make a difference, simply fill out the form, drop it in the mail (ISU Foundation, 2505 University Blvd, Ames, Iowa 50010-8644) and check our next newsletter.

For more information about making a gift to the Department of World Languages and Cultures or including ISU in your estate plans, please contact the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Development Office at 515-294-3607 or Erin Steinkamp at estein@iastate.edu.

www.foundation.iastate.edu/las_gift

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