



# THE POLYGLOT

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER FROM THE  
WORLD LANGUAGES & CULTURES DEPARTMENT

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## A Word from the Chair

As the academic year draws to a close, Eastern will be welcoming a new president, Dr. Karim Ismaili, who is, by all accounts, a well-qualified candidate and great choice for our University. Our prolific Prof. Bacholle is on a well-deserved sabbatical, working on publications in France and scouting possible locations for a study abroad course in Spain. We also continue to hold student events, such as a weekly Spanish conversation group, supported by the University's Office of Equity and Diversity, socials, an annual Alumni forum and the annual Sigma Delta Pi induction ceremony. In addition, we worked with other University offices and departments to celebrate International Mother Language Day, and accompanied a group of about 25 students from the Organization of Latin American Studies on a private tour of the Wadsworth Atheneum—narrated solely in Spanish! We are also proud to say that for the first time ever, one of our student majors—Kathryn Kubisek—was awarded the University's highest honor, the Barnard Award for service and academic excellence. You'll find student perspectives on these events and more inside the Newsletter.

And last, but most certainly not least, is the big news that the busy year yielded the approval of our curriculum revision—with the final vote from the Board of Trustees expected in June. Aside from the general Spanish major, we will now be offering the equivalent of concentrations in Spanish for Business, Spanish for Health Services and Spanish for Social Services, and to make the most out of the new courses and interdepartmental collaboration, next year, we will be proposing certificates in these areas. Hold on to your seats!

As usual, we hope you will keep in touch with us and let us know of any changes in addresses, careers, or how Spanish helped you in your professional life, so current and future students can see the possibilities.

## IN THIS ISSUE

Happenings from Sabbatical

Hartford's Puerto Rican Parade

Spilling the Tea

Film Screening: *Saint Omer*

Fundraiser for Girls' Education

Dean's Student Council

Women in French

International Mother Language Day

Trip to the Wadsworth with OLAS

Alumni Forum

Sigma Delta Pi

Excellence in Language Study Awards

Spreading Our Wings

Henry Barnard Award – Kathryn Kubisek

## Happenings from Sabbatical

Dr. Michèle Bacholle

This semester while on sabbatical leave, based in France, I am pursuing multiple projects. I am putting the finishing touches on a special issue of *Crossways Journal* (Canada), "Contemporary French and Francophone Women Filmmakers," that I am co-editing with Dr. Blum-Reid, University of Florida.

I am also researching and writing the final chapters of a book entitled *Portraits of Rebellious French Women in Contemporary Life Writing*, under contract with Lexington Books. The book is scheduled for publication in 2025 and is focused on the representation in autobiographical narratives of different forms of violence (sexual and sexist, but also symbolic, corporate, economic, medical, etc.) that women are the target of and how they revolt against it.

Beyond research and writing, I am also working on a Global Field Studies course, "Artistic and Architectural Landmarks of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in Spain." In preparation for that new course, I took more Spanish language classes in Málaga – timing it with its annual Film Festival in March, in order to improve my knowledge of Spanish cinema. I went to the sites I plan to take students to in Córdoba, Granada, Sevilla, Toledo, and Madrid. I hope to run this course in late spring 2025.



The biggest highlight of this semester is the publication of my latest book, *Le #Me Too d'Antoinette, octogénaire (80-Year-Old Antoinette's #MeToo)*, an intimate account of a French woman's life journey from forced placement in a rural religious institution for "bad girl" behavior to life in a Paris immigrant banlieue (suburb) with her foreign, abusive husband. Antoinette's life experiences powerfully testify to rape culture, as well as patterns of racism and classism in France.



## Hartford's Puerto Rican Parade

By Natasha M. Durand Castrodad, expected '25

Hartford's *Festival del Coquí*, or the Puerto Rican festival, aims to celebrate Puerto Ricans all around New England. The parade allows Puerto Ricans a space in which they can show pride in their culture. This year's theme was "Unity and Solidarity," which featured police vehicles, fire trucks, decorated floats, dancers, horses, and over-decorated jeeps.

After being delayed by several weeks, this year's parade was held on October 8 and for the first time ever, Eastern participated in the parade. Eastern's Organization for Latin American Students (OLAS) and the Theatre program designed and built a sailboat-shaped float and decorated it with many Eastern flags. One of the cool things that I learned about this float was that Eastern was one of the first Connecticut universities to register for the parade. They did so to represent the school and their Latino/Puerto Rican students. I am from and currently live in Caimito, Puerto Rico. This event was incredibly special and meaningful to me. Since I haven't had many opportunities to express my culture while I've been here, having a whole event dedicated to it was truly incredible. It was a chance for me to proudly showcase my heritage and celebrate it



Natasha at the parade. Photo by [Erika Rohr](#).

with others. I was looking forward to wearing traditional dance clothes from Puerto Rico for the event. I couldn't wait to be a part of the festivities and celebrate my culture.



Eastern's float in the parade. Photo by [Erika Rohr](#).

When we arrived at Hartford, I saw all the different floats, dance groups and presentations getting ready before they would start the march. Many of the people attending wore traditional dance clothes or the jersey of Robert Clemente, the famous Puerto Rican baseball player. The Eastern students wore Eastern merch specifically decorated and painted for the parade, Puerto Rican traditional clothes, or sports jerseys. For the majority of the march, I had the opportunity to be on the float and wave the Puerto Rican flag. We were able to hand out shirts and water bottles containing information about [OLAS](#), and the [Opportunity Scholar](#) program at Eastern.

It was nice to see other Puerto Ricans out amongst the crowds, waving the flag, shouting "WEPA!" or other Puerto Ricans saying. So many kids were running around trying to catch the things the different floats were handing out. There were also many people wearing clothes with the Puerto Rican flag or literally wearing the Puerto Rican flag as part of their outfits. And in

true Puerto Rican fashion, people brought their dogs all dressed up to celebrate the parade. The overall energy of the crowd was amazing and something I had missed from home.

After the parade, I was able to enjoy some typical Puerto Rican street food like *pinchos de pollo*, *empanadilla de pizza con Coca-Cola*, and other yummy fried foods. I also introduced some of my friends- who are very picky eaters- to some of my cultural foods. The whole experience was an interesting one. I was exposed to a different perspective on what it means to be Puerto Rican and how to be proud of it.

## Spilling the Tea

By Elisabeth Graves '22, G '24

The very first time I traveled to Lima, Perú, I spent the entire flight imagining what it would be like to meet the person I had befriended online only five months before. I shared the first part of this story as one of the featured guests in a three-part series of presentations called *Get the Tea from a Returnee*. The event was hosted by the World Languages and Cultures Department in the fall of 2023 as a way to encourage students who are interested in language learning abroad. Each of the three presenters, including myself, had traveled abroad in their own unique way. We each presented about our insights and experiences.

As the first part of the series, Katarina Boskovic, a high school senior, and Dr. Michèle Bacholle, a French professor at Eastern, shared their experience learning Spanish at [Semilla Spanish School](#) in San Pedro La Laguna, Guatemala. This individualized experience combines online tutoring and in-person language lessons with cultural excursions and local homestays.

Next, Kathryn Kubisek, an undergraduate who is majoring in Spanish and graduating this May, presented about her more traditional study abroad experience. She stayed with a host family, enjoyed excursions with API ([Academic Programs International](#)), and took five Spanish language and culture courses at the University of Seville in Seville, Spain.



Kathryn talking about her study abroad experience in Spain.

The series concluded with my presentation. I'm a graduate student at Eastern who will finish a degree in Secondary Education this May. If you didn't get a chance to attend, you're probably still wondering why I traveled to meet someone I had never met in a country that I had never been to. After completing a Spanish minor and working as a Spanish tutor

during my undergraduate studies at Eastern, I was looking for another way to practice my language skills. Like most things in the 21st century, it all started with a simple Google search. This led me to a language exchange app ([Tandem.net](https://www.tandem.net)) where I met and developed a friendship with Roberto who lives in Lima, Peru. Eventually, I traveled to Peru to meet him and his family.

During my presentation this fall, I talked about my first visit to Peru during which I immersed myself in a Spanish-speaking environment and toured around Lima with his family. Because I had such a good experience, I ended up returning during winter break to enjoy the holiday season in Peru and all the traditions that came with it. Christmas in Lima was much different from Christmas in Connecticut, but the magic of traditions and the sacred memories of togetherness reminded me so much of home.

All this to say, there are a range of opportunities to develop your language skills through travel. If you're thinking about traveling abroad, it is possible!



Elisabeth in Peru.

## Film Screening: *Saint Omer*

This fall the World Languages and Cultures Department hosted a screening of *Saint Omer*, an award-winning narrative film by French (Franco-Senegalese) film maker Alice Diop. Dozens of students and faculty from across the university community attended the screening and joined in the film discussion that followed, led by Dr. Michèle Bacholle, a CSU French & Women's Studies professor.

*Saint Omer* (2022) is a court drama that centers on the lives of two Black (immigrant) women, one accused of causing her toddler's death, the other a writer attending the trial to write about the case. The film is a fictionalized telling of the real-life trial and conviction of young Senegalese-French woman Fabienne Kabou.

This one-time screening and discussion was made possible by a grant from [Eastern's JEDI Faculty](#) (JEDI = Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion), a group of faculty who are motivated and determined to create a campus-wide climate that best supports Eastern Connecticut State University's BIPOC students. The JEDI were supportive of the screening and follow-up discussion of *Saint Omer* as it is a film that prominently represents Black female artists and perspectives through its story, actors, and director.

Following the screening, students dissected the film's presentation of intersecting themes such as race, language, immigration, gender, motherhood and culture. Students noted parallels between racist commentary on the speech patterns of 'articulate' Black Americans and how the French press questioned and mocked the central character's use of 'high' French. The rich discussion also noted cinematographic and costume design choices that reinforced the film's messages. Many students, some of whom have immigrant stories of their own, identified with the cultural and generational clashes of the two main characters. The screening and dynamic discussion that followed was an overwhelmingly positive and enriching experience. The World Languages and Culture Department aims to host similar film screening events in coming years.

*Saint Omer* is currently available for viewing on major streaming platforms.



## Fundraiser for Girls' Education

This fall students Dr. Bacholle's FRE/WST 331 Perspectives on Women's Issues class once again designed and carried out a series of fundraisers to support girls' education in Haiti.

Perspectives on Women's Issues is a course dedicated to exploring women's role in history, culture, and politics, with a special focus on contemporary issues, including social advancement, political violence, religion, microfinancing, traditions versus modernity, forced marriage, polygamy, incest, sexual identity, and abortion rights.

In addition to reading, watching and discussing films, novels and other texts, Dr. Bacholle has designed this course to include experiential learning, that is, a learn-by-doing component. Students worked together in groups to make a positive impact in the lives of women and girls. For the past several years, Dr. Bacholle has partnered with a local charity to support the College de Jean Bruny, a girls' secondary school in Les Palmes, Haiti.

This fall, groups of students created a series of fundraisers on Eastern's campus. The fundraisers included a running race, building Halloween treat bags, and the sales of jibbitz and of empowering stickers. Through these popular and successful events, students raised \$448, which covers the annual school fees for more than two students.

At the end of the semester, Bacholle commented, "the fundraising activity was effective in highlighting what we can do to help, which was mentioned in one of our readings. Furthermore, through this experience, learning about the importance of education and emphasizing how grateful we should be as women in the US to be able to have the opportunity to get educated really puts in perspective how valuable education is."

## Dean's Student Council: A Student Perspective

By Kathryn Kubisek '24

Dr. Emily Todd, the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, created the Dean's Student Council in 2022 as a way to better connect with and involve student leaders in campus life. As a member of the Dean's Student Council this year, I represent the Spanish major. During each Council meeting, students from each of the majors within the School of Arts and Sciences share updates from their academic departments and their other involvements on campus. Collectively, we brainstorm ways to improve the publicity, volunteering, networking, and engagement at Arts and Sciences events. Examples of the Council's events include Donuts with the Dean and Network with Alumni from the Arts and Sciences, events aimed at connecting current students to university administrators and alumni. The Council was also involved in volunteering at other events on campus, such as Douglass Day, a day of action in celebration of abolitionist Fredrick Douglass, as well as the opioid symposium Moving Forward: Community Dialogues on the Opioid Epidemic.

## Nomination to Editorial Board of Women in French

This spring Dr. Michèle Bacholle was nominated for and accepted a position on the editorial board of the peer-reviewed journal, *Women in French Studies*, the annual publication of the international Women in French Association (WiF). *Women in French Studies* is a publication dedicated to exploring the literature and culture of French and Francophone women. Over the past decade, Dr. Bacholle has been an active member of WiF, as well as a regular



Table in Webb Hall with FRE 331 students selling stickers, Fall 2023.



contributor to WiF conferences and publications. The invitation to this five-year editorial position is a recognition of Dr. Bacholle's commitment and expertise in the study of women in the French-speaking world. *Women in French Studies* is available on the [Project Muse](#) website.

## International Mother Language Day



For the second year in a row the Eastern community came together to celebrate [International Mother Language Day](#) (IMLD) on February 21, a UNESCO-designated day to honor and promote language diversity and cultural heritage.

The Intercultural Center took the lead by bringing together a number of campus organizations and offices, including WLC Department, the Anthropology program, and the Office of Equity and Diversity, to create a dynamic celebration.

Leaning into the WLC Department's language expertise, our dynamic student workers, Diana Gonzalez Gutierrez and Sophia Gonzalez, developed and presented a game show-like slideshow about idioms from around the world. Incorporating written text, spoken words and interpreted

meanings, the slideshow drew considerable interest on IMLD. For example, do you know what 'Les carottes sont cuites' (the carrots are cooked) means? Idioms are an interesting way to deepen one's language knowledge as they require nuanced thinking and cultural understanding. Check out the full presentation [here](#).

As an outgrowth of our Game Night, a low-key social event to help students de-stress during exam week this fall, the WLC Department brought a wider series of table games from around the world to IMLD. Students, faculty and staff had the opportunity to play *El Juego de la Oca* (the goose game) in Spanish, *Le Cochon Qui Rit* (the laughing pig) in French, *Kōnane* in Hawaiian, *Mensch ärgere Dich nicht* in German and *Kalanay Belanay* in Hindi. We were sure to include key words and phrases in each target language for the players to incorporate into their play. While many people had a few laughs playing the various games, some were keen to note the similarity between games from around the world.

Other activities within the IMLD celebration included snacks from around the world, an interactive language listening guessing game, a language scavenger hunt, a screening of the documentary film [The Linguists](#), and a student poster presentation regarding endangered languages from around the world.



## Trip to the Wadsworth with OLAS

By Diana Gonzalez Gutierrez, '25 expected

Late in the Fall '23 semester, Dr. Chan approached me about coordinating a trip to the Wadsworth Atheneum of Art with OLAS (Organization of Latin American Students). He explained to me that a Sigma Delta Pi *miembro asociado* who now works as a docent at the Wadsworth, reached out to him about giving a guided tour to a group of students. Funnily enough, OLAS had already been wanting to go visit an art museum, but we hadn't yet finalized any details, so when Dr. Chan came to me, it was as if the stars had aligned. It was truly serendipitous. So, we got to work organizing the trip,

and in the end, we found ourselves at the Wadsworth with a group of **22** students! Thanks to the generosity of the CEO of the Wadsworth and Eastern alum Jeffrey Brown '79, our visit was free!



Students gathered with Dr. Chan (front, left) in front of Wadsworth Atheneum.

Originally, we had planned to have two docents, one offering a tour in English, and one offering a tour in Spanish. However, *a la mera hora*, everyone wanted a tour in Spanish! Luckily, both docents were bilingual, so the group split in half, and we all went our separate ways. I had the pleasure of being put in Maria Adams' group, and she started with a wonderful prelude. She asked, right off the bat, "What does being Latino/a/e mean?" Understandably, our group was hesitant to answer such a complex question, but I remember really thinking about it, and it was an effective way to get our minds racing. But Docent Adams moved on and gave us another series of questions. How do you embrace or represent being Latino/a/e in your everyday life? How will you represent your culture for future generations? How did those who came before you shape who you are and/or your culture? She told us to keep these questions and ideas in mind as she gave the tour.

The tour itself was great! We got to see a good variety of artworks that were all connected to the guiding questions she posed to us. In a way, she presented the artwork as the painter's response to those questions. To my surprise, the tour was very interactive. I have never been given an art tour, and I don't know if all guided tours are like this, but at the Wadsworth you are not expected to just be a passive listener but an active participant. Our docent asked us questions about the art, encouraged us to voice our thoughts and opinions, and she even had *us*, at one point, to pose like a figure in a painting so we could see how the pose not only gives the appearance of confidence but in mimicking it, you feel confident as well.

At the end of the tour, our docent left us with some parting words of wisdom and inspiration. She told us to never forget our roots or our language. She told us that being bilingual is a very beautiful blessing to have, and I could not agree more. Adams was not just a tour guide for my group; from the very beginning of the tour, I could tell she was more than that. The questions she posed to us were very powerful, and they left us with something to ponder long after the tour. She also reminded us to be proud of who we are and where we come from. I think it was a great experience for me and our OLAS members, and we look forward to taking students to the Wadsworth and other museums again!



## Alumni Forum

On April 2 the WLC Department welcomed back two of its graduates for our annual Alumni Forum, an evening of dialogue, reflection and connections between current students and alumni.

This year we were joined by Shawn Godaire, BA Spanish & BS Business Administration '06 and Mayra Perry, BA Spanish '18. The evening opened with each guest providing a summary of their career paths since their time at Eastern, after which student could ask follow-up questions.

Since graduation Mayra found success in real estate in North Carolina. After starting out with established firms, Mayra continued her success in forming and growing her own agency. Her career development story is one of hard work, resiliency and continued learning and growth. She noted that her Spanish language skills are something that set her apart from other agents and she credits Spanish as one of the reasons for her success.

After working in banking locally and earning an MBA from Southern, Shawn worked domestically in the field of international business for several years. Then in 2017, his Fortune 500 employer asked him to continue to combine his skill sets of banking, organizational development and Spanish with a move to Panama to launch and develop one of their emerging business ventures.

Students attending the Alumni Forum asked thoughtful follow-up questions to both presenters. Shawn went on to detail his year-long study abroad experience in Mexico while

at Eastern, while Mayra, for her part, shared insights about real estate licensing. Shawn also shared the importance of cultural competency, which along with linguistic proficiency, is something that professors here in the WLC Department always emphasize in their courses. When asked for an example of cultural competency, he shared anecdotes about the cultural differences in motivating and managing teams in the US versus in Latin America.

While Mayra and Shawn are at different points in their careers and work in different sectors, they shared some similar words of wisdom for graduates embarking on the start of their careers – be flexible, be patient and know your worth. They also both echoed the importance of professional Spanish proficiency. Shawn and Mayra were fluent or advanced Spanish speakers at the time of graduation, but both expressed being challenged by business-related Spanish as young professionals, which prompted them to continue to enhance their professional Spanish language skills. These were unsolicited comments but turned out to be strong and genuine testaments of support of the Department's recently approved curriculum modification, which incorporates applied Spanish language coursework in health services, social services, and business.

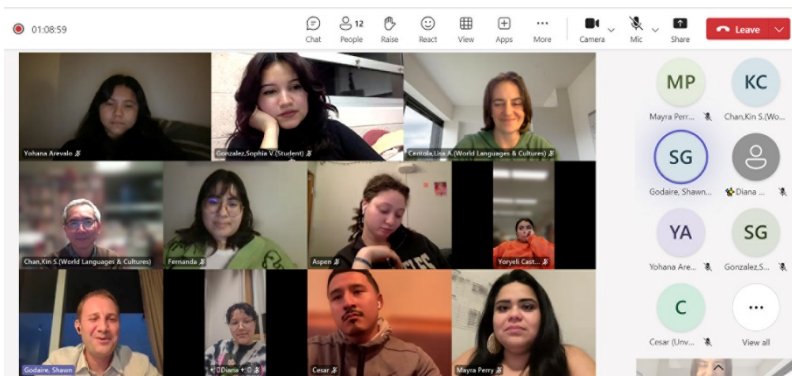
We continue to hold the event virtually as the online format allows us to connect with non-local alumni. Over the past few years, we have talked with past graduates that are currently still in Connecticut, but also as far as the Mid-west, Arizona and now North Carolina and Central America!

If you are interested in viewing the recording of this Alumni Forum, please reach out to [WorldLanguages@EasternCT.edu](mailto:WorldLanguages@EasternCT.edu). We will gladly share the link with interested alumni or current students. We are also always eager to reconnect with alumni. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you would be interested in being a future Alumni Forum panelist—our current students will benefit from your experiences, insights and wisdom.

## Sigma Delta Pi

Continuing an annual tradition, the Eastern's Nu Chi Chapter of Sigma Delta Pi, the National Collegiate Hispanic Honor Society/*La Sociedad Nacional Honoraria Hispánica*, held its new member ceremony on April 22.

Two new members were initiated, Airam Fernanda Arroyo Infante and Aspen Fanning. Consistent with the spirit of Sigma Delta Pi, both students have demonstrated excellence in their study of the Spanish language and culture while



*Screenshot of Alumni Forum. Shawn and Mayra are on the far lower left and right corners, respectively.*



at Eastern. Each of these students is expected to graduate this spring, Aspen with a degree in Spanish and Fernanda with degrees in Education and Spanish.



*Sigma Delta Pi induction ceremony. From L to R: Kathryn Kubisek, President; Airam Fernanda Arroyo Infante; Aspen Fanning; Elisabeth Graves, Vice President.*

Dr. Kin Chan, the Nu Chi Chapter advisor and World Languages and Cultures Department Chair, opened the ceremony, and the proceedings were enriched by the distinguished presence of Dr. Sonia Cintrón Marrero, Professor Emerita. Kathryn Kubisek '24 and Elisabeth Graves '22, G '24, the President and Vice President, respectively, of the Nu Chi Chapter for 2023-2024, officiated the ceremony, each reciting key passages and poems and leading the rituals.

The inductees were supported by a small number of friends and a strong contingent of WLC Department faculty including, Dr. Nancy Armstrong, Akram Erik-Soussi and Jaya Vijayasekar, a member of Fairfield University's Sigma Delta Pi chapter. In addition, a few of our own Nu Chi alumni and a *miembro asociado*, were

generous enough to return to campus to share in the celebration including, Priscilla Herrera, Jacob Paciotti, Laurie Marks, and Christi Moraga.

In a break from tradition, this year's ceremony was held on a weekday evening in the Dr. David G. Carter Science Building. The grand windows and high ceiling of the third-floor Community Room added to the ceremonial and dignified feel of the event. Light refreshments were enjoyed by all following the ceremony.

For any fellow Sigma Delta Pi members that would like to join us in 2025, please do not hesitate to reach out ([WorldLanguages@EasternCT.edu](mailto:WorldLanguages@EasternCT.edu)). We would enjoy reconnecting with you.

## Excellence in Language Study Awards

With contributions from Elisabeth Graves '22, G '24

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the WLC Department had the opportunity to join the Advisory Council of the Northeast Conference on Teaching Foreign Languages (NECTFL), demonstrating the Department's commitment to leadership in language learning.

As the largest of five regional associations of its kind in the United States, representing educators from Maine to Virginia, NECTFL aims to give language teachers a platform to represent their diverse views and a time to interact with one another in a professional setting. Roughly 1,500 educators who teach languages across all levels and in a variety of settings engage and collaborate through NECTFL.

As an Advisory Council member, our Department, through its faculty, can provide expertise, advice, and support to language educators and NECTFL leaders. Membership also affords us the opportunity to recognize students that demonstrate excellence in language study.



*David A. Pierce receives his Excellence in Language Study Award from Prof. Vijayasekar, May 2024.*

For the 2023-2024 academic year, the following Eastern students have been awarded NECTFL's Excellence in Language Study award (in alphabetical order, by language studied): Chinese - Colin Morrison; Spanish – Kathryn Kubisek, Branden Lees, Laurie Marks, Sean Massett, Madison Pajak, Angelina Palacios, David A. Pierce, Mia Sommers, and Estefania Wronski. Congratulations to our awardees.

## Spreading Our Wings: Cultural Competence Through Language Education

By Elisabeth Graves '22, G '24

Each year since the 1940s, the Northeast Conference on Teaching Foreign Languages (NECTFL) has convened to provide language educators with a meaningful professional development opportunity. The 2023-2024 academic year was no different. The theme of this year's conference was *Our Butterfly Effect: Creating a Lasting Impact* which encouraged educators to reflect on the past 70 years. Attendees considered how the Northeast Conference has impacted the field of language education and made educators stronger in the time during its existence. The conference was designed to reaffirm the most essential part of education: the learners themselves. The defining responsibility we have as educators is to figure out how to best support our students and their learning by careful patience and diligent effort.

As a part of this reminiscent spirit, previous conference chairs, including Eastern's own Jaya Vijayasekar, were invited by the Board of Directors to contribute to this year's event in New York. As chair of the 2010 conference, Vijayasekar, alongside other panelists, was asked to participate in the opening session. She is a valued adjunct faculty member of the WLC Department. She is a true polyglot. Beyond English, she is fluent in Tamil, French, and Spanish. Since 2016, Vijayasekar has taught courses in French, Spanish, Education, and World Language Methodology at Eastern. In addition, she is a veteran K-12 teacher and former administrator, and remains active in state, regional and national organizations such as the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers ([CT COLT](#)), [NECTFL](#), the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages ([ACTFL](#)) and the American Tamil Teachers' Association ([ATTA](#)).

In the opening session, Vijayasekar advocated for the importance of prioritizing language instruction in a 21<sup>st</sup> century education system. Language programs, she says, are more relevant than ever because they foster cultural competence among students and teachers which is a vital part of creating a more peaceful world of the future. She believes as do many other educators, students, and parents, that language education is not only beneficial, but necessary for learners in our globally interconnected world. But for supervisors, superintendents, and administrators, building language programs and sustaining them can be challenging when there are so many other factors at play.

For Vijayasekar, one critical effort in combatting these barriers is addressing the teacher shortage that continues to exist, especially in language education. Focusing on teacher recruitment and retention in the world language area promotes the development of programs that will instill within our students a tolerance of diversity and an appreciation of other cultures; and *that* should be what we are striving for as educators.

Visit [nectfl.org](https://nectfl.org) where you can find more information about NECTFL and read the March 2024 issue of its peer-reviewed academic journal, the [NECTFL Review](#), which includes a contribution from Jaya Vijayasekar.



*Opening session of the 2024 NECTFL Conference in New York. Prof. Vijayasekar, seated third from the left in the back row, was part of the panel discussion. Photo courtesy of NECTFL.*

## Henry Barnard Distinguished Student Award – Kathryn Kubisek

This spring, Kathryn Kubisek, a senior Spanish major, was awarded the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system's most prestigious award, the Henry Barnard Distinguished Student Award. For the past 36 years, the CSCU foundation has selected 12 students each year from across *all* four of the CSCU campuses for the honor. Each year only two students from Eastern with exceptional academic records and a dedication to voluntary service are selected. This year, for the first time ever, one of Eastern's Barnard Award recipients was a Spanish major.



*Kathryn Kubisek (center) along with Dr. Kin Chan and President Elsa Núñez at the Henry Barnard Award ceremony.*

Kathryn Kubisek, originally from Southington, has excelled in the classroom, maintaining a 4.0 GPA with a Spanish major and English minor. Her academic accolades include earning membership in and serving as the President of the Nu Chi Chapter of Sigma Delta Pi, the National Collegiate Hispanic Honor Society. To enhance her language learning, Kathryn studied abroad for a semester in Sevilla, Spain. She not only credits her time in Spain for helping her improve her Spanish, but also sees it as a life-changing personal growth experience. After graduating in May 2024, Kathryn plans to continue her education at Eastern in the Early Start MA of Education program this summer, with the aim of becoming an elementary school teacher.

While academics are a key factor in the Barnard Award selection process, a dedication to community involvement and service is also essential. Throughout her time at Eastern, Kathryn was an active and involved student leader as well as a generous community servant. She participated in the Repertory Dance Troupe, the Modern Movement Dance Club, the Aspiring Educators Club, the Women's Center Book Club, and this academic year she served on the Dean's Student Council (see her perspective on this position above). In one of her classes, Spanish for the Digital Age, Kathryn identified a need for Spanish language books at a local library and, as a result, spearheaded a book collection and donation program to support Spanish readers of all ages. She also served as a Student Leader in the Center for Community Engagement, an office on campus that coordinates student volunteers in area schools and non-profit organizations, all with the goal of developing an engaged and civic-minded student body.

On the evening of May 2, in a gathering of family, friends, faculty and advisors, Kathryn, and her fellow Eastern Barnard Award recipient, Billi Kozak, were officially recognized and feted for their undergraduate excellence. President Núñez opened the ceremony with remarks about Henry Barnard and the prestige of this award, as well as the educational rigor at Eastern. Then the Academic Advisors for each awardee shared remembrances of these extraordinary students. Dr. Kin Chan's address mapped Kathryn's educational journey at Eastern from being a bright, wide-eyed but already accomplished First Year student, to her growth as a student and individual, and ultimately to the early start of her Masters.



*President Núñez speaks at Barnard Awards ceremony.*

As he shared stories about her hard work, intellectual curiosity, and kind and open spirit, some of the people gathered nodded along, knowing that they too had similar stories of Kathryn. *Felicitaciones a Kathryn!*

## Selected Photos from 2023-2024



*Welcome Back Social, September 2023.*



*La Mesa de Español, Fall 2023, a weekly Spanish conversation table for Spanish speakers and language learners, supported by the Office of Equity and Diversity.*



*International Game Night, December 2023, a student-centered social event sponsored by the WLC Dept to help student de-stress before exams and explore games (and languages) from around the world.*



*La Mesa de Español, Spring 2024.*

## Alumni Updates

The World Languages and Cultures Department likes to stay in touch with alumni – please reach out and let us know what you are up to, [WorldLanguages@EasternCT.edu](mailto:WorldLanguages@EasternCT.edu).

Vol. 5 Issue 1 of the Polyglot – written, designed and edited by Lisa Centola, University Assistant

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