At the beginning of the fall the campus greeted us with a world of less-than-full parking lots, closed doors, Plexiglass, disinfectants, and loud quiet. Staff, students and faculty alike faced challenges. Due to health reasons, some faculty members had to teach virtually to keep their families safe, while others were able to teach on-ground or in the hybrid mode. However, it was students who bore the brunt, having to isolate themselves in their dorm rooms and only going out to classes or to retrieve their meals. Their mental, emotional and social lives suffered tremendously. This was recognized by the Administration, which decided, once again, to allow them to put up to three classes on a credit/no credit basis.

The University seemed deserted at times, Webb Hall being mostly empty; once in a while we would see a door open and a fellow colleague come out of their office. It would not be an exaggeration to say that ours was one of the few departments to keep its doors open, welcoming student inquiries, tutees, and the occasional drop-in from faculty in the English Department. To stay safe, we followed all the protocols, kept our windows cracked open on one end, and the door wide open on the other to aid ventilation. We would also see staff disinfect doorknobs like clockwork, a welcome sight that confirms Eastern’s commitment to our collective safety.

In spite of the challenges posed by COVID-19, our faculty and students kept busy doing research, engaging with the outside world and fundraising, as you’ll see below in this newsletter. We also hosted three events this year, an Alumni Forum, a Resumé Hustle, and our annual honor society induction ceremony. As most other events on campus, these events took place virtually. Despite our initial apprehension, the Wi-Fi and other technology behaved and all went smoothly!
In the office, Lisa, our University Assistant, cheerfully welcomed full- as well as part-time faculty, becoming the anchor of the World Language Department, which would not be the same without her. We are sad, however, to see three of our long-time student workers graduate and leave Eastern for bright prospects: Corina will graduate with a degree in Performing Arts and has her sights set on the Big Apple, Ashley will graduate from her Master’s program in Education and Shaheera will pursue a Master’s degree at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. We wish them all success and joy in their careers and hope they keep in touch with us.

You, who are reading this, please let us know what you are up to (worldlanguages@easternct.edu), and don’t forget to send pictures that we can post in our Instagram feed (@EasternWorldLanguages) or website. Wouldn’t that be a good way to stay connected to Eastern and to your classmates?

As we finish a whole academic year under the mask COVID-19, we are hopeful for the fall semester, when classes are scheduled to be fully on-ground and we go back to the old normal.

¡Saludos a todos! Au revoir! Ciao! 很快再见 ﻣﻊ ﺍﻟﺴﻼﻣﮫ また近いうちに会いましょう

-Dr. Kin Chan, Department Chair

Big Read

By Ashley Smith, BS ’20 and MS of Ed ’21

Throughout this past year, it is easy to feel as if COVID-19 has put a hold on any event that may be meaningful or inspiring. However, one special event remained present in our campus community that we are grateful to have been part of: Big Read.

Big Read is an annual program created by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to revitalize and celebrate literature and reading in American culture. Eastern was fortunate to be named one of just 84 organizations across the nation to host Big Read events and programs this year. Each year, Big Read program selects a book to promote and encourage communities across the country to read. “Into the Beautiful North,” by Mexican American author, Luis Alberto Urrea, was the selected title of 2020. In conjunction with community partners from across eastern Connecticut, a variety of events, from art exhibitions and literary readings to film screenings and author conversations, were hosted in the fall of 2020.
Eastern’s First Year Program had students read “Into the Beautiful North” as part of their required texts, and some of our Department’s professors, such as Dr. Bacholle and Dr. Chan, also incorporated Big Read into their curriculum.

Here is an excerpt of a paper written by Yenifer Serrano, expected class of 2023, from Dr. Chan’s SPA 312 course, Spanish Conversation and Composition, in response to events related to Big Read:

“... decidí asistir al panel "Boarder Turner". El panel tenía a la Sra. Doyle y al Dr. Robin. En este panel conversaron sobre los hechos ocurridos el 24 de noviembre de 2019 cuando hubo una conexión entre El Paso Texas y Chihuahua México. Este evento permitió que la gente de México se conectara con la gente de El Paso.... Boarder Turner fue un proyecto destinado a conectar la frontera. En el panel, escuchamos a dos personas que estuvieron muy involucradas en este proyecto. Estas mujeres eran la Dra. Robin y la Sra. Doyle. La Sra. Doyle habló sobre la misión de la Universidad de El Paso y por qué este proyecto era tan importante para ellos. La Dr. Robin habló sobre cómo la misión de este proyecto era recuperar ese territorio de la frontera que ha sido reclamado por el gobierno. Ella dijo: "Fue como volver a hacer público ese espacio y recuperar ese espacio de la privatización en que se había convertido". Lo que significa que el propósito real de este proyecto era conectar lados que han sido separados por leyes.

Encontre este proyecto una vista increíble de cómo se sienten los estudiantes sobre la frontera. Yo tengo una pasión por los temas de inmigración y encontre este panel muy interesante cuando hablaron sobre la verdadera razón de este proyecto de arte. Después de que terminó el panel, realmente desearía haberlo sabido antes para poder haberlo presenciado yo mismo.”

**Faculty Profile: Dr. Angela Chen**

Dr. Angela Chen joined the World Languages and Cultures Department as a part-time Chinese (Mandarin) language professor in 2012. She has 20 years of experience teaching Chinese language in area K-12 schools, camps, and enrichment programs, as well as serving as a director for an online language learning site.

At Eastern, Dr. Chen has regularly taught the two Introductory Chinese language classes (CHI 110, CHI 111), which are designed for true beginners and emphasize how to use Chinese in real life. Just this year, Dr. Chen began teaching Chinese Culture Through Film (CHI 216), which is an examination of the culture, history, politics, society, and economy of China through feature and documentary films. Taking on a new course this year was particularly challenging since COVID-19 protocols pushed the course to a virtual format.

Chen shared, “teaching a new course demanded a lot of preparation time, but the real challenge for this new course was how to use all different online resources to foster higher-order thinking.” She also noted the benefits of this challenge, “the online new course allows me to include innovative technologies. No longer confined to classroom and lecture, I am free to be creative with new learning materials and experiences.”

Chen explains, “It is important to examine how foreign language teachers approach language teaching and how this changes as they move from theoretical and methodological coursework into the real-world experiences of classroom practice.”

Her study centered on interviews with 25 foreign language teachers from around the US. She examined how these teachers’ beliefs about foreign language learning, along with how their teacher-training and professional environments, shaped their teaching practice, outlook and ability to enact educational changes relevant to 21st century learners.

Chen summarized her findings, “Education administrators, foreign language teachers, professional development operators, teacher-hiring organizations, and policy makers may benefit from the findings of my study, as the findings have provided a better understanding of teachers’ expectations and experiences in the foreign language classroom.”

Dr. Chen continues to pursue her research interests in her capacities as Asian Studies advisor at Eastern and University Supervisor at the University of Connecticut, and by mentoring and assisting students during their student-teaching practica.

Dr. Chen is looking forward to teaching Introductory Chinese and Chinese Culture Through Film in Fall 2021 again.

Highlight - Haitian School Fundraiser

Continuing a three-year service-learning tradition, students in Dr. Bacholle’s French/Women’s Studies 331 – Perspectives on Women’s Issues – class raised money to support the secondary education of young women in Les Palmes, Haiti.

Tuition at Jean Bruny College, a high school for girls, costs $180 per year per student. In years past, Eastern students have raised enough money for one to four scholarships. This year’s fundraising efforts exceeded all expectations, raising $915 and funding more than five scholarships.

The funds were enthusiastically received by the ministry coordinating donations for Jean Bruny College. “Our ministry is so appreciative of the fundraising that [Eastern] students have done the last several years to support the
students at the school in Les Palmes. That is especially true this year since our ministry has not been able to conduct any of our in person fundraising events, such as our wine tasting, silent auction and pasta dinner,” said Peter Sullivan of Our Lady Queen of Peace Haitian Ministry.

Undeterred by the realities of the pandemic, the students in Dr. Bacholle’s FRE/WST 331 class were innovative in their fundraising ideas, exploring and implementing a plan that was workable during a pandemic.

Led by senior Lyle Smith Jr., the class established and grassroots-marketed a Go-Fund-Me page. Family, friends and colleagues, many directly connected to Eastern’s community, made donations from as little as a few dollars up to $100. Collectively, these donors and the student organizers are making a significant impact on the educational futures of young women in Haiti.

Dr. Bacholle hopes that her FRE/WST 331 students realize that, “although they face their own struggles, others are far less fortunate and that a little help here goes a long way there. Less than $200 may determine whether a young woman will remain in endemic poverty or will be empowered by receiving a diploma that she will use in turn to empower her own family and community.”

An administrator at Jean Bruny College shared the names and pictures of the students, one of whom you can see above, that will receive the scholarships. Their futures and the futures of their families are now a little brighter.

New Minor: Medical Interpreting in Spanish

In conjunction with the Health Sciences Department, the World Languages and Cultures Department is excited to announce a new academic minor – Medical Interpreting in Spanish (MIS).

For health service professionals, knowledge of medical Spanish is no longer an option, but a necessity. Language barriers pose real health risks and can lead to negative health outcomes. Today’s health service professionals need to be prepared to break through those barriers and Eastern’s new MIS minor helps do that.

The MIS minor, available for the first time in Fall 2021, is for students preparing for a career in health services, from nurses, physicians and medical aids to pharmacists, dentists, EMTs and more.

The aim of the MIS minor is to develop critical skills that future healthcare providers can use to improve communication with Spanish-speaking patients. The curriculum is designed to raise awareness of how language impacts access to healthcare among Spanish-speaking patients.
The minor requires 18 credits in a combination of Spanish, health services and public health courses, such as HSC 225 Medical Terminology, PBH 330 Principles of Global Health, and SPA 404 English-Spanish Translation. Notably, the MIS minor requirements feature a new course, HSC/SPA 415 Medical Interpreting and Translation.

Language Tutoring in 2020-2021

By Ashley Smith, Spanish Tutor, BS ’20 & MS Ed ’21 and Marie Sene, French Tutor, BS ’20

In the world of COVID-19, everything is different. Classes must be conducted in entirely new online formats, we no longer have the social interaction necessary for learning, nor do we really have the chance to be present in a learning environment to fully support comprehension and understanding. We are all adjusting and discovering how to effectively learn online while our professors are discovering how to successfully teach online. This is especially a challenge for language courses, as much of language learning is through social interaction. As the Spanish and French tutors, we understand how overwhelming this time might be for language learners. Thankfully, the World Languages and Cultures Department has helped us to transition to online tutoring.

We are glad we have figured out how to tutor virtually and provide support to struggling students who may be feeling extra overwhelmed learning languages. At the start of COVID-19, we were nervous we would not be able to reach our students, but online tutoring has proven to be a wonderful experience. Virtual tutoring provides more flexibility as students can log-on from anywhere and can meet me in the comfort of their dorm rooms. No masks are necessary, allowing students to clearly hear and visualize correct pronunciation. There are also many notable features provided with online tutoring, such as recording and screenshots so that students can watch again or review material from the session. Screensharing has also been a helpful tool as students can show us their work or online resources for further guidance and support.

Of course, not everything has been a walk in the park. Learning virtually is different from sitting one-on-one and engaging in fun learning activities together. The screen can feel like a barrier sometimes. As everyone knows, technical difficulties are common and can happen to anyone. Sometimes the screen will freeze, the connection will falter, or sound may be a bit fuzzy. Despite the difficulties, we – all students – are persevering and we – as tutors – will continue to be here for students during this chaotic time.

To all current students, if you need extra support in your language classes, do not hesitate to reach out to the Spanish and French tutors (SPAtutor@EasternCT.edu or FREtutor@EasternCT.edu).
Research Update: Dr. Michèle Bacholle

Dr. Michèle Bacholle decided not to let the pandemic get in the way of her research and made the most of the possibilities offered by the internet.

In November, Dr. Bacholle presented on the evolution of her FRE 116 "Introduction to the French-Speaking World" course in a talk entitled, “Decolonizing the Gen Ed Culture Course (and Its Instructor)” at the virtual Diversity, Decolonization and the French Curriculum conference. She revealed that her class veers away from traditionally taught French culture topics. Instead, her course takes a critical look at France’s colonizing enterprise and emphasizes the Francophone world, most of which is made up of former French and Belgian colonies. Bacholle’s talk concluded with, “If the negative effects of colonized education are indeed deep-seated and penetrate all aspects of the world of their victims, decolonizing the French curriculum will affect our students’ whole lives, whether they are white or BIPOC. In this historic electoral year, when the seven-year-old Black Lives Matter movement regained strength, my course has indeed been a springboard for discussion of racial and social justice that has brought my students to critically think about their own political, social, economic, and cultural environment. Decolonizing education is then one aspect and one step in de-whitening education.”

In February, Bacholle launched her e-museum on contemporary French writer Annie Ernaux (www.Annie-Ernaux-Emuseum.com). Ernaux is a prolific, award-winning French author, whose work has been widely translated and read around the world. Dr. Bacholle’s digital museum, titled E-MUSEUM ANNIE ERNAUX: GUIDED TOUR OF (REAL) ERNALIAN PLACES, is the result of years of research and of a personal pursuit. The design and layout of the e-museum was envisioned and built by Eastern alumna, Linnea Reich ’20, of Linnea Reich Design.

At the 20th and 21st century French and Francophone Studies Colloquium in March, Bacholle organized a virtual session, “Curation in Literature,” where she presented her e-museum and argued that researchers in literature act as curators since they select, organize, exhibit, and give meaning to literary content. She explained how her e-museum belongs to the creative vein of curation. Whereas websites on writers belong to the encyclopedic vein, since they gather biographical facts, list critical sources, etc., Bacholle’s e-museum invites visitors to a unique museological experience. The e-museum features ten places that are meaningful in Ernaux’s life and œuvre. Bacholle selected excerpts of Ernaux’s texts relevant to each of these places and added her own photographs and audio components with Ernalian biographical facts. Bacholle’s true creativity lies in her “Critic’s Corner” where she shared personal reflections that these places elicited in her, as an Ernalian specialist, a feature that Ernaux has called ‘autobiographie croisée’ [intersecting autobiography]. Bacholle’s e-museum received an extremely favorable reaction from Ernaux herself and from her e-museum visitors. With strict physical travel restrictions due to COVID-19, visitors also enjoyed the travel opportunities the e-museum provided.
In April Bacholle participated in a virtual round table discussion on writing about suicide at the online conference FEMMES ET SACRIFICES: LA PART CRUELLE DU DON DE SOI [Women and Sacrifices: the Cruel Part of Self-Sacrifice]. Bacholle’s presentation and discussion were an outgrowth of her research and recent book, Contemporary Narratives by Suicide-Loss Survivors (2019).

This spring Bacholle also presented on Céline Sciamma’s latest film, Portrait of a Lady on Fire, at the virtual Women in French-UK conference. She discussed themes that she addresses in some of her courses, i.e. the issues of consent and rape, the female (vs. male) gaze and the (in)visibility of women.

As Eastern expects to return to near-normal next fall, Bacholle hopes that her research and presentation of research will once again be in-person and involve travel. She is scheduled to present a paper on the "invisible woman" – the woman over age 50 – based on works of French novelists Chloé Delaume and Camille Laurens at the Rocky Mountain Modern Languages Association convention in October 2021.

Spring 2021 – New French Tutor

After our French tutor Marie Sene graduated in December, the Department was excited to welcome Djenerly Massena as our new French tutor this spring. Djenerly is a first-year student from Derby, CT, majoring in Biochemistry and minoring in Modern Languages and plans to be a doctor in the future. Originally from Haiti, Djenerly speaks Haitian Creole, French, and English. She is enthusiastic about languages and is currently learning Korean, Chinese and Japanese and is eager to learn more! We hope Djenerly will be back in our main office next year to continue to assist students with their French studies.

New Course – Spanish for Spanish Speakers

For the first time in more than a decade, the World Languages and Cultures Department will offer SPA 315 – Spanish for Spanish-Speaking Students – for the Fall 2021 semester.

Changing demands in the employment market, coupled with trends in our campus and national population, have demonstrated the need for the reintroduction of this course. Increasingly, a diverse array of careers call for
proficient Spanish speakers, writers and readers. Conversational Spanish or colloquial speech and writing is no longer enough.

SPA 315 is designed for heritage Spanish speakers, students that learned the language at home or in a Spanish-speaking country or community. Going beyond what traditional Spanish-as-a-second-language classes teach, this course focuses on the linguistic needs of students already familiar with the language. It is a dynamic course, tailored to the unique proficiency levels and interests of the students enrolled. The aim of the course is to strengthen students’ command of Spanish grammar and composition, as well as to enrich their knowledge and appreciation of Hispanic literature and culture.

The Fall 2021 course will be taught by Magdalena Parera, a part-time Spanish professor in our Department, who hails from the Catalan region of Spain. Professor Parera currently teaches Intermediate and Advanced Spanish at Eastern and has taught Spanish at K-12 schools in the past.

Special Events with Alumni

This year the World Languages and Cultures Department hosted two events virtually to connect alumni with current students. These events are not only a valued and beloved way to maintain the close community-like connection with graduates after they move-on from Eastern, but they also serve as an invaluable networking and knowledge-base resource for current students.

This fall the Department warmly welcomed back four graduates for an Alumni Forum. This virtual event was an opportunity for current Eastern students to learn and ask questions about the professional journeys of four past Spanish majors, Héctor Gonzalez ’08, Jeremiah Elliott ’10, Mónica Malaver ’12, Jennifer Green ’14. This year’s panel featured current K-12 language teachers, a business leader and a government communications specialist.

Each panelist shared details about their education at Eastern and the career steps that followed. Like many graduates, some of the panelists pursued different paths than they anticipated in college and discussed how they navigated those career turns. Notably, all continued their education beyond Eastern, earning Master’s degrees to further their careers.

Each of the panelists detailed how they continue to use their Spanish language skills in their jobs: two are teaching Spanish to children; another uses Spanish to assist in teaching English as a second language to adults; and several regularly translate English documents into Spanish.

The forum concluded with the alumni sharing tips for the job search process. Jennifer Green reminded students to always be prepared with at least one question to ask during an interview to show interest in the potential employer’s company or institution.
As graduation neared, the Department, in coordination with the Center for Internships and Career Development (CICD), hosted Resumé Hustle this April. Featuring Yisel De Oleo ’13 as a special guest, Resumé Hustle was a virtual meet-up dedicated to assisting current students in developing and refining their resumés.

While at Eastern, Yisel double majored in Spanish and Communication, graduating with the distinction of Summa Cum Laude. After graduation, Yisel worked as an Admissions Counselor at Eastern before moving on to mentor students at Achievement First Academy, a Connecticut charter school. This May Yisel graduated from Brown University with a MA and will continue to pursue her passion, advocating for educational opportunities for traditionally underserved communities in Providence, RI. Using her own resumé as a guide, Yisel discussed resumé writing and shared tips for students studying languages. Current students asked questions about how to best feature their language skills on their resumés, and how to network and use their resumés to get desired jobs.

At Resumé Hustle, Lana O’Connor, an Assistant Director of CICD at Eastern, also offered students helpful tips on resumé writing and reminded students of the career development resources available on campus. Resumé Hustle concluded with Dr. Chan reminding students that resumé writing is something that should not wait until senior year and it is something even graduates continue to improve and refine over the course of their careers.

Normally these types of events would have been hosted in Webb Hall, the home of the World Languages and Cultures Department, with refreshments and warm abrazos, but due to COVID-19, this year’s alumni speakers were featured virtually. While virtual events lacked the close-knit community feeling that is a signature of the World Languages and Cultures Department, the virtual setting allowed our students to connect with former alumni from around the country, which is a silver lining in the COVID-19 cloud.

The World Languages and Cultures Department plans to continue to regularly host Alumni Forums to stay connected to alumni and assist current students in planning for life after graduation.

Sigma Delta Pi Update

By Corina Yanes, BA ’21

Every year the World Languages and Cultures Department welcomes new members into Sigma Delta Pi, the National Collegiate Hispanic Honor Society. The Department’s Nu Chi chapter of Sigma Delta Pi was established at Eastern in 1979, making it the Eastern’s oldest honor society in the School of Arts and Sciences. Since its inception, hundreds of students have been recognized for their outstanding achievement in Hispanic studies.
This year’s ceremony, held on May 3, was officiated by Dr. Kin Chan, Department Chair, Dr. Sonia Cintrón-Marrero, professor emerita, and Dr. Carmen Cid, Dean of Arts and Sciences, along with current Nu Chi members and students Brianna Nolan ’21, Jacob Paciotti ’21 and Ashley Smith MS ’21. Serving as the chapter’s President, Brianna officially opened the ceremony, followed by recounting the history of the Society by Jacob, the chapter Secretary. Dr. Cid spoke of the qualities that Sigma Delta Pi stands for and what is expected of each member. Dr. Chan read a farewell poem to graduating seniors and Ashley, the chapter’s Treasurer, recited a poem about the importance of Hispanic culture. Dr. Cintrón-Marrero quoted a section of *Don Quixote* to conclude the opening remarks.

Next, Brianna began the candle-lighting part of the initiation ceremony. As the new members of Sigma Delta Pi lit their candles, Brianna spoke of the importance of the society’s colors represented by the candles - red and gold - as well as the light emitted by the flame. With the lighting of the candles, Sigma Delta Pi welcomed five new members: Areli Angel Peña, Luz Marina Clavijo-Parrado, Claire Lavarreda, Lizbeth Macias and Yenifer Serrano.

Areli Angel Peña is from Waukesha, WI. At Eastern she has been a member of the Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS) since 2017, as well as the Vice President of Biology Club for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Luz Marina Clavijo-Parrado is from Bogotá, Colombia. At Eastern, she completed her Spanish degree in 2021, having made the Dean’s List and been recognized in Eastern’s 2021 Inclusive Excellence Awards. To Luz, being a part of Sigma Delta Pi is an honor because it recognizes her hard work in and outside of academics.

Claire Lavarreda, from East Haddam, CT, completed a degree in History and Social Science with a minor in Spanish in 2021. She received two academic excellence awards and is a member of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society. Her Sigma Delta Pi induction is important to her because her father is from Guatemala, and she has always wanted to learn Spanish.

Lizbeth Macias is from Waukesha, WI and completed her course work in Elementary Education and Spanish this year. She hopes to be a bilingual teacher after graduation. Becoming a member of Sigma Delta Pi connects her to the Spanish culture through language, something she was not allowed to express during her middle and high school years.

Yenifer Serrano is from New Orleans, LA and is working towards a double major in Early Childhood Education and Spanish. She is an active member of the Eastern community, currently serving as the Vice President of FEMALES, the secretary of Kappa Delta Pi and a Student Ambassador. Being a member of Sigma Delta Pi is an honor to Yenifer because it recognizes the hard work she has put into her classes and this Society proves that her hard work has been worth it.

According to Jacob, a 2019 inductee, “Sigma Delta Pi is a fantastic honors organization that truly highlights the accomplishments and success of both the students inducted into the Society and the Spanish program as a whole. For me, this was the first honor society that I was inducted into on campus, and it truly gave me a sense of...
accomplishment in my Spanish studies and further reinforced the idea that I was in the correct major and that I was on the right path going forward.”

With the return to in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year, the Department hopes to go back to its traditional Sigma Delta Pi luncheon ceremony next year. Former Sigma Delta Pi miembros are encouraged to join in the festivities. Email the Department (WorldLanguages@EasternCT.edu) or look for your invitation next winter.

Students, Friends and Alumni

Please keep in touch with the World Languages and Cultures Department. You can reach us at WorldLanguages@EasternCT.edu or 860-465-4571. Follow us on Instagram @EasternWorldLanguages.

Photos from World Languages and Cultures Department 2020-2021

Virtual La Mesa de Español, 11/2020.

Prof. Parera teaching Spanish virtually, Fall 2020.

Prof. Gallucci teaching Italian 111 in-person, Spring 2021.

Prof. Biales teaching Spanish virtually, Spring 2021.