50 Years of LCS
Department celebrates milestone

When in 1965 the Board of Governors included Charlotte College as the fourth campus of the consolidated University of North Carolina, the Department of Foreign Languages formed one of the institution’s strongest departments.

Pierre Macy, the chairman, gathered a small but outstanding group of faculty members who formed the basis of the department for years to come. They focused primarily upon excellence in teaching, developing a university academic curriculum, and building an appropriate university-level library collection. Austrian Karl Gabriel headed the German program. Czech Dr. Paul Saman, the most extraordinary polyglot ever on the faculty, taught Russian, French, and German. Edward Hopper, still a faculty member today, created the Spanish program. Upon Macy’s retirement, the University honored him by naming the language building for him.

In the early days, University graduation requirements followed traditional liberal arts guidelines: five semesters of language study for every student. Students attended class or lab for five hours every week. By the fifth semester, most students showed relatively advanced abilities in spoken and written foreign language. During academic revisions sparked by the student unrest of the late 60s, the University removed the five-semester requirement. Eventually a two-semester requirement became part of the General Education Program, later dropped in favor of today’s variable requirements that correspond to our campus’s various majors.

As University enrollments flourished over the years, so have those of LCS, which at various times formed part of the Division of Humanities, the College of Humanities, the College of Arts and Sciences, and finally the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Today, the Department is a dynamic, research-intensive unit with a commitment to balancing curricular tradition and innovation. We offer an MA in Spanish with a track in English-Spanish translation studies; undergraduate majors and minors in French, German, Japanese and Spanish; additional minors in Chinese, Classical Studies, Francophone Studies, Italian, Russian and Film Studies; courses in Arabic, Farsi, and Portuguese; a graduate and undergraduate Certificate in Translating; a Certificate in Business Language; online courses via the University of North Carolina Language Exchange; and a variety of study abroad experiences. It boasts a Language Resource Center with cutting-edge technology for language pedagogy and a diverse faculty from around the world who offer more than 200 courses to more than 4,000 students annually.

Article by Edward Hopper, associate professor of Spanish since 1967 and pioneer member of the Spanish program.

The ever-evolving face(s) of LCS

No one embraces innovation more than Michael Doyle, professor of Spanish. A faculty member since 1993 and department chair from 1993-1999, Doyle recently reflected on the department’s constant modernization, specifically its key leadership role “in offering a more progressive, forward-looking curriculum that balances traditional and innovative course offerings. Keeping a finger on the always changing times, [LCS] continues to foster a departmental mindset that supports the ongoing renewal of a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of the learner and society,” Doyle said.

Clockwise: Doyle at San Diego State University (1992); recently in the department; and as a master’s student at the University of Salamanca, Spain (1976).
Tales of our busy faculty

Michèle Bissière, associate professor of French, was the recipient of two esteemed national and international awards that have recognized her commitment not only to teaching but also to service and scholarship as it relates to French language, literature and culture. Bissière, a 25-year department veteran, was named Knight in the Order of French Academic Palms, a title given by the French government. The Ministry of the French National Education in Paris, who decides upon recipients after the French Embassy has reviewed finalists, awards this distinction.

Bissière’s distinction as the recipient of the 2015 Dorothy Ludwig Excellence in Teaching award, given by the American Association of Teachers of French, serves as recognition of her success as an instructor of French and as a leader in the foreign language field. “I have dedicated a big chunk of my career to teaching and service-related teaching,” said Bissière, “and it is nice to receive recognition and encouragement to continue the work.”

E ntry level student Shota Ogawa, assistant professor of Japanese, was cited in Massoud Hayoun’s Al Jazeera America article, “What Emmanuelle Riva saw of Hiroshima.” Ogawa provided Hayoun, who wrote the piece on the 1959 film Hiroshima Mon Amour, with an overview of the iconic status the film has in Japan and its influence on Japanese films in the 1960s.

Jeff Killman and Mónica Rodríguez, assistant professors of Spanish, are conducting the research project, “The Effects of Technology on Spanish-English Translation Processes and Products.” They have processed data for 15 of the 30 study’s participants, which is funded by an $11,900 internal grant. The study examines the actions translators take when using machine translation systems, specifically if new technologies may reduce the time translators otherwise may spend working with different resources online.

Anahid Abifaker, lecturer of Arabic, edited the English translation of the book Mysticism in the Druze Faith, published in Arabic and translated to English. The author himself, Dr. Sami Makarem, died before the book’s publication, but prior to his death Makarem requested that Abifaker edit the translation. “It took a lot of work and years” said Abifaker, “and it was a great experience I am thankful for.”

GLOBAL REACH

Faculty member Michèle Bissière’s dedication to the field of French literature, language, and culture garners international prestige

Generation#D, a diverse success

Experimental performance on diversity brings German director to Charlotte and unique student performers to the stage

W hen Bianca Potrykus, lecturer in German, applied for a University Chancellor’s Diversity Grant, she envisioned creating a project relevant and current to not only the city of Charlotte but more importantly University students. Dominik Büttner, an actor, singer, dancer, choreographer and director who Potrykus has known for over 15 years, was the obvious choice to bring this project on diversity to fruition. The diversity grant, over $4,000, allowed for Büttner to travel to Charlotte from Germany and in a short three-week span, produce Generation#D, a performance project on diversity.

Generation#D brought together a wide range of performers, including students majoring in theater, students with no performance background, and even faculty like Lorena Delgadillo, lecturer in Spanish. The final two September performances unapologetically broached sensitive topics like homophobia, racism and social pressures. A University student even shared his experience as a former military sniper.

“My take a lot of courage to talk about yourself and your personal story onstage in front of an audience, but that is exactly what made the show so strong,” said Büttner. “It was real and authentic.”

Tales of our busy faculty

Student participants of Generation#D ranged from those majoring in theater to those with no stage experience.
Simulated Poverty showcases harsh reality

As a participant in past poverty simulations, Susana Cisneros, lecturer in Spanish, recognized the value of experiencing the frustration of a language barrier and the real-life effects this communication gap can have on one’s professional and personal life. For that reason, in September Cisneros partnered with the Charlotte Crisis Assistance Ministry to host a Simulación de pobreza, a two-hour event in which sixty Spanish students glimpsed what it means to live in poverty in a foreign country and survive with few language skills.

“The simulation challenged me to put my Spanish-speaking skills to good use outside my current field of employment.”
—Lori Wilson, simulation participant

While speaking only Spanish, students organized into “families” were tasked with carrying out bill paying, job searching, purchasing food and clothing, and managing crises. They were aided by two dozen Spanish speakers from the community who portrayed key facilities like banks, police officers, loan companies, child care services and health care centers. By the event’s end, student mouths were agape and eyes wide at the outcomes experienced from an inability to communicate: jobs were lost, home evictions ensued, participants were jailed and children taken into custody.

“I did not expect the project to be so detailed, nor for it to mirror real life so closely, and I have not been able to stop talking or thinking about my experience,” said participant Lori Wilson, a university alumna and local Spanish teacher. “The simulation challenged me to put my Spanish-speaking skills to good use outside my current field. With the increase of non-English speakers in our area, rates of unemployment, increase of life-threatening diagnoses and lack of affordable resources for even middle-class America, the timing is perfect for such scenarios.”

Poets in our midst

The Second Annual Multi-Language Poetry Slam brought together over 160 students, faculty and community who performed and enjoyed poetry in English, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish and even a mixture of two or more languages.

The event was a convergence of individuals from all parts of the university. Student Dixie Thurlow of the Music Department performed clarinet throughout the evening; the German Club provided $100 in cash prizes to the evening’s winners; and the judging panel benefited from a diverse group including author Grace Ocasio, Caleb Harmon, a double-major in Business and Japanese, and Ann González, interim chair of the department.

Winners from the evening were Ray Hicks (most original poem); Benjamin Dizon (best haiku); Isabel Zelman-Parnall (best poem in a language other than English); and Svanny Wong (best performance).
Scholarships provide unparalleled study abroad experiences

Eileen Jakeway, a major in Communication Studies, French, German, and English, was awarded $2,000 by The German Language and Culture Foundation of Charlotte for Summer 2015. With these funds she researched foreign language instruction in Germany. Jakeway spent part of her summer studying in the country itself and part in Charlotte. The project “opened up my eyes to certain parallel obstacles educators face all around the world,” she said. “However, my exposure to differing cultural viewpoints also helped me understand the American educational system in a whole new way.” Jakeway’s findings concluded that although educating teachers to passionately promote foreign language education varies across cultures, it is an integral priority that must be examined profoundly, given the power of language in a globalized world.

Shannon Butler, a double major in Japanese and Computer Science, received the $1,000 Figge Scholarship and $5,000 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship to study in Japan in Summer 2015. Butler still marvels that she could be rewarded “with life-changing experiences and the chance to prove you have place and presence in this world.” The nationally-funded Gilman Scholarship requires students to propose a project promoting study abroad they agree to complete upon returning. Butler, whose hobby and passion is creating comic strips, proposed she would make 50 comic strips about her experience and share them on facebook.com/shaninjapan, her project page. “The idea that someone would want to invest in me and my future is new to me,” said Butler. “To have strangers believe in your education is a feeling like no other; it restores faith in humanity and motivates you to succeed.”

International horizons explored

Study abroad scholarships allow students to fall in love with new cultures and experience personal growth

Victoria Fubara, a Psychology major and Spanish minor, was awarded the College Language Association’s Caroll Mills Young Study Abroad Scholarship. The $1,000 national scholarship allowed Fubara to study in Costa Rica in Summer 2015. “Through my study abroad experience I found that learning a different language, not merely its technical elements but being immersed in all its aspects, bridges cultures,” Fubara said.

Wintana Asfaha, a German major, was awarded the $5,000 Regina Waldhausen scholarship, which she utilized to spend one month at the Goethe Institut in Bonn, Germany and shadow a Kindergarten Manager in Frankfurt, Germany. “This experience provided me with not only the business understanding of how German Kindergartens are run, but also a true leadership experience,” she said, “which will be beneficial in the future when and if I decide to open up my own kindergarten system.”

Leslie Contreras, a major in French and Criminal Justice, was awarded the John Philip Couch scholarship by the Executive Board of the North Carolina chapter of the American Association of Teachers of French. The $3,500 scholarship will allow Contreras to study abroad in Spring 2016 in Lyon, France. “I am ecstatic for this wonderful opportunity and hope to use what I learn in my near future,” Contreras said.

Caitlyn Hanafin, a University alumna and current Master’s student at Columbia University, received a full tuition scholarship to study abroad at Fudan University in Shanghai, China in Summer 2015. Hanafin, whose research interests focus on the history of Han dynasty, fell in love not only with the material she studied but also with the scenic places she was able to visit and the people she met.
Laying the Foundation

Students Christian Walton and Carlie Herron strengthen their language skills via recent national achievements

**Christian Walton**, a Japanese major, won first place at the All-State Duke Speech Contest in April for the second highest proficiency level. This is the first time a UNC Charlotte student has taken first place at the Duke Japanese Speech Contest. Walton credits Yui Limori, lecturer in Japanese, for always taking time to help him with extra one-on-one practice, thus motivating him to take his studies even more seriously.

Walton began studying Japanese over two years ago, but his language ability exploded when he became good friends with a Japanese student at the University named Ryuki. “I slowly started to realize that with language, you can connect with so many more people and open so many more doors simply because you are able to think in a different way,” said Walton. “The first time I was able to talk to somebody [Ryuki’s mom] who could not speak any English, it made me think how much more is possible if I continue to study Japanese.”

**Carlie Herron**, a master’s student in Spanish, was accepted into the Graduate Studies Summer Session at Middlebury College in Summer 2015. The Vermont college, who awarded Herron financial aid in order to study, offers students a completely immersive six-week language experience involving the signing of a language pledge, a promise to which students fiercely adhere, as well as a living experience with professors who live in the same dorms as the students and come from worldwide educational institutions for Middlebury’s summer session. “Ironically, it was easier to make friends in this environment,” said Herron, “even without the advantage of using your native language, than in the ‘real world.’”

Although frustration was normal, Herron found communication in Spanish, her second language, eventually became more natural. “I still almost feel like it is cheating to opt to converse in English when given the opportunity to speak in a language I want to master,” she said. “My experience reinforced my own view of learning: If you want to grow to do something well, you have to be willing to live what you learn.”

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**Japanese JETsetters**

Japanese Studies alumni Christ Covington, Andrew Gibbs, and James Bollinger were accepted to teach English in Japan through the competitive Japanese government-sponsored program JET. The three alumni met as undergraduates studying abroad in Nagoya, Japan, and all credit this experience with inspiring them to apply for the yearlong JET program.

Covington and Gibbs are both working as teachers while Bollinger tackles a lesser-known position titled the Coordinator for International Relations: As a representative for the prefectural government, this position requires Bollinger to translate, interpret, provide information and amateur counseling for teachers within the prefecture, and participate in events as a representative of America.

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**International** is certainly the word to describe recent student endeavors. Whether it be travel to international destinations or bringing that internationality to campus, both students and faculty remain committed to representing LCS worldwide:

→ The Costa Rica study abroad program celebrated its 26th year with 21 student participants.

→ The new Limoges, France, study abroad program launched with 11 student participants.

→ Among others, the Russian, French, and German clubs hosted activities for the 40th annual International Festival, treating attendees to traditional Russian dances, authentic French crepes, and the always sought-after German bratwurst!

→ The Gold Reel Student Film Festival, hosted by the University Film Club under adviser Rodney Stringfellow, lecturer in Film Studies, welcomed over 150 attendees in April.
I want to thank the Department of Languages and Culture Studies for the warm welcome it has given me as Interim Chair. We are off to an impressive start this academic year. Already the Department has sponsored a number of well-attended events:

- Generation#D’s performance on diversity directed by world renowned actor, director, and choreographer Dominik Büttner;
- a successful Poverty Simulation in Spanish;
- a multi-language poetry slam with some 150 students and faculty present;
- participation by faculty and students in this Fall’s Study Abroad Fair, Majors Day, and International Festival;
- and a Tertulia to encourage Spanish conversation.

All of these activities we do on top of searching for new positions in German, Arabic, and Spanish, opening our Graduate Translating Certificate to Russian, French, and German as well as Spanish, running language clubs, recruiting for study abroad programs, supervising internships, publishing textbooks and articles, presenting at conferences, advising students—oh, and teaching classes!

We are certainly a hardworking, productive department, and I congratulate all of our full- and part-time faculty as well as our fine staff for the contributions they make daily to improve the lives and futures of our students.

Ann González
Professor and Chair

A note from Ann González, department chair