Fourth Annual Multi-Lingual Poetry Slam, photo courtesy of Lorena Delgadillo
First, our losses—We have two retirees this spring: Dr. Ed Hopper in Spanish and Dr. Katherine Stephenson in French. We will miss them and are grateful for all their contributions to the department and the university for these many years. We have also lost one of our secretaries, Samantha Roberts, due to illness. We will miss her and hope for her full recovery, and we lost our LRC Technician: Ryan McCallum to a new job in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. At least we will still see him around. But we have good news, too. We have hired new faculty: Dr. David Boyd in Japanese and Will Davis in Film Studies. Both will be joining us full time next fall. In addition, the Confucius Institute started operations this spring with a new U.S. Director, Dr. Yongling Gorke, and a Chinese Director, Dr. Monica Yi. We hired a new Language Resource Technician, Austin McComas and the Confucius Institute hired a new part-time assistant, Laura Jones. We welcome all of our new faculty and staff.

We have had so many events and participated in so many university and community activities that I cannot list them all here. I must mention, however, our successful sixth annual International Film Festival and our third annual International Poetry Slam. We have also hosted a multitude of invited speakers and volunteered for numerous activities, from interpreting for parent/teacher conferences (Spanish), to participating in speech contests (Japanese), to preparing for career fairs (German), to learning about (and tasting) chocolate (French).

Most important, our students have won numerous awards and been accepted into international internships and prestigious programs. We had five successful spring break trips to Japan, Germany, France, Italy, and Argentina and we hope to add a trip to China next year. I look forward to seeing everyone at Commencement this May where we plan to graduate over 100 majors in French, German, Japanese, and Spanish! Congratulations to all. Have a safe, enjoyable, and productive summer.

Dr. Ed Hopper came to UNC Charlotte as an Instructor in 1967. After receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Missouri in 1972, he was promoted to Assistant Professor and then to Associate Professor in 1976. He was basically responsible for building the Spanish curriculum from the ground up between 1967 and 1969. He helped start an Honor’s program, and in 1972, was on the committee that had to write a “Justification for the Existence of a Department of Foreign Languages.” In other words, if it had not been for Dr. Hopper, we might not be here today! He has served on the Academic Policy and Curriculum Committee 9 times from 1979 to 2014. He won the prestigious Bank of America's Award for Teaching Excellence in 1986 and another award for teaching excellence in 2005 from the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. He has served on and chaired innumerable department, college and university committees; most notably, he chaired the AAUP Committee on Academic Freedom from 1976-1980. He coordinated the Spanish staff eight times over his career, most recently just last year. He has taught almost every course in the Spanish curriculum, led study abroad programs to Spain, Portugal, and Mexico, co-authored a book (An Annotated, Analytical Bibliography of Tirso de Molina Studies 1627-1977 published by the University of Missouri Press in 1979), reviewed manuscripts, interpreted for the community, and even translated the subtitles for several Italian operas performed by Opera Carolina. But did you know that he coached varsity tennis for the University from 1981-83 and appears in the Who’s Who in Tennis (1981)? Dr. Hopper has been a vibrant, influential, and contributing member of this department and the university for almost 50 years. We wish him well in retirement, but we will certainly miss him.
International Events

International Film Festival

The International Film Festival, running from March 12 until April 6, 2018, screened 27 feature films and documentaries and a dozen short films. The Department of Languages and Culture Studies sponsored 21 films from China, France, Germany, Iran, Italy, Japan, Russia, Spain, and Latin America. These films were funded by a Tournees grant, a Pragda grant, 9 Popp Martin Student Union Movie grants requested by the language clubs, 1 mini diversity grant and a SGA grant. In addition, our department hosted 2 lectures funded by College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Speaker Funds. The program also included 7 feature films and documentaries and a dozen short films sponsored by other UNC Charlotte units and a community organization that requested to join our festival this year: 2 African shorts and 1 feature sponsored by Africana Studies with a Franco-Burkinabe director in residence; 1 documentary sponsored by the Office of International Programs; 1 film sponsored by the Turkish Student Association thanks to a Popp Martin Student Union Movie grant; 4 feature films/documentaries from India and Korea, and 10 short films from different Asian regions sponsored by the Charlotte Asian Film Festival.

Multi-Language Poetry Slam

The fourth annual Multi-Language Poetry Slam, which took place on February 22, 2018 at the Cone University Center After Hours, was an event organized by María Mahaffey, Yukiko Yokono, Bianca Potrykus, Karoline Kiefel, and Lorena Delgadillo. Submissions included authentic works in English, another language, or a mixture of languages, as well as translations of poems by published authors. The program included twenty-three submissions in English, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, or a mix of languages. The poems were displayed in English in order to give the audience the opportunity to understand the content if they did not speak the original language.

Catalonia panel

Hugo Pascual Bordon moderated an information session co-sponsored by the Latin American Studies Program highlighting the current political turmoil in Catalonia, Spain, which ensued after a declaration of independence from the Catalan president due to the results of a referendum for independence. The information session, which took place on February 13, 2018, consisted of a panel discussion and was followed by a question and answer session. The panelists included Dr. Pilar Blitvich and Dr. Juan Meneses from the Department of English, Dr. Julian Montoro-Rodriguez from the Gerontology Program, Dr. Monica Rodriguez from the Department of Languages and Culture Studies, and Dr. Oscar de la Torre from the Department of Africana Studies.
Dr. Christopher Mellinger
I am an Assistant Professor of Spanish Interpreting and Translation Studies. I am actively involved in the profession, serving as the managing editor of the journal Translation and Interpreting Studies, as an executive board member of the American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association (ATISA), and as a member of several editorial boards. Since arriving at UNC Charlotte, I have been developing several interpreting courses and working on a few research projects related to translation, interpreting, and cognition. This year, I published several articles and presented at conferences in Argentina, Canada, and the U.S. Moving forward, I am excited to work with the new Communiciversity initiative to find ways to engage the local community through research, teaching, and service.

Welcome, New Members of Faculty!

Dr. Philip Kaffen:
I think of my work as concerned with the ways moving images can generate conversations and new ideas, or enlarge our sense of care for ourselves and one another. I feel lucky to be able to explore these interests in my classes at UNC Charlotte. I like being in the classroom and I’m really impressed by the students. But I also want to explore these concerns outside the classroom. In addition to presenting films for the International Film Festival, I have shown some films in the evenings and hope to do more in the coming year. I just finished a translation of the book, What is Japanese Cinema? by scholar Yomota Inuhiko, which will come out soon on Columbia University Press, and am working on several articles for various journals. Apart from teaching, workshops, translation, and research, my favorite part about Charlotte so far is taking the bus. Riding the bus is not terribly efficient, but it allows for many different kinds of conversations and I learn a lot. The bus rocks!

Dr. Paloma Fernández Sánchez:
I am a Lecturer in Spanish in the Department of Languages and Culture Studies and I serve as the academic advisor for Spanish majors and minors. I hold a Ph.D. in Spanish from Indiana University Bloomington. I also hold an M.A. in Spanish from Loyola University Chicago, and an M.A. in North American Studies from the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares in Spain. Teaching is my passion and I enjoy working with students. Recently I put together a panel, with two graduate students, and presented our research at SECOLAS this March.
Together with Dr. Carol Polsgrove, Professor Emerita of Journalism, Indiana University Bloomington, I have an ongoing project to bring Latin American literature to more English-language readers, hosted at https://latinamericanwriters.com/. I enjoy my role as academic advisor and the possibility it gives me to meet students and discuss the role that Spanish plays in their studies and future careers.

Carolina Timoteo de Oliveira:
My experiences at UNC Charlotte have been even better than my expectations (that were already high). I love our department; it is very diverse, the faculty and staff are very welcoming, helpful and resourceful. This spring, I defended my thesis and earned the M.A. in Latin American Studies. The title is “Afro-Brazilian Culture as a Means of Transformation: Spaces, Businesses and Political Participation in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.” I have also been accepted to a summer program on Heritage Language Teaching at UCLA and I am very excited about it. Investing in my teaching formation is very important to me. I am very fortunate because next year, I will keep teaching Portuguese at the LCS department as an M.A. Fellow; this is an amazing opportunity to grow professionally and start planning the next step. When I am not working hard, I like to cook, listen to Brazilian music, and practice playing the pandeiro, the melodica and the guitar. I also like to explore cultural movements in Charlotte and attend live music venues.

Dr. David Dalton:
I have loved my time here at UNC Charlotte. I enjoy working with great colleagues across the department and the college, and I have enjoyed working with honors students and M.A. students in Spanish and Latin American Studies. I enjoy my students and colleagues, and I appreciate the support we have for professional development, particularly research. My book, Mestizo Modernity: Race, Technology, and the Body in Post-Revolutionary Mexico will be coming out with the University of Florida Press this summer. I am chugging along with a second monograph, entitled Robo Sacer: Transnational Mexican Resistance through Technology. This book looks at Mexican and Mexican-American literature to discuss ways that people can resist the dehumanizing effects of neoliberalism—particularly the transnational flows of labor, capital, and bodies across arbitrary barriers—through subversive uses of technology. This summer I am going to travel to Mexico, where I hope to do some preliminary archival work for another book called Mexican Animated Cinema: De leyendas a huevos. Recent scholarship has underscored the importance of analyzing the market conditions that have contributed to film productions in Latin America. Nevertheless, most have largely ignored animated films despite the fact that they are consistently the highest-grossing domestic films of the year in that country.

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The Confucius Institute: Operations Have Launched

The Confucius Institute is housed within the Department of Languages and Culture Studies in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at UNC Charlotte.

Yongling Gorke
Dr. Yongling Gorke is the Director of the Confucius Institute that has launched its operations this semester at UNC Charlotte. Originally from Shanghai, Dr. Gorke pursued her M.A. at the University of Liverpool, and then her Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota. Yongling’s dedication to foreign languages started as early as middle school as she was fortunate to attend a school that specializes in foreign languages. Yongling considers it absolutely fitting for the Confucius Institute to be integrated into the Department of Languages and Culture Studies at UNC Charlotte.

When asked for a message that would compel UNC Charlotte students to take up foreign languages, Yongling said that knowing foreign languages would give our students a decisive advantage over their peers with everything else being equal; through their understanding of foreign language and culture they become multidimensional people. Her next step as leader of the Confucius Institute is to work on development of a spring semester course that includes a spring break trip to China to offer those interested the possibility to experience Chinese language and culture first hand. The biggest goal is to establish and maintain a continuity in language and culture learning that could serve as a model for other languages. She is working to establish connections with companies in the greater Charlotte area and open up possibilities for internships and similar cooperation. Yongling’s goal is to support a strong exchange and cooperation between all languages and cultures the Department has to offer. In her spare free time, Yongling is busy settling in, exploring, and enjoying her new hometown Charlotte.

Monica Ji
Monica Ji hails to us from Shanxi University in Taiyuan City, located in the Shanxi province, where she taught English and translation in the Department of Foreign Languages. During her postgraduate studies in Literature, where she received her Master’s of Arts, Monica particularly enjoyed Emily Dickinson’s and Ezra Pound’s poetry as well as Charles Dickens’ novels. As one main task, Monica will work with the Chinese teachers who will assist UNC Charlotte faculty and teachers in the public schools. Since her arrival, Monica has been working on adding and creating more cultural activities that give students the chance to engage with Chinese language and culture outside of the regular classroom setting. A series of workshops and activities is currently in planning to highlight the diversity in China. With about 55 minority groups, almost as many dialects, and drastic differences between progressive hubs like Shanghai and poverty-ridden provinces in Western China, there is much for people in Charlotte and at UNC Charlotte to learn. Yet, even the longest journeys start with the first step: the first events have already occurred or are scheduled in the near term -- The Country Culture Workshop, the 2018 Asian Festival and Dragon Boat Race, an exhibit of children’s picture books from China, and calligraphy workshops.
Student Experiences

Study Abroad

We all know our department’s thriving spring break study abroad culture. Whether you want to investigate the haunting past with “Ghosts in Berlin,” do a round trip of (snowy) Italy, experience the world of literature and culture in Paris, or head out to Tokyo--there are always plenty of opportunities to broaden your horizons. And as if our plethora of spring break excursions is not enough, we just added another one: Spring Break in Argentina. Thanks to the tireless Susana Cisneros, eleven students had the opportunity to spend their spring break travelling Argentina. They all covered 1,100 miles, travelling from Buenos Aires, Cordoba, San Miguel of Tucuman and back again. The number and magnitude of impressions was absolutely overwhelming. One encounter stood out though because it was utterly unplanned: a chance encounter and photo op with Governor Jual Luis Manzur in the White Hall of Tucumán Government House.

31st Japanese Speech Contest

Japanese major Wing Yin (Vanessa) Lee won the First Prize at the 31st Japanese Speech Contest at Duke University in Durham, NC. With students from Duke University, UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC Greensboro, NC State, and Wake Forest, Vanessa competed in the Level 2 category and after coming in third last year, she went all the way this year and won the first prize! Her hard work paid off and we couldn’t be happier about it. Now you may wonder how Vanessa came to be the UNC Charlotte representative at this competition. Well, that’s because she was the winner of the Japanese Speech Contest hosted earlier this year by our very own UNC Charlotte Japanese Program, which after receiving funds from the Office of International Office was able to invite judges from the greater Charlotte area. Congratulations to Vanessa and the Japanese Program, whose relentless work and commitment is nothing shy of inspiring.

German Internships

No less than five (!) German majors received highly competitive internships in Germany. Through the cooperation of the American and German Chambers of Commerce, five of our students were offered paid internships with international German companies like Porsche, Bosch, or Ernst and Young. Out of eight UNC Charlotte applicants, five received the offer; all eight, however, were finalists in the last round of interviews. Their competitors came from Bowdoin College, Middlebury College, Emory University, Georgia Tech, UNC Chapel Hill -- to name but a few. We don’t exaggerate if we claim that this achievement is next to spectacular! Congratulations to the German Program!
Anabel Aliaga-Buchenau won the 2018 International Education Faculty Award! This is so well deserved because in case you were wondering whose idea it was to send our students to other continents and countries on spring break, now you know: Anabel had the idea and first took a small group of students to cold and snowy Berlin. The International Education Faculty Award is an annual celebration of scholars’ and students’ commitment to creating new learning possibilities in the international context. The International Education Faculty Award is administered by the Office of Education Abroad as well as the International Student and Scholar Office. Congratulations, Anabel! It makes us happy to see your excellence recognized!

Michele Bissière has had quite a year: after winning the prestigious Bank of America Award for Teaching Excellence at UNC Charlotte, she went on winning the Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching. Michele’s commitment to excellence in scholarship and teaching did not go unnoticed. The College has just announced that Michele is one of this year’s inductees into the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society. Phi Kappa Phi is the nation’s oldest and most selective all-discipline honor society, and its mission is to recognize and promote academic excellence in all fields of higher education and to engage the community of scholars in service to others. Well deserved, Michele! Congratulations!
Impressions: Chinese New Year Celebration Gala

The UNC Charlotte Chinese Program, the Chinese Club, as well as the Chinese community in Charlotte celebrated the traditional Chinese Lunar New Year on February 9. There were games, performances, and traditional Chinese food, and we would like to share impressions of the event with you.