ACTFL’s OPI Assessment Trainers at CSN
By Dr. Bette Brickman

Trainers from ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) were at the West Charleston Campus to give two 18-hour training sessions (October 11 and 12 and October 18 and 19). Each session was limited to 10 attendees, who watched training videos, discussed ratings, and then had a chance to interview and rate ESL student volunteers.

Although the workshop was conducted in English and student volunteers were rated in their English speaking ability, ACTFL also conducts training in more than 100 languages for OPI (Oral Language Proficiency).

The ratings can be done face-to-face or over the telephone and are curriculum-independent. The rater tailors the questions to the interviewees’ interests, which are established during the preliminary introduction questions. ACTFL assists the U.S. Department of Defense in language testing, and ACTFL training programs are accepted by more than 20 states for teacher licensure. According to the ACTFL web site, “ACTFL proficiency tests are currently being used worldwide by academic institutions, government agencies and private corporations for purposes such as academic placement, student assessment, program evaluation, professional certification, hiring, and promotional qualification. Teacher certification boards in more than 20 states require

Save the date: Friday, February 21, Assessment Speaker Dr. Elizabeth Bernhardt will follow up on MOPI Training at CSN on the relevance and integration of this kind of assessment. Look forward to a workshop and breakout sessions. More information will be forthcoming.
A Warm Welcome to Deborah Van Damme, Spanish Language Faculty

The most recent hire in the Department of International Languages comes to us from Rome. As is typical of instructors in this department, Ms. Van Damme is no stranger to overseas life and travel.

During her childhood years, she lived and studied in Italy, Germany, Spain, Somalia, Texas, and Nigeria. As an adult, she has continued to travel extensively throughout Europe and Latin America. While visiting Leakey’s sites in Kenya, Ms. Van Damme developed an interest in archaeology, which was later heightened after viewing the Mayan and Aztec ruins in Guatemala and Mexico.

Ms. Van Damme’s degree (Ph.D. ABD) concentrates on Latin American post-colonial literature and feminist critical theory. Her dissertation examines revolutionary landscapes, applying eco-feminist theory in the works of Gioconda Belli, Omar Cabezas and Che Guevara. Her primary research interests are Spanish language, literature, culture, and history. Developing culturally competent and innovative pedagogical methods in second language acquisition is of utmost importance in her research.

Ms. Van Damme has taught at the University of Texas at Arlington, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Baylor University in Waco, Concordia University at Austin, the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Adams State College, Saddleback Community College, Cumberland University and the University of South Dakota. Presently, she is advisor to the CSN Spanish Club and is dancing flamenco with a group, some of whom are professionals. She hopes to do the same in the near future as she is just rediscovering flamenco after a 14-year hiatus.
News Briefs

Outstanding Student Nomination for the Department of International Languages

It's time to begin thinking about your nomination for this year's outstanding student, who will be chosen in late April (the deadline has not yet been announced by the College). Nominees who are eligible may be enrolled in either the fall or spring semester. The students nominated for this honor should be outstanding in the following categories: grade point average, academic achievement, character, and obstacles overcome.

You may print your nomination form from the webpage at sites.csn.edu/eslhome/OSS.htm and submit it to richard.williams@csn.edu or mail to sortcode S1D.

ESL Student Placement Testing in Henderson

Students can now take ESL placement tests at Henderson Campus. For more information, please contact Ivana Valeriani at ext. 5822.

Testing on Charleston Campus

Proctored placement testing will be conducted in the Charleston Campus Language Lab for prospective domestic students. Weekly tests are available during peak registration periods (December 6, 13, 16 and 20 and January 3, 6 and 8). Walk-in testing is still available. However, students are encouraged to sign up for one of the scheduled proctored tests.

Students participate in Ambassador Day on Charleston Campus on November 20. Taiwan and Ethiopia are represented above.
CSN Japanese Program Awarded Certificate of Appreciation for 25 Years of Service by Consulate General of Japan

Professor Sachie Kurasawa and winners of the tenth annual Japanese Speech Contest are pictured from left: CSN student William Wichers (University Level 2 First Place Winner), Hannah Peters, also of CSN (University Level 1 First Place Winner & the recipient of the Dr. Bichard Memorial Special Award that is given to the contestant who scored the highest in the entire competition), and Roxana Vazquez, also of CSN (University Level 1 Second Place Winner). Special thanks to Hiroko Fry, our department secretary, for tirelessly practicing with our contestants!

Postcards from Abroad

On September 26, Spanish Professor Ivonne Leavell gave a presentation entitled Mexico: Facts vs. Myths, clarifying the answers to questions such as Where is the richest man in the world from? How many ‘gun’ stores are in Mexico? In which country was the piñata invented? and Why has illegal immigration to the U.S. declined by 80%?
Eugene T. O’Neal, an Arabic student at CSN and a UNLV Ph.D. candidate in political science, was selected from thousands of applicants for a Critical Language Scholarship to study Arabic in Oman. The Critical Language Program provides summer study-abroad opportunities for students of less commonly taught languages, including Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Russian.

Under the auspices of the CLSP, Eugene was able to spend the summer of 2013 in an Arabic immersion in Ibrī, Oman, a city of about 100,000 people. Students in the program were required to sign a contract that they would speak only Arabic throughout the summer.

“That means no English at all!” Eugene says. “That was quite a transition, but it vastly improved my language skills. Before the program, I was VERY nervous to carry on a simple conversation in Arabic. By the end of the program, I was having debates with my Arabic professor on the world’s economic system and the political philosophy behind it.”

A typical day included seven hours of Arabic language study, five days a week, with classes conducted exclusively in Arabic. Although that schedule was difficult to adapt to, Eugene believes it is the key to developing fluency.

“Most of the professors did not speak English,” he says, “so the entire class was in Arabic. That took some getting used to, but it was useful in my Arabic language learning because I started to think in Arabic.”

Since returning to Las Vegas, Eugene has been enrolled in Arabic 212, Second Year Arabic II; in addition, he keeps his Arabic skills current by speaking and writing to friends from the program and from Oman as well as reading and listening to BBC Arabic and Al-Arabiyya for hours every day. He also studies with tutors; once the semester is over, he plans to continue with tutoring and studying vocabulary.

Eugene began studying Arabic at St. John’s University in Queens, New York, where he obtained both an undergraduate degree in Sociology and Criminology and a master’s in Government and Politics. Once at UNLV, he began taking Arabic classes at CSN (CSN offers the only Arabic classes in the state). “I am glad CSN had an Arabic program and the program has been EXTREMELY helpful for me. I became comfortable with the

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When people hear the name “Vietnam,” they may think of the war of the 1960’s-1970’s, which sent over 2.7 million American soldiers and support staff half way around the world. Or they may remember the 1987 Robin Williams’ half-comic/half tragic movie Good Morning, Vietnam! However, the Vietnam that I visited in August of this year could not have been more removed from those mental images. The North and South have since united into one country, though the three regions (North, Central and South) retain their distinct characteristics in food, clothing and language.

From Ho Chi Minh City, to Da Nang to Hue to Hanoi, the people I met were above all interested in educating their children. Public education is free, but “helicopter” parents pay extra fees to have their children educated in the three top and best-paying fields: math, science and English. My tour leader sent his daughter to a special after-school session until 10 p.m., six days a week, to help her develop her skills in those fields. The study of English is so important in Vietnam these days that informal schools command huge fees. I encountered one such school while walking along the Perfume River in Hue. Several Vietnamese students, ages 16-21, approached me and wanted to practice English. Soon, the group grew to eight, and then ten, and finally to twenty. They were accompanied by their teacher, a man of Vietnamese descent from San Diego.

Traffic is a problem in the Vietnamese cities, but it is not cars that clog the roadways but rather motorbikes. It was almost impossible to cross the streets in the cities, even in crosswalks, until I was given instructions on how to do it. Step out into the road and very slowly walk

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Adjunct Appreciation  
By Prof. David Schultz

On a hot May evening last spring, nearly fifty adjunct instructors and their full-time colleagues enjoyed an evening of food, conversation, raffle prizes and music at the West Charleston campus. The occasion was the second annual Adjunct Appreciation Soirée, held to provide recognition of the many adjuncts who contribute so much to the Department of Arts and Letters at CSN. A multi-disciplinary committee consisting of Marcela LaBounty, Shelley Fischer, Steve Herro and Elizabeth Henkel worked hard to make the evening a success, scouring Las Vegas for raffle prizes that included a Nevada State Museum Membership, gift cards for various businesses, and original creative work by CSN faculty. Besides showing our appreciation for the adjuncts, we also helped feed the hungry in Las Vegas since the event was catered by Three Square, and a large part of the catering price went to support their programs. Dell Griffin and the International Languages Administrative Assistants, Yadira and Hiroko, did much to make the event a success as well – thank you! Bruno Rhodes encouraged Phi Theta Kappa volunteers to lend an invaluable hand. Thanks also to all faculty in International Languages who attended. Stay tuned for an even better soirée next spring!

CSN Arabic Student O’Neal  
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language and both professors I studied under. Professor Anderson and Ms. Nabiha al-Abed assisted me greatly with obtaining the CLS scholarship. This program has really helped me with my dream of advanced fluency in this complex language.”

Eugene expects to complete his doctorate in May 2014; he is not certain what direction his career will take after that. “The focus of my research has been environmental politics, regionally concentrated in the Middle East and North Africa. I am examining how climate change has been impacting political stability in the region,” he says. Since not a lot of research is conducted about this issue, he hopes to make people more knowledgeable about what is going on in that region. “Honestly, I just want to make an immediate impact. Whether that is through a government agency, nonprofit organization or international organization, I would want to ‘change the game.’ Once I know what changing the game is, I’ll let you know.”

Eugene says that the CLS program was probably one of the best experiences of his life. “I learned so much about Islamic, Middle Eastern, and Omani culture.” He found Oman to be a great place to study Arabic. From the city of Ibri, he was able to visit cities all over the country, including the capital Muscat, Nizwa, and Salalah. “My favorite city was definitely Salalah. The weekend

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Cross-Cultural Quiz: Can you explain the communication problem?"

1. In England, an American visited a pub and asked where the restroom was. The barman laughed and asked, “Why? Are you going to ‘rest’?”

2. In a British home, an American visitor said she would like to wash up before dinner. Her host said, “You want to do that BEFORE dinner!!”

3. In China, a businessman accepted a business card, said “thank you,” and slipped it into his right back pocket.

4. The Palace Hotel in New York compared their establishment to the Taj Mahal in India.

5. When General Motors introduced the Chevy Nova in South America, sales were poor until they renamed it the “Caribe.”

6. An American tourist in Maui was greeted by locals at a luau. A beautiful lei was placed around the neck of each guest. The tourist removed his lei and put it on the ground next to him.

7. An American couple in Russia was served shots of vodka. They took a sip and said it was very good.

ANSWERS:
1. In the U.K., it’s a ‘loo’.
2. “Washing up” means doing the dishes.
3. This is insulting, whether left or right.
4. The Taj Mahal is not a palace but a mausoleum.
5. *No va* means “it won’t go.”
6. Refusing or removing a lei, which is a symbol of friendship and welcome, is disrespectful.
7. Russians expect you to drink it all in one gulp.
evidence of spoken and/or written language competency as demonstrated through official ACTFL ratings. More than 200,000 ACTFL tests are conducted yearly through LTI, the ACTFL Testing office.” (http://www.actfl.org/)

ACTFL has developed similar ratings for writing proficiency and is now working on assessments for reading. For a detailed analysis of ACTFL’s rating criteria, click on the link below: http://preview.tinyurl.com/om6ghwf

My Take-Away from MOPI Training
by Barbara Bird

It was enlightening to see that the OPI assessment focuses on what a student can do with language, which is very different from grammatical accuracy; this is usually measured on chapter tests and exams. The OPI measures language proficiency by focusing on 4 elements:

1. Functions or Global Tasks: examples include asking questions, narrating, and discussing abstract topics
2. Context / Content: ability to communicate about topics that are familiar and increasingly abstract and specialized
3. Accuracy / Comprehensibility: ability to be understood by different kinds of audiences

Of these elements, only number 3 (Accuracy/Comprehensibility) focuses on grammar. The lack of emphasis on grammar in the OPI reminded me that grammar is only a small element of language proficiency. I plan to take a close look at my syllabi and curriculum to see how I might emphasize some of these additional components of language proficiency.

Second, I was surprised to find out that my expectations about the kind of language that students should be able to produce after a semester or two of language study might be a little too ambitious. I plan to refocus speaking and writing assessments in my classes to more closely mirror the text types, functions, and context that are appropriate for my students’ level of language proficiency.

A big “Thank you!” to the Department of International Languages and the College of Arts and Letters for sponsoring this helpful and relevant training!
I was in Salalah, I felt like my Arabic language transitioned” to a level of being very comfortable with the language. “Very late at night, I had to negotiate, in Arabic, my cab fare. The conversation went on for about 15 minutes, with me being able to successfully negotiate my fare from four rials, which is about ten U.S. dollars, to half a riyal. That was probably my proudest moment in the program.”

His advice to students? “I would encourage anyone who is interested in the Arabic language to do an immersion program. Whether it is with CLSP (which I highly encourage) or another (there are many), living in a country where the language is spoken forces you to speak the language for survival and is very important.”

For students who are applying for a CLS scholarship, now or in the future, Eugene has two recommendations. The first is to be unique. “Tens of thousands of students are applying for this scholarship, and you must convey in about 2,000 words or less why you should receive this fully funded opportunity. I believe that if you are able to tell ‘your story,’ it will make you a very competitive applicant.”

The second piece of advice is to be persistent. “I applied once and did not make the first-round cuts. I went on to improve my application and was blessed to receive the scholarship the second time around.”

International Coffee House Reconvenes Second Friday of Spring Semester

Fridays from 10 a.m. to noon in D Lobby of Charleston Campus

Sign-in sheets for professors

Weekly themes

Up to 12 languages
across the street, making sure you maintain eye contact with every driver on your right as you cross. The drivers will then avoid hitting you. Click on the link to see a Youtube video of everyday traffic in Ho Chi Minh City. http://tinyurl.com/jw74o64

Older is better in Vietnam. Elders are respected, so Vietnamese may ask you your age from curiosity because they cannot correctly guess the ages of Westerners, but also to gauge how much respect to show you. In the small country villages, people appeared older than their years, but that is because they toil long hours in the fields, caring for the crops either by hand or with the aid of water buffalo. I also passed through villages where people were drying noodles on bamboo trays arranged along the road. There is no formal social security system in Vietnam. I saw many elderly people selling trinkets to make enough money to get by. However, the younger members of the family also help to support the older generation.

Have the Vietnamese people forgotten the “American War,” as they call it? Outwardly, it appears so. The areas that had been laid bare by defoliants during the war have now recovered and are lush green jungles. However, indications of the horrors of war are kept on display in the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City. The Friendship House near Hanoi is devoted to serving people afflicted with diseases caused by Agent Orange, and there is some thought that the defoliant has caused and will continue to cause birth defects for generations to come. The Hoa Lo Prison (“Hanoi Hilton”) focuses on the treatment of the pilots who were shot down and then kept there, some for up to six and a half years, before being released at the end of the war.

The cosmopolitan and high-tech atmosphere of the cities sometimes makes one forget that Vietnam is a communist country that went through a difficult period during and after the wars (French and American). Although my guide was candid about Vietnam’s history, politics is not a topic for public discussion. He was one of the million+ “boat people” who fled Vietnam during its chaotic post-war years and narrowly avoided being attacked by pirates that preyed upon refugees. He returned to the Mekong Delta several years later, when conditions improved. Out of a family of 15 children, two sisters live in Canada, one brother was executed, and the remaining children reside in Vietnam. I was fortunate to leave Vietnam, not on a crowded fishing boat with 400 other people, but in a comfortable China Airlines 747 (with 400 other people). At the end of a 16-day educational tour, it was time for me to say xin chao (goodbye) Vietnam.
French Club Meetings
Spring Semester 2014

West Charleston Campus
Building I, 301
10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

COME AND JOIN US!
on the second Friday of each month
CALL 651-7673

FRENCH CLUB ADVISOR
nathalie.odom@csn.edu