Letter from the Chair

¡Saludos desde Valparaíso!
As I write this letter, the beautiful October weather we are enjoying today is predicted to continue through at least part of Homecoming weekend, and I hope to connect with many of you at our annual Open House.

The 2013-14 academic year was exciting and eventful as we made several new hires in the Department. In the pages of this issue of Lingua Viva, you will meet three new full-time faculty members whose unique teaching and research interests are already enriching the curricula in Classics, French and Spanish. In addition to these new colleagues, we extend a warm welcome to Dr. Thomas Landvatter, who will be teaching both Core and courses in Classics. We also welcome back Dr. Lisa Jennings, who teaches Core and will teach German during Dr. Jennifer Bjornstad’s sabbatical, and Daniel Hoyle, a colleague from the Graduate School who is teaching Chinese again this semester. With a tenure-track search just getting underway in Chinese, we look forward to welcoming another new colleague in the coming academic year.

I hope you enjoy this issue’s news of student activities, faculty achievement and awards, and the career plans of our most recent graduates. I also hope that these stories will inspire you to take a moment to fill out the Alumni Response Form on the back. We love receiving news, ideas and feedback from you, our alumni. Please keep in touch!

Sincerely,

Stacy Hoult-Saros

Symphony Across Cultures

In high school, Avery Davis had played percussion, as well as the baritone and euphonium, but it was a visit from a Valparaiso University professor who changed the way Avery saw his future. “Professor Meng came to my high school to teach Chinese music and Chinese language. He was looking to put together a Chinese ensemble and suggested I try the sheng,” he said. “It’s a difficult instrument,” Meng said of the sheng. “Avery’s very good. He’s very talented. He’s also had some very good teachers,” Meng laughed.

Professor Jianyun Meng is the director of the Confucius Institute at Valparaiso University, which also sets up Confucius classrooms in local high schools where students can learn about Chinese language and culture. “Confucius said music is the best way to bring people together,” said Meng. “That has also been my experience. There’s no language barrier in music. It’s a more direct exchange.”

It’s this cross-cultural exchange through music that Avery picked up on quickly. After joining the ensemble in high school, Avery got to travel to China with a group of students where they got the opportunity to study at the Shanghai Conservatory. On the trip, Avery was struck by the universality of music — how despite language barriers, music notes were the same. “Music is like a universal language. Even though we may not speak the same language, we all play the same thing. We can share music with people from all around the world,” he said. The experience inspired Avery to come to Valparaiso University to study both music and Chinese studies. He’s also had the opportunity to go back to China again, this time with Valparaiso’s Concert Band. Now he dreams someday of teaching English to Chinese students, using music as a common denominator.

Adapted from an online Valpo Newswire Spotlight article, January 15, 2014
New Faces in Foreign Languages

Prof. Noelia Domínguez received her Ph.D. in Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Languages, from The Graduate Center, City University of New York. Her area of expertise is Contemporary Spanish Literature and Culture. She considers herself highly fortunate to be teaching in an institution which embraces diversity and promotes the study of foreign languages and cultures. Next semester Professor Domínguez will teach Spanish 390 titled Literature, Film & Music in Democratic Spain 1975-2014.

Prof. Rachel Geer earned her Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. She joins the French faculty in 2014-2015 during Professor Timothy Tomasik’s limited teaching load in the third year of his Baepler Professorship. Professor Geer is a medievalist, having recently defended her dissertation "Intimate Politics: Devotional Reading and Poetry of Social Engagement in Late Medieval France." She is enjoying sharing her preferred period of French literature this fall while teaching our French 351 course that takes students through the literature and cultural history from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance.

Prof. Elizabeth Platte received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan's Interdepartmental Program in Greek and Roman History in 2013, along with degrees in Ancient Greek and Medieval and Early Modern Studies. Her research looks at the influence of Christianity on the Roman aristocracy in the fourth and fifth centuries CE, focusing in particular on the economic impact of Christian asceticism on wealthy women. At Valpo, Professor Platte teaches all levels of Ancient Greek as well as courses in Classical Civilization. She especially enjoys teaching courses that look at issues of gender and race and ethnicity in the ancient world.

Faculty Publications, Projects, & Honors

Professor Tomasik's critical edition and English translation of a Renaissance French cookbook, The Most Excellent Book of Cookery, appeared this year, published by Prospect Books. He also published an article in French on a sixteenth-century morality play, La Condamnation de Banquet, which appeared in a Festschrift volume honoring his former dissertation director, Tom Conley. In July, Prof. Tomasik traveled to England, to attend a workshop at Oxford University on producing digital scholarly editions. He will share his experiences at the workshop with Valpo faculty participating in the Wente seminar on digital humanities that he will lead in spring 2015. This seminar reflects his ongoing work as the Richard P. Baepler Distinguished Professor in the Humanities.
Are you LinkedIn?

All alumni are invited to join one of our new LinkedIn groups! This helps us stay in touch with you and gives current students an idea of where their language studies can take them. Visit LinkedIn and search for these groups:

- Valpo Alumni: Friends of German
- Friends of French at Valpo

2014 Graduates in the World

Ben Burnett, '14
Spanish
Volunteer for Soccer Without Borders, Nicaragua

Katie Effertz, '14
Spanish, Psychology
Graduate studies in Student Affairs, Western Illinois U.

Noah Finegan, '14
German, English, Fundamentals of Business
Fulbright in Austria, English Teaching Assistant

Emily Hardesty, '14
English, French
Graduate studies in Library and Information Sciences, U. of IL

Micaela Johnston, '14
Spanish, Communication
Digital Marketing Specialist, Citrus Studios

Kelsey Loden, '14
Chemistry, German, Humanities
Pursuing M.D., Indiana U. School of Medicine

Zach Nelson, '14
German, International Relations, Business
Graduate studies in Global Higher Ed., U. of WI

Alexandra Meyer, '14
History, Classical Civilization, Theology
Deaconess Intern, Lutheran Mission Society

Kirsten Pohlplatz, '14
English, Latin, Creative Writing
Graduate studies in Creative Writing, Ball State U.

Faculty Publications, Projects, & Honors

Professor Jennifer Bjornstad has been selected by the Indiana Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German as the German Collegiate Teacher of the Year 2014. Professor Bjornstad did her undergraduate work at St. Olaf College and earned her MA and PhD degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She teaches the full range of German courses, from German 101 through the Senior Seminar; she especially enjoys figuring out new ways to help her students increase their language proficiency: "I love it when I hit on a classroom activity or homework assignment that really helps students make quick progress toward their language-learning goals." She especially enjoys helping students make the transition from high school to college and loves sharing her enthusiasm for language and literature with them.

The 2013 Martin Luther King, Jr. Award was presented to Professor Stacy Hoult-Saros at the MLK Day Convocation on Jan. 20, 2013. Professor Hoult-Saros has been actively involved in activities promoting diversity and inclusion, chairing the Diversity Concerns Committee and co-chairing the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Steering Committee, and serving as faculty advisor to LIVE (Latinos in Valparaiso for Excellence).
Alumni Response Form

• First name: 
• Last name (Maiden name): 
• Year of graduation: 
• Major(s) at VU: 
• Current E-mail address: 
• Current mailing address: 
• Current position / title / employer: 
• Your latest news: 

"I realize the difference my foreign language studies have made whenever . . ."

• In the future I prefer to receive the Lingua Viva newsletter in the following format:  
  Paper  
  E-mail  
• May we post information you provide on the department website?  
  Yes / No