As school districts and constituents become aware of the benefits of early language learning, our elementary school foreign language teachers are increasingly in demand. Professor Marcie Pyper ensures that Calvin’s teacher candidates have many opportunities for hands-on practice before they begin their teaching career.

IDIS 356 is a course for students seeking certification to teach foreign language at the elementary level and enrolls students from all of the foreign language departments. Last fall Professor Pyper presented her students with a challenge: Choose an elementary content area concept and teach it to a group of third graders who have had no foreign language—using only the target language! Her students were initially resistant—this was too hard for grade school students! Couldn’t they just teach colors and numbers? But Professor Pyper persisted, and the class worked together to figure out how to teach the water cycle exclusively in Spanish or German. They approached the problem methodically, breaking down the lesson into its most basic parts and designing the steps and stages they would have to follow to attain their unit objectives. Then, each Monday for seven weeks at Shawnee Park School (part of the Grand Rapids Public School system), each group worked with half of the class to teach them the vocabulary and concepts they needed to understand the water cycle. The unit culminated with a hands-on re-enactment of the water cycle.

In spite of their initial resistance, the students were delighted with the results of their teaching. By working to make the target language comprehensible they were able to convey complex and abstract ideas to children with no prior foreign language knowledge. They were surprised and impressed at how much Spanish or German the third graders could understand.

During interim, a class consisting of only Spanish teacher candidates repeated the experience at Campus Elementary School with equally impressive results.
McGregor Summer Research Fellows

A visitor to the Spanish department this summer may notice a few younger faces. Two students have been awarded McGregor Summer Research Fellowships to conduct research alongside faculty mentors in the Spanish Department.

Since their inception, the McGregor Summer Research Fellowships have been focused on connecting undergraduate students with faculty partners in the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Now in their 11th year, the Fellowships continue to solicit and support Calvin’s “best and brightest” students and faculty in collaborative research projects.

McGregor Fellows earn a stipend for nine weeks of full-time work during the summer months in partnership with a faculty member. They also participate in a weekly colloquium with other McGregor Fellows and present research results at a professional presentation.

This summer Megan DeMaagd is working with Professor Ed Miller cataloguing poems, short stories, and essays published in the major Afro-Argentine and Afro-Uruguyan newspapers between 1825 and 1900. The goal of this project is to reproduce these literary works so that they can be read and evaluated by students and scholars of Hispanic Literature, thereby giving a voice to a previously silenced group.

Elise Ditta is conducting a survey with Professor Slagter and Professor De Graaf (incoming Director of Off-Campus Programs) on the long-term impact of Calvin’s Off-Campus semester programs. She will be helping to develop the survey instrument, conduct interviews both by phone and in person, and help to compile and analyze survey results.

Both Megan and Elise will present their research results at a professional conference and will be co-authors on publications that result from their research.

Edna Greenway Scholarship

The award of this $2,400 scholarship is based on a number of factors including GPA, recommendations and an essay written by the student. In the essay students are encouraged to reflect on and articulate the importance of the integration of faith in their own lives and careers.

The Spanish Department is pleased to announce Amber Fennema as this year’s recipient. A few excerpts of her essay follow.

“My goal of being a high school Spanish teacher is based on my passion for, love, and respect of diversity. One of my goals is to fill my classroom with love for each student as a unique individual. To me this means loving and accepting their different interests, backgrounds, and learning styles. [...] This passion is founded in Paul’s description of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12).

I extend this metaphor to the classroom, in that it is full of students with different gifts, purposes, and abilities, but is united in one focus and in love. Also, the body of Christ includes those of different languages and cultures, and I hope to help my students grow in their knowledge, acceptance, and love of all people. [...] I not only want to build a classroom based on love and respect for and among my students, but also based on love and respect for God’s people in all parts of the world. As Christians, our role in the world is summed up in our call to ‘love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength, and all our mind, and to love our neighbor as ourself’ (Luke 10:27). Because of this commandment, my goals are to teach in love and to teach love.”
Faculty News

Professor Karen Miller is working this summer in Southern Chile and the Dominican Republic (with Calvin student Ana Stutler) on a project that examines language acquisition in Spanish-speaking children. This project compares the acquisition of plural morphology in different varieties of Spanish: Chilean and Dominican Spanish where the plural morpheme is sometimes produced and sometimes omitted on plural noun phrases due to syllable final /s/ lenition and Mexican Spanish, where the plural morpheme is always produced on all plural noun phrases. We ask whether and how these differences in input will affect development of plural morphology and verbal agreement in the two groups of Spanish-speaking children. This project is currently being supported by the National Science Foundation and a Calvin College Research Fellowship. For more information please visit our lab website: http://www.calvin.edu/~klm26/

In addition to working on the literature review for her dissertation, Professor Maria Rodriguez presented a mini-workshop to STEP (Striving Towards Educational Possibilities) students here at Calvin. She will also presenting two workshops at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Professor Alisa Tichelaar presented two papers this past year. At the Renaissance Society of America (RSA) conference in Los Angeles she spoke on “Theater in the Post-Catholic-Reformation Spanish Convent: The Pastoral Influence in a Dramatic Text by Cecilia del Nacimiento (1570-6146)”, and at the North American Christian Foreign Language Association (NACTFL) in San Diego, California her presentation was titled: “The World of the Early Modern Carmelite Nun Expressed in Poetry.”

In addition, they taught a graduate workshop this summer for high school teachers titled “Bringing (a) Life to the Spanish Classroom: Creating Materials Using Personal Narrative.”

After serving for many years as Department Chair, Professor Marilyn Bierling refocused her energies this year and once again directed the Study in Spain program. She also published an article entitled “Teaching Enrique’s Journey” in the Journal of Christianity and Foreign Languages.

Professor Dianne Zandstra has graciously agreed to serve as the new Department Chair.

New Faculty Member
The Spanish Department is pleased to welcome Martin Carrión to our ranks beginning Fall 2009. Professor Carrión, born in Bolivia, is finishing his PhD at Johns Hopkins University. He brings with him a broad spectrum of experience: he has been a diplomatic fellow, a congressional intern, a labor relations assistant, an assistant to the director of a Latin American Studies program, and an intern at the International Youth Foundation. Professor Carrión has also received numerous fellowships, scholarships, travel grants, and awards. Most recently he was a recipient of the Excellence in Teaching Award for graduate assistants. He is currently managing the editorial team of a book publication, and he has been the founding member of an undergraduate journal. Our department is looking forward to the energy and perspective he will bring to our endeavors here at Calvin.

In Memorium

Dr. David Vila of Rubí, Barcelona, Spain passed away on September 22, 2008 at the age of 74. Dr. Vila studied in Spain, Switzerland, England, and Canada before coming to the US in 1955. Here he studied at Gordon Divinity School, Michigan State, the University of Michigan, and Calvin Seminary. He to Calvin College and 1957 and was the founding member of the Spanish Department. He continued teaching until 1975. Most of his life was devoted to the production and distribution of Spanish Christian literature through Words of Hope and Radio Bible Class.
Ben Van Wyke (1999)
I am finishing up my PhD. in Translation Studies, a relatively new field (I am in the first PhD program in the country). The focus here at Binghamton University, NY, is on comparative literature/philosophy, and the program is affiliated with the comparative lit dept. I have been able to bring a lot of the things together that I like: language, politics, philosophy, etc. A lot of contemporary TS deals with, for example, the power structures influence how translation has been carried out, translation and gender, translation and colonization, etc. I had no idea all this existed. I naively entered thinking that they were going to teach me how to translate. Of course, I have learned to be a better translator, but not because I have memorized formulas.

My dissertation is on the intersection between metaphor and translation, and I use a series of metaphors to trace the history of translation studies, and to show the relevance of contemporary philosophy (post-Nietzsche) for our notion of translation, and, consequently, what this means for the practice. The first chapter is going to be published soon. The others... well, I’m just trying to get them sufficiently done for the moment. The title is: “Delicitable Bodies and their Clothes: Plato, Nietzsche, and the Translation of Latin America.”

I just got married last spring to a Spanish girl. We started going out the last time I lived in Denia in 2000. Since August I have been teaching at IUPUI in Indianapolis as Assistant professor of Spanish (and Translation studies, since that’s what they mostly hired me for).

Anita Zandstra (1999)
recently spent three years promoting community libraries in Bolivia for Mennonite Central Committee. On January 3, 2009, she married Saul Enriquez in Grand Rapids. The couple resides in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, where Saul, a native of Bolivia, is finishing his law degree and working part-time for MCC and Anita has been teaching at a local Christian high school.

I have been teaching Spanish for 4 years now at Spring Lake High School and loving every minute of it. We have been teaching using TPRS since 2000 and have teachers from all around the state come and observe us and the success of the TPRS program.

Ben Ashby (2004)
I taught Spanish at Holland Public Schools for the last three years, and then just this past year took an elementary Spanish job with Zeeland. They are starting a new program, and I liked the idea of having a chance to write the curriculum like I did in Holland. I am also teaching online Spanish through Michigan Virtual Schools. Last May I received my masters in K-12 leadership from Michigan State. In other exciting news, my wife and I had our first baby, a boy.

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David Malda (2004)
was just awarded the 2009 National Olmsted Scholar from the Landscape Architecture Foundation. Part of the prize is $25,000 for research. He will continue to do research on urban highways, but also plan to do the entire Camino de Santiago in June or July of next summer. He is very excited about the opportunity to finally do this with his wife Sara Terpstra (2005)

In order to practice the Spanish grammar and vocabulary they were learning, Sarah DeYoung Veenstra (2004) had her Spanish IV class at Calvin Christian School in Grandville, MI write and illustrate children’s books in Spanish. The books were then transported to El Verbo Christian School in Nueva Suyapa, Honduras. The Spanish IV students chose Christian themes and then developed an animal fable that discussed the theme and taught a lesson. “The children at El Verbo Christian School couldn’t wait to read the books created by their big brothers and sisters in the U.S.” noted the principal of Calvin Christian, who delivered the books.

“They devoured the books and in the process learned some important moral lessons.”

Jordan Bruxvoort (2006)
Cuando yo salí de Calvin en el año 2006 con una concentración mayor en español y concentraciones menores en ministerio para jóvenes y también en desarrollo internacional, no sabía muy bien lo que iba a hacer. El primer año después de Calvin hice una gran variedad de trabajos que, después de un tiempo, me hicieron sentir muy fragmentado e insatisfecho con lo que hacía. Eventualmente averigué sobre una oportunidad para trabajar como un organizador comunitario que se enfoca en las iglesias en Kalamazoo y Grand Rapids. Gracias a Dios conseguí el trabajo y ahora me enfoqué en nuestra campaña para una reforma migratoria comprensiva y también nuestra campaña para abrir más oportunidades económicas a personas que salen de
Vanessa Acosta Abreu (2006)
works as Assistant Director of Admissions at Calvin College (directing the Fridays at Calvin visit program). She says: I think I am one of the only people in my office that speaks Spanish. I just returned from a trip to the Dominican Republic to visit my husband’s family and I felt like I knew the history of the country thanks to some classes that I took at Calvin. Last year I was given the opportunity to travel to Latin America (Brazil, Paraguay, Ecuador, Guatemala & Honduras) for 2 weeks to recruit for Calvin and I felt like I knew a little bit about each country when I arrived there thanks to my college experiences.

Meg Lawry (2007)
¡Me han aceptado a la universidad en Madrid! Salgo por allá el 22 de junio. Estoy matriculada en unos cursos bien interesantes—la enseñanza del español, español en el mundo, y la introducción a la critica literaria. Será una aventura, por lo menos. Viviré en un apartamento con otros estudiantes en el programa. ¡Estoy muy emocionada!

Emily Jipping (2008)
I spent the last year working at the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce. I’m still involved at Roosevelt Park Community Church where I teach ESL, and this year I took on a bigger role and will be leading lessons at the beginning of classes. I try to stay in touch with my friends from Spain and Mexico as much as possible as well as the friends I’ve made from ESL. Because my passion is to teach Spanish at the college level someday, I’m happy to say that I have recently been accepted into the Masters program at Western Michigan University and been offered a teaching assistantship.

Tyler Petrini (2008)
received the “Rookie of the Year” award at Howard High School in Ellicott City, Maryland. He says, “I beat out almost a dozen other new teachers to receive the honor, which certainly makes me feel as if my tireless efforts over the past 10 months were clearly recognized. My story can serve as a testament to the strength of Calvin’s education program, as there is no greater reason for my preparation than the superb professors in your department!!!

Meredith DeVries (2009)
has accepted a job offer at the International School of Tegucigalpa as a long-term biology sub for a teacher on maternity leave. She will also be coordinating their labs and be a general sub. The next year she’ll have her own classroom, most likely in a science position.

Kat Swanson (2009)
will be teaching English in Spain next year. She will be working at CEIP San Fernando in Adra, Almeria and plans to continue polishing her Spanish skills in anticipation of continuing her studies in the translation field in the future.

SIS 2009
This past spring a group of 25 Calvin College students, ranging from sophomores to seniors, had the opportunity to be a part of the semester abroad program in Denia, Spain. We were accompanied by Professor Bierling from Calvin and were also taught by three Spanish professors who have been with the program for almost as long as it has existed (Alfonso, “Ge,” and Fuensanta). Tracy Ariza took charge of our ethnographic studies. All students were on the “Advanced” track, meaning that we had all taken 301 prior to this spring semester. This year was a year of transition for the program, and we got to experience lots of new things.

All of the students got along well with their families. Most of the families were older (in their 60s), and all of them have been with Calvin’s program for several years. They all told us that this winter was the worst one they’ve seen for decades … and we all wished that it would have been a bit warmer!

We frequented cafés and bars like Cyber-Denia, Patty’s and La Naviéra, along with the beach and other fun spots in Denia. As a group, we had three official group excursions to Barcelona, Granada, and Madrid. Many of us also got a chance to visit Benimarell, a small town where Ricardo Esteve (our bus driver) grew up. This was a great way to see another part of Spanish life. Additionally, most of the students made it to Valencia a few times to enjoy the city, see a play, or celebrate festivals like the Fallas.

Overall, it was a great semester, a wonderful opportunity, and an irreplaceable experience.
Interim in Granada

Interim 2009 included a program in Granada. Twenty students, accompanied by Professor Slagter, began their adventure in Barcelona where, in addition to the usual highlights of this fantastic city, they visited Puente, a welcome center for North African immigrants. After a brief stop in Denia to greet the students studying there for the semester, the group spent two weeks in Granada. The intense grammar and conversation classes were complemented by a homestay, visits to the Alhambra and the cathedral, hikes in Sacromonte and in the villages of the Alpujarras, and a special tasting of the foods and wines of the region. A visit to Toledo and Madrid wrapped up an action-packed interim.

Right is a photo-essay reflecting on the interim experience.
What brought us to Nicaragua?
Each year at Partners Worldwide, Lora makes a trip to each of the countries that she works with throughout Latin America. In 2006, she combined two of those trips into one as she traveled to Honduras and Nicaragua in November. On one of her off days in Managua, she visited a friend (a Calvin alumna) teaching at Nicaragua Christian Academy (NCA) and realized that it would be a very intriguing place to teach. When she returned to Michigan after that trip, we did some research and found that the high school science job was open. Although Joel had no experience in teaching science (he was currently teaching math and Spanish at Grandville High School) it was an opportunity that we decided to look into. We reasoned that if I applied and got the job, Lora might be able to transfer to Managua and continue to work for Partners Worldwide, but be in a better location for traveling to the partnering countries. By March of 2007, we had made the decision to move to Nicaragua for the following school year. Looking back over the whole process, we can now definitely see God acting, whispering, and nudging us to make the move. The move to a Spanish speaking country had been something that was on our hearts from the time we returned from Spain in 2003. Four years later, God opened the doors and softened our hearts enough to finally say yes. Teaching and working in Nicaragua for two years has been such a huge blessing for us in “relearning” Spanish, meeting new friends, and seeing how God has changed us in many ways.

What we’re involved in now
Lora continues to work for Partners Worldwide serving as the Latin American Facilitator. Joel will begin his third year of teaching and coaching at NCA in August. We look forward to another year of serving, learning, and attending our church. We also look forward to recruiting more students from NCA to attend Calvin in the future. This year, there will be three NCA students attending in the fall.

Matthew Ferner (2005) Blame it on my upbringing or God’s stiff elbow nudging me in my side causing me to rise out of my comfy chair, but I am off once again. This time to Nicaragua, the land of lakes and volcanoes, a land torn by war and devastated by earthquakes and hurricanes. The second poorest country in the western hemisphere offers us great opportunities to make impacts both big and small.

Since I graduated from Calvin College I’ve lived in the hills of the eastern Dominican Republic and amongst the tangled jungles of Panama. I’ve been fortunate to have worked with Dominican youth on business plans and taught Wounaan Indians computer skills. Add some English classes, AIDS presentations, a youth soccer team, and eco-tourism development. Throw in a touch of (or rather two truckloads full of Bio-Sand water filters) and you have a good idea of what it has been like, project wise. Oh, and I’ve eaten rice just about every day these past three years.

Through it all, I have learned some amazing life lessons – even while living on a deserted tropical island. (Just kidding about the deserted island part, it was FAR from deserted). I have learned that people are what matter most. I have worked from inside communities, using local knowledge and resources, and have learned that this is the most rewarding and successful way to make an impact. I have learned that small individual impacts (guitar classes, story times, and mouse click skills) are just as important as their bigger counterparts (indigenous land rights, democratic leadership change). I have learned that impact is not always measured by numbers on a spreadsheet or on monthly reports, but by smiles shared and tears shed upon leaving. I have also learned to spear fish and enjoy turtle soup along the way.

It is this way that leads me to Nicaragua for a year with an organization called Partners Worldwide (www.partnersworldwide.org). Partners Worldwide facilitates partnerships between business-people in the U.S. and small and medium sized business people of developing countries. I work with three American partners and a Nicaraguan counterpart on a water filter project. We develop a business and a community based network that manufactures, sells, and maintains the wonderful and oh-so-familiar Bio-Sand water filters (from my DR project). We also do hygiene education to complement the crystal clean drinking water that many Nicaraguans will soon be drinking while eating their “gallo pinto.” I also work in the Nehemiah Center, an epicenter of sorts for numerous Christian development organizations, on other small business initiatives as the need arises.

Check out my blog at www.ferndinho.blogspot.com. If you would like to be included in my support network please email me your mailing address.
The Elsa Cortina Project

Although teaching and learning verbs and vocabulary has sometimes been considered “value-free,” the beliefs and morality that underlie a teaching approach strongly inform what is taught and how it is taught in world language classrooms. The world language classroom can be a place in which students learn more than discrete vocabulary and sentence structure. It can be a locus of discovery of common humanity and a place where human dignity is recognized and respected. By studying the life of a real person, students gain an understanding of that person as part of a larger community and a larger historical context. Biographical narrative holds together what is often separated in language classrooms—basic language functions and the experience of spiritual and moral challenges integrated into a life context. Students learn empathy as they share this person’s trials and triumphs and grapple with moral and spiritual issues while listening to and using the target language.

The subject for our biographic narrative is Dr. Elsa Cortina, emerita professor of Spanish at Calvin College who came to the U.S. as a Cuban refugee after the Cuban revolution. The project began with a series of video recorded interviews with Dr. Cortina in which she narrated the story of her life. These units include video clips taken from the interviews, materials for pre- and post-viewing activities, and resources for guided reflection activities. Through a variety of exercises students will be encouraged to adopt a countercultural, critical stance toward the prevailing culture from a faith-based perspective. As we anticipate continued work developing curricular materials based on this narrative, it is our hope that these materials will spark discussion, foment ideas, and provide important feedback that will result in offering our students a deeper and more meaningful experience in their world language learning.

See the available materials at: http://www.calvin.edu/kuyers/curriculum.php?ID=8

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Huellas fall 2009 issue

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