Spanish Department Launches Elsa Cortina Scholarship

To celebrate twenty-five years of SIS and to honor Dr. Elsa Cortina, this summer the Spanish Department launched a fundraising drive for the Elsa Cortina Scholarship. Over the next three years we hope to raise $70,000, enough money to grant scholarships to two Study in Spain students each year. In fact, since all Spanish majors are currently required to spend at least a semester studying abroad, this scholarship is especially important right now. In order to meet our ambitious goal we need the financial support of those who participated in the Study in Spain program and those who have warm memories of studying with professor Cortina.

For many who participated in the Study in Spain program, it was the highlight of their college career. The challenge of adjusting to a new place, a new family and a new language were accompanied by the excitement of visiting amazing architectural sites like the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona or experiencing the wonder of the mosque/cathedral in Córdoba. And who can forget the huge fires of fallas, the walks along the Mediterranean, or sipping café con leche at a sidewalk café? Everyone who participated has wonderful stories to tell.

Many of these stories include Dr. Elsa Cortina, the heart and soul of the SIS program and of the Spanish Department at Calvin for many years. From the first classes she taught on campus in 1966, Dr. Cortina dedicated herself wholeheartedly to the college and its students. In her more than thirty years in the Spanish Department, Dr. Cortina taught nearly 200 classes and had an impact on the lives of over 3,000 students. All of Elsa’s former students remember her as a warm, enthusiastic teacher who was excited about the material she taught. They remember the many stories that she told and how she was able to relate literature to life. She was also a friend to her students, always approachable, sensitive, and willing to help with personal problems. Students who participated in the Study in Spain program remember meeting her with her friend “Ge” (Maria Angeles) on the streets of Dénia and being invited to sit down and chat for a while in a café. To view a first-person account of her relationship with Calvin and the beginning of the program in Spain, go to the website: www.calvin.edu/academic/Spanish/elsacortinascholarship.

Our goal is to raise at least $70,000 over a three-year period. Each year, this would enable two students to receive need-based scholarships of $2,000 each, offsetting some of the extra cost involved in studying in Spain. Help to make this vision a reality. Please join us in honoring Dr. Elsa Cortina with this scholarship in her name. You can give by going to the secure Calvin website at http://www.calvin.edu/admin/development and clicking on the “Make a Gift Now” button. Please specify “Other Designations: Elsa Cortina Scholarship Fund.”

Thank you for helping to ensure that future generations of students will be able to experience the excitement, the adventure, and the life-changing experience of studying in Spain!

- Did you know the Study in Spain program was Calvin’s first official off-campus program?
- Did you know over 600 students have participated in the program since 1983?
- Did you know Dr. Elsa Cortina launched this program and taught classes in Spain for twenty years?
¡Alabando al Señor en español!

This year Spanish chapel met on Thursdays at 10:00 in the Meeter Center. Organized by Professor Lourdes Rodriguez, it included speakers from local Hispanic churches, services of song and praise, and worship directed by members of the Spanish House, study-abroad programs, and upper level Spanish classes. Each week between 80-100 students attend and at times there is standing room only. If you would like to join us for worship or if you'd like to speak at Spanish chapel next year, please contact the Spanish Department.

Calvin Approves New Latin American Studies

This interdisciplinary minor is designed to acquaint students with the histories, cultures, languages and contemporary realities of Latin America. It consists of six courses—three required and three electives—and requires participation in an off-campus semester or interim course in Latin America. Students must also demonstrate competence in a foreign language such as Spanish, Portuguese, or French. Professor TenHuisen is the advisor for this program.

Study in Honduras Fall 2006

The fall semester of 2006 was an incredible adventure and turning point in the lives of 22 Calvin students. Living in Tegucigalpa was not always easy because everything was different—the food, the customs, the loneliness, the language, the crime, the poverty—and yet it was a good time. Our Honduran families became OUR families, and the landscape of our lives became intertwined with theirs. They helped us learn that different was not to be feared but to be embraced. So while we were taught much in our classes and we learned much from our professors and our books, our families are what kept us going. They philosophized with us, talked politics and religion with us, helped us with (and suffered through) our language problems, fed us, encouraged us and chastised us. They accepted us into their homes and that made all the difference. A semester abroad is about so much more than us.

Interim In Yucatán

Our wonderful Mayan families welcomed us as in other years—all 26 Calvin students, along with director Marilyn Bierling. We learned about Mexican history, politics, economics, religion, education, and health systems, wrote extensively in Spanish, spoke Spanish at almost all times (exceptions: a little bit of Maya with our families and some English during the last weekend in Playa del Carmen), and visited pyramids, caves, and cenotes. We were constantly challenged—and amazed by what we saw and had begun to comprehend. We were forced to examine our faith in light of the Mexican reality. We recognize that just 3 weeks in Yucatan is only a brief introduction to Mexican culture; yet we were able to experience the culture and language first hand and we fell in love with the country. Plans are to continue the January interim in Yucatan, while the department works to set up a temporary spring 2008 semester program in Merida, with the goal of providing all of our Spanish students the opportunity to study in an immersion experience abroad.

Huellas fall 2007 issue

Funding for this newsletter was provided by the Calvin Alumni Association and the Calvin College Department of Spanish.
New Books!

2007 saw the publication of two works by Spanish professors. Professor E. Miller collaborated with Kori Kros VanderKooi (93) to publish a bilingual edition of the poems of José Luis García Suárez. This volume, De Azul y Blanco (Of Blue and White), is the result of a long friendship first formed when Kori participated in the Study in Spain program 1991. Although VanderKooi and Miller were initially reluctant to take on the special kind of translation required to render poems in another language, the opportunity to share these poems with a larger audience sustained them throughout their three-year project. Read more about this book and the remarkable journey that led to its publication at http://www.calvin.edu/publications/spark/2007/summer/spain.htm

Professor D. Zandstra’s book is similarly the fruit of many years of labor. Entitled Embodying Resistance: Griselda Gambaro and the Grotesque, it represents the first full-length study of most of Gambaro’s major narrative publications. Gambaro (Argentina, 1928-) is widely recognized as an interpreter of a society in crisis. She seeks to reshape perspective and priority in the reader through texts that are often painful and always conflictive. Professor Zandstra’s study traces narrative strategies in six of Gambaro’s novels.

Both of these books are available through the Calvin College campus store.

Spanish Department Implements New Curriculum

After much work, untold hours of meetings, and numerous committees, the new Spanish Department curriculum finally made its debut during the 2006-07 school year. One of the main changes is the replacement of the four 3-credit Survey of Literature courses (students were required to take two of them) with two required 4-credit courses: “Introduction to the Hispanic World I and II.” These courses explore the relationship of major literary and artistic works to economic, political, religious, and social developments in Spain and Spanish America from antiquity to the present.

Another new element is the inclusion of an elective culture course. The topic of this course will change each semester. The initial offerings were “Hispanic Immigration” and “El Camino de Santiago: A Pilgrimage in Spain.”

All Spanish majors are now required to study abroad for at least one semester and all minors for at least an interim. The effects of this are already being felt as the enrollment in our off-campus programs surges (see related story).

In the past Spanish students could only take one Spanish linguistics course. Now they have the choice of “Spanish Phonology and Dialectology” or “Advanced Spanish Syntax and Sociolinguistics.”

Important features of the new curriculum for majors and minors, in addition to new courses, are 1) beginning the major/minor at the 300 level, rather than with Spanish 202 or 203, 2) integration of history, culture, and literature, and integration of Spain and Latin America, providing a common base for all Spanish majors and minors, 3) more flexibility, allowing a student to complete the program with courses in linguistics and culture, as well as literature, 4) higher expectations in oral fluency, and 5) required study abroad in Spanish, with a minimum of an interim for minors, and a semester for majors.

New Requirements for Spanish Teacher Candidates

Demand across the nation for Spanish teachers, both at the elementary level and at the secondary level, remains strong. Both the State of Michigan and National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) have raised the standards for teacher certification, especially in the area of oral proficiency. While research shows that only 50% of language majors nationwide reach the “Advanced Low” level on the ACTFL scale (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages), NCATE wants evidence through the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) that 80% of our education students reach that level. In addition, the OPI level must be certified through an outside agency.

To meet Michigan and NCATE standards, we have increased the requirements for the major and minor in our new curriculum and have begun requiring the OPI telephone interview. These decisions will greatly affect our education students, but we are confident that we will continue to graduate able and enthusiastic teachers.
Alumni News

Sarah Reynolds (2001)
Sarah has just completed her third year in Cornell’s PhD Economics program with a concentration in development. She will be traveling to Brazil this coming year for field work.

Elizabeth Schepel de Farrant (2003)
Elizabeth has been involved in leading justice seminars and child sexual abuse training for churches and USAID “justice centers” in Bolivia. “Most people have lost all hope in the justice system and most Christians feel defeated before they even attempt to make changes in their society. For now, we are trying to motivate churches and we are praying that God will move them to start justice ministries and be a voice in Bolivia.”

Cherilyn (Dudley) Larsen (2005)
After teaching at the International School in Tegucigalpa, Honduras for a year, Cherilyn has moved on to teach Spanish to middle school and high school students at an alternative school in Champaign, IL.

Matthew Ferner (2005)
Matthew is happily serving his second year in the Peace Corps. He is stationed in the Dominican Republic in a small rural community called Pedro Sánchez, and his work has involved installation of water filters as well as organization of a youth camp focused on cultural appreciation. His blog can be viewed at www.ferndinho.blogspot.com.

Kevin Haag (2004)
Last January Kevin and his wife Hannah left for Nicaragua to work for a faith-based NGO called The Kairos Association for Formation. They will be there for a full year with the option of renewing their contract this coming January. More information about their work is available at http://gagehaag.googlepages.com.

Danielle Jackson (2004)
Danielle is currently at Emory University in Atlanta, completing a Physician’s Assistant M.S. program. She recently participated in the program’s two-week South Georgia Farmworker Health Project, which hosts free clinics for migrant workers, most of whom are Haitians or Latinos. This was a very humbling experience, and her eyes were opened to the difficult situation migrant workers often find themselves in: “Their situation has to be looked at as a mixed blessing in some ways. For while they are so grateful for the chance to earn enough money to actually survive and not starve to death, the conditions they live in and the injustice they sometimes face in their work situations seems so unfair compared to that of the rest of our country.”

Allison Kleinassser (2006)
Allison is enjoying her new position as an elementary Spanish teacher at a Christian school in southern California, where she is the only Spanish teacher in the school and teaches about 700 students a week.

Andrea Smidt-Sittema (1999)
Andrea received a PhD in Latin American History and is now teaching history, along with one Spanish class, at Geneva College in Pennsylvania.

Emily (Steenwyk) Romero (2005)
Emily has one more year at Fuller Seminary in California. After completing her program she hopes to work in Honduras with her husband, David Romero, who is from Nueva Suyapa, Honduras.

Micah Bruxvoort (2003)
Micah and Katia finished a year-long internship in Ciudad Juárez, México and will now be moving to Georgia so Katia can begin a PA program at Emory University in Atlanta this fall. Micah just graduated from seminary.

Brian (2005) and Joy (Jones) (2004) Cumings
Brian and Joy will be spending two months in Mexico over the summer, first in Ensenada and then in Oaxaca. “The only fairly specific detail we actually have been told about the entire summer is that for one week in Oaxaca we shall be helping teach some of the local church members Spanish literacy skills. For Zapotec Indians, Spanish is their second tongue and education is not always practical for them when they are young. That is, for both of us, a very exciting time that we are prayerfully anticipating being a beneficial part of.”

Dustin Brewer (2003)
After spending 30 months in Japan and falling in love with Japanese language and culture, Dustin returned home and has since been working in marketing and sales for a Japanese company called Meira. He has also been doing translation work in Dublin, Ohio. Dustin became engaged to his Japanese girlfriend, Keiko Hyuga last Christmas and is now looking into graduate programs for Japanese studies.

Cory Henrickson (2000)
Cory is currently teaching Spanish at a high school in Oakland, California. She is also co-advisor to a school club called Building with Books, a group that encourages high school students to become involved in their communities through weekly meetings and various service projects. Last spring she and a group of students spent two weeks serving in Mali, which is located in western Africa.

Jeffrey Skrenes (1999)
Estoy trabajando como prestamista hipotecario ahora, pero estoy buscando de nuevo un puesto en el mundo de organizaciones sin fines de lucro. La tercera parte de mis clientes son latinos pero también enseño clases para los que están comprando su casa por primera vez. Además, he trabajado contra préstamos predatorios y por leyes que pongan restricciones en ciertos tipos de préstamos. Por la lengua, latinos y otros inmigrantes están en riesgo de ser víctimas de eso. Yo soy presidente de mi iglesia también, y es una iglesia bilingüe, llamada El Milagro/The Miracle Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de America. Finalmente, ya empecé un grupo del club de Leones en Minneapolis específicamente para los latinos.

Courtney (Tabor) Yarch (2004)
Courtney's first child was born in February of 2007 and was named Denia Marie, after the town where the Study in Spain program takes place.

~ continued on page 5
Jonathan Mosier (2006)

Lately, I have been substitute teaching because Coca-Cola has not had any work available for me. It has been going quite well, but it made me realize that I don't want to be a high school or middle school teacher. So I'm thankful for God's direction in that matter. The other two things of interest in my life have been that I bought a new car and spent one week in Mississippi helping with hurricane relief.

Leslie Harkema (2005)

Leslie spent the past year working to finish her MA thesis at the University of Georgia, and this fall she will begin a PhD program in Hispanic Language and Literatures at Boston University. They have offered her a presidential fellowship, which Leslie counts as a great blessing.

Ben Katt (2003)

Ben and his wife Cherie are living in Seattle, where Ben is finishing an internship and Cherie is going to graduate school for counseling. Ben, who has graduated from seminary, hopes to eventually plant a church.

Aaron Bennink (2005)

I have gone back to school for my MBA while maintaining my business on the side. We are trying to incorporate it into my father's sign company, as they are related industries. I am working in Toronto for the summer at Scotiabank, trying to get some exposure to the corporate world. After I get married in August, I have one year of school left, and we'll see where I end up after that.

Joanna Schmit (2006)

Joanna was accepted to the University of Illinois at Chicago with a teaching assistantship but has deferred her acceptance until the fall of 2008 in order to teach English in Korea for one year.

Aaron Iverson (2005)

Aaron has begun an internship at Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization (ECCHO), which is based in Ft. Myers and deals with fighting world hunger by providing agriculturally-related resources, training, seeds and information to development workers and missionaries across the globe. As an intern, Aaron's responsibilities include a lot of hard outdoor work on a 50-acre farm as well as teaching seminars. "It's been a very stimulating place and I've learned a ton; it's also been refreshing to get my hands dirty and calloused after spending several years in the classroom, although that was certainly worthwhile, too." Upon completion of his internship Aaron intends to go to Mozambique for a year alongside a South African missionary involved in agricultural development and discipleship training.

Michelle Steenwyk (2004)

Michelle is studying public health in Washington, D.C. and recently got married to Enrique Hoyos, who is from Quito, Ecuador.


Daniel just graduated from Yale Divinity School and is waiting for a call as a pastor, hoping to work in a Hispanic area.

Cindy (Barkules) Vander Klay (1998)

Cindy has been happily married for almost four years and lives in a suburb of Chicago with her husband, Kevin. For the past few years she has been a bilingual resource teacher for 4th through 6th graders, working with about 40 Hispanic students who are learning English at various levels. She is about to begin her 9th year of teaching. Cindy has also been able to use her Spanish skills with her church's food pantry ministry, which primarily serves Hispanic families in the suburbs.

Michelle Daining (2002)

He sido aceptada a Bowling Green State University y su programa de maestría en español. Estaré en Hermosillo, México durante el primer año y en Bowling Green, Ohio el segundo año. Bowling Green era mi primera elección por la oportunidad vivir en México (en vez de España con NYU y Middlebury). Además, me dieron el apoyo económico de un "assistantship." Estoy agradecida y emocionada por esta oportunidad.

Cynthia Timberlake-VanHeyst (1999)

Our lives have continued to be richly blessed in so many ways. We just had our second child 3 months ago, a little boy this time, and are rejoicing in the joy that our 2 little ones bring to our home. I've returned to work, part-time, only this past week, which we have found to be a good balance for all of us. My job has continued to expand within the field of International Business at Citigroup. Specifically, I work with regional counterparts (primarily in Mexico City, London, Manila, Tokyo, Sao Paulo) in helping senior management teams prepare for and journey through standardization and globally-driven change. The travel has been intense previously, so I've backed out of international travel until Maya and Ezekiel are older, working remotely in a dedicated basis out of the Tampa-based office. These years I feel very committed to our young family, while my career, even PT, provides a challenging forum for problem-solving and the utilization of the full brain. We are very, very blessed.

Thomas Miller (2003)

Thomas has returned from Brazil and will be starting school to be a chiropractor.

Kari (Feddes) (2005) and Peter Ippel (2006)

Kari works in labor and delivery at St. Mary's, and Peter is currently looking for a teaching job. This coming year they will both be mentors at the Project Neighborhood Home House in partnership with Eastern Ave CRC.

Amanda Lord (2005)

After taking a crash course in teaching from the Chicago Teaching Fellows Program, Amanda has been hired as a Spanish teacher at Fuller Elementary in the Northwick area of Chicago. She is very excited about her new job.

Heidi Wolters (2006)

Heidi and Joshua VerMaire were married in Holland, MI on July 28, 2007. Heidi is currently teaching in San Marcos, CA.
Spanish Professor Studies in Germany

Professor Dwight Ten Huisen was awarded a Fulbright Grant for research at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Germany (one of the best collections of early modern materials in Europe) from August 2006 to January 2007. He writes: "I thoroughly enjoyed being back in Germany. The research facilities were excellent and very accessible, and the academic environment very stimulating. Wolfenbüttel was delightful, and I enjoyed watching my children acquire German, even if it was difficult. We did turn many heads in Europe (one Italian man in Noli congratulated us heartily when he discovered that we had four children). We look forward to receiving visitors from Wolfenbüttel this August."

Professor Ten Huisen returned to Germany in March to attend a conference in Wolfhagen to commemorate the release of a new facsimile edition and the 450th anniversary of the publication of Hans Staden's Wahrhaftige Historia.

Mediterranean Crossings: Interim 2007

When you hear "immigration," the natural inclination is to think about Latin American immigration to the United States. However, this course dealt with a different immigration scenario. In January 2007 Professors Cynthia Slagter and Leslie Matthews (French Department) took a group of 26 students to Spain, Morocco, and France to see first hand the causes and effects of North African immigration to Europe.

In Spain the group visited important sites of the Moorish conquest as well as the contemporary sites of Islamic concentrations in Granada and Barcelona. In Granada our lectures were held in the new mosque, just across the valley from the Alhambra. In Barcelona we met with Christian who were working on the front lines of the immigration scene.

In Morocco the group learned a bit more about the homeland of many of the immigrants to Europe.

In France visits to Marseille, Lyon, and Paris, locations of large Islamic concentrations, allowed students to see the French expression of Islamic immigration. A high point was a visit to a mosque during afternoon prayers.

Seeing immigration in a new context helped students to consider US immigration from a different perspective.

Interim in Argentina (May 22-June 21)

After a long flight, we arrived in Argentina, where we received a hearty welcome from our hosts at the Kairds Center and then headed out to a small evangelical church/community center where we were taught how to tango. Later we visited the Plaza de Mayo to see the mothers of the 'disappeared' marching around the plaza. They started this in the 1970's to protest the disappearance of their sons and daughters who were mostly socially active university students. Today there is a remnant of the original mothers who faithfully march every Thursday and also support other current causes.

During part of our stay we lived with host families. Our time in Argentina also included a visit to the famous Iguazu Falls and some time in the city of Salta.

For more details and photos of our interim visit...
http://argentadvent.blogspot.com
Faculty News

Marilyn Bierling wrote a chapter for the book *Spirituality, Social Justice, and Language Learning*, edited by David Smith and Terry Osborn. The chapter is entitled "Legal and Illegal Immigration: Complex Ethical Issues for the Language Classroom" and was based on the courses on immigration that she taught in fall 2004 and fall 2006. Alumnae Sarah De Young, Ashley Uyaguari, and Kathleen Avila co-wrote another chapter of this book entitled "Of Log Cabins, Fallen Bishops, and Tenacious Parents: (Auto)biographical Narrative and the Spirituality of Language Learning.*

Sandra Cleveinger piloted the new course "Introduction to the Hispanic World I" as a first-ever team-taught course with Professor Kate Vauliere of the History department. Olga Leder can't get enough travel in her life! After directing the Study in Honduras program for the last three years, she has agreed to direct the new Study in the Yucatan program during spring of 2008. Chris McGrath will begin a regular appointment in the Spanish department in 2007-2008. Professor McGrath first taught at Calvin in 1990. He is currently working on his dissertation on the intersection of Caribbean music and literature.

Ed Miller published a translation of the poetry of José Luis García Suárez (see related article). He will be directing the program in Honduras beginning this fall. Karen Miller successfully defended her dissertation "Variable Input and the Acquisition of Plurality in Two Varieties of Spanish." She presented papers at several conferences. But most important was the birth of Sofia Gabriela Cardenas-Miller March 23rd, 2007. She weighed 7 pounds 6 oz.

Marcie Pyper's extensive work on the data and documentation required by the State of Michigan for its review of the teacher education program resulted in a pass and renewed certification for the Spanish Department. She is now gearing up for the process of NCATE certification. She also continues to work on the Elsa Cortina pedagogy project.

Lourdes Rodríguez was blessed by the birth of a second son, Brian Abdiel Lancel on October 11, 2006. He weighed 7 lbs, 8 oz.

Maria Rodriguez continues to work on her dissertation.

Cynthia Slagter published articles in the *Michigan Academician* and the *Journal of Education and Christian Belief*. She completed another stage of the Camino de Santiago this summer and hopes to return next year.

Dwight TenHuisen spent the fall semester and interim in Germany on a Fulbright Grant (see related story). He published a book review, presented papers at several conferences, received tenure and was promoted to Associate Professor. He will direct the Study in Spain program in spring 2008.

Alisa Tigchelaar presented a paper on Golden Age conventual drama in Wales, Great Britain in May. In May she also completed her three-year term as director of the Study in Spain program.

Dianne Zandstra led a May term to Argentina and published a book on Griselda Gambaro.

A Semester in the Yucatán, Mexico Study Abroad Programs Oversubscribed, New Programs

Although the Spanish department conducts Calvin's two largest overseas programs (in Spain since 1983 and in Honduras since 2001), each of these programs has had to turn down qualified applicants in recent years. This year (fall 2006-spring 2007) the Spanish department received 74 applications for the 50 available placements in our advanced study-abroad programs. In addition, the core program in Spain also had more applicants than it could accept. The department has responded to this abundance of riches by launching a temporary solution to what may become a longer-term demand for the off-campus semester programs in Spanish. A one-year program in Mérida, Mexico solves the immediate need and allows time to make sound decisions for the future.

We pleased to announce this new semester-long opportunity for the spring semester of 2008. Those of you who participated in the interim in the Yucatán undoubtedly have fond memories of visits to Mayan ruins, swimming in cenotes, living with Mexican families, and improving your abilities in the Spanish language. Now students will have the opportunity to spend the entire semester in Mérida. Similar to the other two semester programs offered by the Spanish department, in Denia, Spain and Tegucigalpa, Honduras, the students will be immersed in the Spanish language and the culture of the country, they will live with local families and they will be able to complete a full academic load. If you spent the Interim in Mexico and know a current Calvin student who is hoping to study abroad this year, let them know about your experiences and encourage them to consider the Study in Mexico program!
Una experiencia inolvidable Stacy Ladenburger SIS 2007

De niña, siempre quería ir a España para estudiar durante mis años universitarios. Y aunque siempre sabía que iba a hacerlo, no podía imaginar qué buena sería la experiencia y cuánto aprendería.

Mis mejores experiencias durante mi semestre en Denia tratan de las amistades que hice y las conversaciones que tenía con mis amigos españoles. Mi mamá española, Maite, y yo llegamos a ser amigas y me contaba las historias de su vida y compartía su sabiduría conmigo. Compartíamos no solo un piso sino también la vida. Durante Las Fallas de San José, una celebración muy importante en la región de Valencia, me senté con mi amigo Vicente, un viejo pescador, y me explicó la historia de la fiesta.

Aprendí las cosas pequeñas que se puede aprender a través de una amistad, las historias pequeñas de personas distintas, las cosas que han aprendido cada uno durante sus años en el mundo, las razones porque la gente es como es. Estas experiencias y lecciones de la vida son sin precio y no las cambiaría por nada.

Reminiscences Florie VanBaak SIS 2007

As a graduate from the Semester in Spain program, I can attest to the dedication given to the study abroad programs at Calvin College. However, there is an unforeseen benefit that can only be realized after the all-too-soon return home. After returning home the opportunities to reminisce with other students from the program became priceless.

I went out to dinner about two months after my return from Spain with a girl that I became good friends with during our semester abroad. We chose to try out the Spanish restaurant downtown. To our delight the name of every dish on the menu was in Spanish and some ingredient names had been mistranslated into English! The next four hours passed with ease as we told stories of our time abroad and gave our taste buds a chance to remember the role they played in our experience as a whole.

As I sat in my chair taking in the smell of Spanish olives - a delicacy I have come to thoroughly enjoy - I couldn't help but think how my semester abroad broadened my experiences so widely that I will never be able to read "tortilla española" or "paella valenciana" without recalling hundreds of memories, tastes, and lessons from my semester abroad.