Brave New eWorld: The Lafayette College World Languages Portfolio Initiative

The exploration of world literatures, civilizations, and cultures and the languages that represent them are a vital component of the College’s evolving core curriculum and its central mission to foster “the free exchange of ideas” and “nurture the inquiring mind.” However, in a discipline involving the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills as well as knowledge of and familiarity with the myriad aspects of cultures related to the language of study, it can be challenging to determine from class to class the level to which students have acquired communicative competence. Precisely what does it mean to be “fluent” in a language? Our department is exploring the answers to this question through an exciting project: The “La-Folio,” a student-centered electronic portfolio.

The language e-Portfolio is a cutting edge concept that seeks to measure students’ communicative competence and cultural literacy by providing an electronic folder of evidence of language acquisition. In increasing use in United States and European academic institutions, the e-Portfolio is a personalized and responsive/reflective record of development and progress that each student can take from class to class and level to level of language study.

The La-Folio provides students with the opportunity and electronic space to collect creative and analytical works in language and literature classes, select the best samples of these works, and reflect on how together they demonstrate their developing communicative skills and cultural acumen or, in other words, “what students know and what they can do.” Hence, it serves the dual purpose of informing instruction and motivating (continued on page 2)
Dear Alumni, Students, Parents, and Colleagues,

The teaching and learning of foreign languages, cultures, and literatures are, by their very nature, interdisciplinary endeavors and bring together teachers and students from various fields across the campus. Our language and literature programs support a number of area studies that offer major and minor B.A. degrees: Russian and East European studies (Russian); Asian studies (Chinese and Japanese); Jewish studies (Hebrew); Latin American and Caribbean studies (Spanish); classical civilization studies (Latin and Greek); medieval, Renaissance, and early modern studies (French, German, and Spanish); Africana studies (French); and international economics and commerce (French, German, and Spanish). The international affairs program and the international studies and engineering program are supported by all six modern languages offered in our department. The Max Kade Center for German Studies—created in 2002 with a generous grant from the Max Kade Foundation—also adopts an interdisciplinary approach and secures the annual participation of German-speaking writers-in-residence and distinguished professors in the multidisciplinary academic program. In addition to valuable interdisciplinary perspectives, our students are engaged in the creation of their e-Portfolios, which document their personal journey of language-learning. La-Folio, our department’s world languages electronic portfolio initiative, has captivated the imagination of faculty members and students alike. For our teachers, it is an inspiring teaching tool and an effective instrument for assessment. For our students, it is an exciting and comprehensive documentation of their communicative competence and transcultural literacy, which are crucial for success in today’s globalized world.

This newsletter highlights the exciting activities of teachers and students in the our classrooms and beyond. You will also read about faculty scholarship and achievements. Enjoy!

Cordially,

Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger
Professor and Head of Foreign Languages and Literatures

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**LAFAYETTE**

**Foreign Languages & Literatures**

*Foreign Languages & Literatures is produced by the Division of Communications for the Foreign Languages and Literatures Department and is distributed to FLU alumni and students. The department welcomes your comments and letters. Send them to: Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger, Head, Foreign Languages and Literatures, 433 Pardee Hall, Lafayette College, Easton, PA 18042; (610) 330-5255; lambfam@lafayette.edu*

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**FACULTY**

- Bonnie BUTLER – instructor, Spanish
- Ioanna CHATZIDIMITRIOU – instructor, French
- Osvaldo CLEGER – associate professor, Spanish
- Markus DUBISCHAR – associate professor, classics
- Olga Anna DUHL – professor, French
- Sidney DONNELL – associate professor, Spanish
- Denise GALARZA SEPULVEDA – assistant professor, Spanish
- Michelle GEOFFRION-VINCI – associate professor, Spanish
- Naoko IKEGAMI – instructor, Japanese
- Roxanne HALANDE – professor, French
- Margarete LAMB-FAFFELBERGER – professor, German
- Ilana LEVY – instructor, Hebrew
- Edward R. MCDONALD – professor, German
- Jean-Francois ORSZAG – instructor, French
- Rado PRILOCIC – Edwin Oliver Williams Professor of Foreign Languages and Literatures, German, and chair of international affairs program
- Camille QUALITERE – instructor, Spanish
- Man QIN – Fulbright Chinese language teaching assistant
- Leticia ROYES – instructor, Spanish
- Juan ROJO – assistant professor, Spanish
- George ROSA – professor, French
- Valeria SAJEZ – lecturer, Russian
- Richard SHUPP – instructor, Spanish
- Mary TOULOUSE – director of the resource center and instructor, French
- Sufeng XU – visiting assistant professor, Chinese

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**Brave New eWorld**

students. Ultimately, this computerized archive serves as a valuable record of achievement for the Lafayette graduate to share with future employers or graduate schools, both nationally and abroad.

With the support of a grant from the provost’s Fund for Faculty Innovation, the department completed a series of faculty development workshops with the aim of training our faculty in the construction of e-Portfolio-friendly projects contoured to the Lafayette student population.

Keynote speakers were Barbara Cambridge, president of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning; Gary Brown, director of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology at Washington State University; and Cindy Evans, director of the Foreign Language Resource Center at Skidmore College.

**Katherine McFadden ’10,** an international affairs major, says, “The e-Portfolio helped me think about the many aspects of knowing a language. I now focus more on developing skills needed for fluid conversation. I think more about the different types of conversations (emotional, entertaining, formal) and what I need to be comfortable in different situations.”

**Joey Haymaker ’09,** who graduated with an A.B. with majors in Spanish and economics & business, says, “I now have a 3D example of my undergraduate work. This is important because while I may demonstrate in an essay or cover letter how much I have learned, it is completely different to present my e-Portfolio that shows what I am capable of accomplishing.”

**Michael Bellantoni ’10,** a double major in Spanish and economics & business who served an externship in Peru, says, “The e-Portfolio has helped me understand that I have the confidence and tools necessary to participate in international trade. As an econ major, I know the theory of how to make an intelligent business decision.”

**Michelle Geoffrion-Vinci,** associate professor and one of the co-authors of the language e-Portfolio initiative, will share La-Folio as well as our preliminary research results regarding its effectiveness as a teaching and learning strategy at the Patriot League Academic Conference (“Exploring Alternative Pedagogies: What the Best Patriot League Teachers Do”) at Bucknell University in October.

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