When I was a child, I looked forward to the start of another school year with excitement and anticipation. The beginning of the school year signaled new experiences and opportunities: a new teacher, new friends (and the opportunity to re-connect with existing friends), new books to read, and last but certainly not least, new school clothes and a new pair of “school shoes.” As you read this edition of the College of Humanities Newsletter, I hope you will share our excitement about the many new beginnings in the College—including our new Associate Dean, three new academic programs, CSUN’s participation in a national initiative to develop social and personal responsibility in our students, and the campus-wide brand new “Freshman Common Reading Program.”

Included in this issue of the newsletter, you will also find a new feature: the “Alumni Corner.” Our inaugural alumni author, Zeke Zeidler, will surely be known to some of you who may have shared a class with him or worked with him in student government. As you will see, his CSUN degree stood him in good stead for his later career and success. In future issues you will be able to re-connect with other College of Humanities classmates. Finally, I hope some of you will be able to attend all or part of our second annual College of Humanities International Film Festival. The film festival was the brainchild of several of our faculty members who wanted to create an opportunity for community friends and supporters to connect with the College and our students. This year’s theme, “Immigration,” is timely and evocative. We look forward to seeing you!

I joined the CSUN campus community in the Fall of 1996 as I was completing my doctoral dissertation from UCLA on how Japanese-European Americans negotiate their multiple racial ethnic, gender, class, socio-linguistic, and national identities both interpersonally and structurally and simultaneously trying to acclimate to my new professional life as a tenure-track assistant professor. I completed and filed my dissertation that semester but took several more years figuring out what being a university professor at a large, public, modern, urban campus like CSUN was all about.

Although I am a sociologist by disciplinary training, it was my good fortune that my home department, Asian American Studies, was housed in the College of Humanities here at CSUN, along with other ethnic / women’s studies programs and traditional Humanities disciplines, including Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures (since my undergraduate degrees are in Japanese Studies, Language, and Literature). I soon learned that the faculty and students in our College have been and continue to be engaged in exciting, dynamic, and innovative work from a variety of disciplinary/interdisciplinary perspectives, examining and studying, in essence what it means “to be human” in an increasingly globally and geo-politically complicated world.

As I reflect upon the impact of our previous Associate Deans of the past eleven years, I feel a tremendous sense of pride and honor to be following in their footsteps. Among my many roles and responsibilities will be to help shepherd our College curriculum through the various levels of the university structure, to work closely with our College’s advisement teams in the EOP Student Center and Liberal Studies program, and to better serve our students, faculty, and communities. I hope to assist our College with its ongoing commitment to and practice of learning-centeredness and quality education by continuing our peer mentoring, student retention, and alternative assessment programs. One of my passions is to work with programs across our campus to develop College of Humanities-based international programs that would benefit our students, faculty, and academic units here at CSUN and abroad, as well as to promote international/intercultural learning exchanges.

I am thrilled to be part of CSUN’s College of Humanities, under the leadership of Dean Elizabeth Say, and along with our Administrative Council, faculty and staff. It’s very exciting to be part of a team of dedicated educators committed to nurturing a “community of learners” and “global citizens.” through the scholarly, critical examination and practice of the Humanities.
CSUN Teams Attends Summer Institute in Vermont

A seven-member CSUN team from across campus attended a five-day Summer Institute in Vermont this August, sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) and designed to help the University’s delegation to explore ways to increase the personal and social responsibility of its students.

The Institute was linked to a $25,000 grant from AACU to the Colleges of Humanities that would allow CSUN to participate in its Core Commitments project. CSUN is one of only 23 campuses selected to participate in the highly competitive grant program from over 120 applicants.

Core Commitments is designed to help the participating campuses to develop purposeful, transparent and developmental pathways for students to become more responsible to themselves and to others both during and after college. It encompasses such subjects as academic honesty, the dangers of binge drinking and the use of contemporary issues to promote student involvement in community improvement. Throughout the year, CSUN students will be given opportunities to explore these themes both in and out of the classroom.

CSUN’s team leader Adam Swenson, Assistant Professor of Philosophy said he valued the opportunity to spend planning time with CSUN colleagues from across campus in a cell phone and e-mail free environment. “We came together to identify specific areas that would be our primary targets during the 2007-2008 academic year. We decided to focus on one critical issue of personal responsibility -- the elimination of cheating and plagiarism, and on one of social responsibility -- fostering a shared commitment toward elimination of global warming,” Swenson said.

CSUN’s plan has three components:

1. The addition of new curricular components (i.e. essays, readings, lecture elements) into General Education Basic Subjects Courses (Freshman Composition and Critical Reasoning);
2. The creation of a new Certificate of Achievement Program housed in the College of Humanities, that will motivate students to take 15 units of courses that include aspects of personal or social responsibility. Six of these units will be in Basic Subjects, six in upper division General Education courses and three will be devoted to community service-learning or independent study projects that contribute to improving the quality of life in our local, national or global community.
3. Promotion of student awareness of personal and social responsibility issues through co-curricular activities such as speakers, new student orientation themes and activities sponsored by clubs and organizations and Student Affairs.

Other members of CSUN leadership team include: Anne Kellenberger and Sharon Kollmeyer, lecturers in English; Roberta Orona-Cordova, Associate Professor of Chicano/a Studies; Maureen Rubin, Director of Undergraduate Studies; Johnie Scott, Associate Professor of Pan-African Studies; Shelly Thompson, Director of the EOP/Student Service Center in the College of Humanities; and William Watkins, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students.

Over the five days of the institute, CSUN faculty, staff and administrators attended a variety of cross-institutional workshops and plenary sessions with national leaders that allowed the CSUN team to explore ideas and discuss strategies for assuring that all CSUN students grasp and use ethical, civic and moral frameworks throughout their university and professional lives.

Queer Studies: Envisioning a Minor

What is normative? Who benefits from maintaining normative ideas about gender? Why is non-normative sexuality perceived as so threatening? What happens to communities that do not conform to these norms? What are the new articulations of gender, sexuality, and community that become possible when we challenge normativity? These are just some of the questions that a Queer Studies minor might grapple with. The relevance of these questions to the lives of all peoples, queer and otherwise, is profound because they go to the very heart of our assumptions about how we embody our gender, who we love, and how we walk in a transcultural world with ambiguous borders and identities.

The Queer Studies Program at CSUN is being envisioned as an interdisciplinary minor that questions normative constructions of sexuality and gender. The program explores how heterosexism, heteronormativity and transphobia intersect and collide with national, ethnic, racial, class and other identifications.

continued on next page
New Minor in Writing and Rhetoric

Beginning in Spring, 2008, the English department will offer a 18 unit minor in Writing and Rhetoric which can benefit students both academically and professionally. The new minor is intended for students who wish to improve their writing, speaking, and technological skills and students who desire successful careers and a competitive edge in the professional world—future teachers, lawyers, engineers, scientists, and business executives—all of whom will need a rhetorical understanding of the vast changes that have already begun to take place in the public and private sector. Rhetorical awareness gives today’s global citizen profound insight into shifting cultural, political, and technological trends, and the new minor will help students across the disciplines understand connections between rhetoric, literacy and culture, as well as develop expertise in a variety of print and electronic genres.

To minor in Writing and Rhetoric, students will complete four courses in the English Department: English 306, “Report Writing,” English 407, “Composition and the Professions”, English 455, “Literacy Rhetoric and Culture,” and English 495, an Internship program oriented toward students with professional goals, both those intending to be teachers and those aiming toward other professions. English 455, “Literacy, Rhetoric and Culture,” is a new course developed specifically for the new minor. The course examines the status of current and past theories of literacy, the nature of literacy itself, connections between rhetoric and literacy, the ways literacy is shared and used by individuals, families and cultures, and the political, social, and personal ramifications of literacy. Other issues investigated and discussed in the course will include the meaning of literacy in our culture, the role of rhetoric in creating culture, and the relationship between literacy and power. The department is also in the process of developing several other new courses that will become part of the new minor, including one tentatively titled, “Writing and Technology.”

The Internship Program will have two professional strands: Option #1, intended for students aiming toward a variety of professions, and Option #2, intended for students aiming to become teachers. Students who select Option #1 will be assigned to a sponsoring organization where they will work as writers. They will then complete a portfolio of writing done for the sponsor and a term paper that analyzes that experience. Students who select Option #2 will be assigned to an elementary or secondary school, where they will observe how theories of writing and literacy are implemented. They will keep a journal and write a term paper that analyzes that experience.

The additional six units for completing the minor consists of electives that can be taken in a number of other departments, including Business, Marketing, Chicano/a Studies, Communications, English, Journalism, and Pan African Studies, as well as the English department. This interdisciplinary focus is likely to make the minor attractive to students across the curriculum, and several departments have already indicated their desire for students to select this minor as a means of fostering professional development. It is expected that this linkage with other departments will generate interdisciplinary connections that will prove valuable for both students and faculty.

Queer Studies continued

Envisioning a minor in Queer Studies as one way to create a community of learners that really grapples with issues of diversity, gender, sexuality and social justice, Dean Elizabeth Say called together a committee of professors from departments across the College to develop the minor last year. The committee was chaired by Gina Masequesmay (Asian American Studies), and included Elizabeth Adams (Liberal Studies), Ian Barnard (English), Ramon Garcia (Chicano/a Studies), Jacob Hale (Philosophy), Leilani Hall (English), and Sheena Malhotra (Women's Studies). The committee has recommended a 6 course minor which focuses on histories, contemporary experiences, and community-based knowledges of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, intersexed people, queers, and others who occupy non-heterosexist and non-normative gender positionailities. Students in the Queer Studies Minor would take three core required courses and three electives. The minor was approved by the Academic Council of the College of Humanities in Spring, 2007. It is pending approval by EPC. If approved, it would be offered officially as a minor starting in the Fall of 2008.

The first of the three core courses in the minor, “Perspectives in Queer Studies” is designed to provide a theoretical foundation and introduction to Queer Studies that can also serve as a stand-alone course for interested students outside the minor. The other co-gateway course is entitled, “LA in Transit: Communities, Organizations and Politics.” This course provides students with a broad understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexed, and queer communities, organizations and politics in Los Angeles. In addition, students will take three elective courses in consultation with faculty in the program. The final core course offered in the minor is the Queer Studies Senior Capstone class. This is where students will develop theoretically informed individualized research, activist or service learning projects in Queer Studies.

Given that Queer Studies has long been at the cutting edge of critical scholarship, the minor offers an exciting opportunity for CSUN to become a nationally recognized academic home for students and scholars interested in studying the intellectual, cultural and material conditions that have shaped our understandings of sexuality and gender variation. It will be a safe space for students and faculty to develop community, to engage dialogues that generate resistant theories and practices and to envision new articulations of sexuality and gender. What becomes possible when we challenge normativity? We invite you to join us, to discover and design the answers.
One Campus, One Book: 
CSUN’s Fall 2007 Freshman Common Reading Program

This fall’s bumper crop of CSUN freshmen—4117 students and counting—will be participating in the campus’s first-ever Freshman Convocation on September 6, a brand new tradition that will welcome them into the academic and intellectual community that is at the heart of the university. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., will speak on “Our Environmental Destiny”; Jessica Beach, CSUN’s 2007 Wolfson Scholar, will reflect on her years as a dedicated and successful student-athlete; and at the end of the ceremony, President Koester will formally invite the freshmen to ascend the Oviatt Library Grand Staircase in their new role as members of the academy. By the time this newsletter is printed, the ceremony will be part of University history. But at least one part of the Freshman Convocation just will be getting under way: the Freshman Common Reading Program.

This program, “One Campus, One Book,” is a pilot project which invites faculty teaching freshman-level classes to focus a portion of their fall class meetings on a single book: The Things They Carried by Tim O’Brien. The Things They Carried is a work of fiction based in part on the author’s year as an American soldier in Vietnam. Its twenty-two stories explore the main character’s life at key moments from childhood through the war and beyond. If you’re considering whether to read O’Brien’s book yourself, dive into the first story, which is the title story (“The Things They Carried”), and if you’re still not sure, skip ahead to the final story, “The Lives of the Dead.” Both are powerful, moving narratives that represent the range and depth of the book as a whole.

To launch the Common Reading Program on campus, copies of the book were made available to all interested faculty, staff, and administrators beginning early last spring. Sample assignments and discussion topics were posted on CSUN’s Common Reading website: http://www.csun.edu/afye/CommonRead.html

Even before classes began, the New Student Orientation program used The Things They Carried as the anchor text for orientation leader training. The Matador Bookstore ordered nearly 1000 copies of the book. (And even so, they ran out during the first week of classes.) President Koester read the book over the summer and recommended it to the campus community at the conclusion of her Convocation Address just before classes began. And freshman students began reading the book as part of their regularly assigned work in courses like freshman composition, Political Science 155, Religious Studies 100, and University 100, the Freshman Seminar.

Oviatt Library mounted an exhibit at the end of August in the main lobby featuring The Things They Carried. It offers an overview of late-1960s American culture and includes snapshots of campus life at the time (CSUN was still San Fernando Valley State College) as well as historic photographs taken in 1968 when presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Sr., spoke to a crowd of 10,000 on the bookstore lawn. The Center for Ethics and Values (in partnership with the Department of Philosophy) will present a half-day program on September 19 called "A Look Back at the Vietnam War with special attention to Tim O’Brien's The Things They Carried." And faculty across campus are incorporating the book into assignments and projects ranging from argument-based essays in freshman composition, to case study discussions of critical thinking and ethics in University 100, to lessons about politics and government in political science classes.

If this pilot program succeeds—and all signs suggest that it will—a group of interested and committed faculty, staff, and administrators will soon start the process of selecting the title for the 2008 Common Reading. Join the discussion, or just read along on your own:

http://www.csun.edu/afye/2008suggestedtitles.html

With a little luck, next year’s book will reflect not only the theme of the 2008 Freshman Convocation but also dovetail with both the campus-wide Speak Your Mind series as well as the CORE Commitment project of the College of Humanities. We might have a movie series, too; and a freshman essay competition, and a large-scale multi-class art project. What about a play reflecting the book’s subject matter as part of the 2008-2009 Theatre CSUN series? and a campus visit by the book’s author? There could even be a book discussion group for former freshmen, as well as a sister program for the surrounding community at the Northridge Public Library. You get the picture. And you know what’s missing: you! Join us: for more information, call Dr. Cheryl Spector at (818) 677-6535 or contact her by email: cheryl.spector@csun.edu

Excerpt from The Things They Carried

“They carried all the emotional baggage of men who might die. Grief, terror, love, longing—these were intangibles, but the intangibles had their own mass and specific gravity, they had tangible weight. They carried shameful memories. They carried the common secret of cowardice barely restrained, the instinct to run or freeze or hide, and in many respects this was the heaviest burden of all, for it could never be put down, it required perfect balance and perfect posture. They carried their reputations.”

—Tim O’Brien
The Languages and Cultures Major

The Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures has launched its recently established Languages and Cultures Major with Concentrations in Armenian, French, German, Italian, or Japanese. The major requires an intensive study of a language combined with comparative cultures to prepare students for international careers in the global environment and supports the College of Humanities Mission to "explore and value the diversities of cultures, thought, perspectives, literatures and languages of humanity."

The first two students graduated with the Language and Cultures minor in 2007, and there are currently over 30 declared majors. The Department celebrated the creation of the new major in April, where Dean Elizabeth Say and Associate Dean Teresa León-Williams congratulated students, family and faculty members. Two students who returned from the study abroad program shared their experiences.

The Languages and Cultures Major is enhanced by a variety of scholarships and study abroad opportunities. Many of the Languages and Cultures majors will also take advantage of the study abroad opportunities offered by the CSU and California State University, Northridge. Six students have returned from a year abroad in France, and this year two students are studying in Aix-en-Provence. Seventeen students have returned from Italy, and six more are going this year. Nine students studied in Japan on exchange programs last year, and eleven students are going this year. Five of the students will go on an all-expense-paid semester of study with the CSUN-Tokai University Exchange Program. Both last year and this year, one of the four students studying at Ryukoku University in Kyoto was selected to receive a prestigious Japanese government scholarship.

CSUN is host to some 300 students from Japan, the largest contingency of international students on campus. The Japanese Student Association operates a Language Exchange Program that meets twice-weekly with CSUN students studying Japanese. In April the JSA also hosted Japan Culture Day, including a Japanese drum performance by the CSUN Jishin Taiko Ensemble. The Japanese Section hosted a photo exhibition titled "Colors of Japan" and a performance of taiko drum, shamisen guitar, and shinobue flute by AUN, a musical group from Japan. During the Spring semester, students taking the course Traditional Japanese Culture participated in a tea ceremony at Master Soshin Iinuma’s teahouse.

 Liberal Studies Inaugural Conference

On September 29th, the Liberal Studies Program hosted an inaugural conference on the CSUN campus. The conference—"Future Teachers Making a Difference in Children’s Future"—began with a keynote speech by Dr. Michael Spagna, Michael D. Eisner Chair and Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning. After Dr. Spagna’s talk, Liberal Studies students had the opportunity to attend two sets of break-out sessions.

Topics in the break-out sessions focused on a variety of issues. Some were engaged with structures and practices for future classroom teaching like one led by Robin Tallas Mlynarnik, an experienced classroom teacher and CSUN faculty member, which considered the secrets to effective classroom management skills for students early in the Liberal Studies Program. Tony Osumi, a LAUSD teacher, helped future teachers understand how to create effective classroom community both in the school and beyond. Ross Berg, a Career Counselor, and Carol Weiner, CSUN recruitment coordinator for LAUSD, offered tips on how to have a successful job search in the education field.

Graduates of the Liberal Studies Integrated Teacher Education Program (ITEP) provided their perspectives on that crucial first year of teaching. Tina Zaman-Suwarmo, Christina Hobbs, and Christina Riggs lead this session. Bonnie Crawford, the Director of CSUN’s Credential Office and Doug Johnson, a Credential Advisor, provided guidance to students interested in pursuing graduate or post-baccalaureate credential work in the Michael D. Eisner College of Education. The LAUSD Career Ladder Program was the focus of a session presented by Steve Brandick, that program’s director.

Other workshops focused on a range of applications of subject matter to the classroom and beyond. Professors Sue Sears and Sharon Klein offered highlights of emerging issues around literacy for young and developing readers. Joel Zeitlin and Jerry Gold, both CSUN Math professors, presented some guidance on how to teach math and how to understand how children comprehend math.

Dance and music infused the session offered by Terry Sweeting and Mary Schliff. The focus of that session was arts literacy. Professors Kathy Peckham-Hardin and Sally Spencer offered a session on working with students with special needs.

There were information booths from the Teacher Curriculum Center at the Oviatt Library, the CSU Education Alumni Association, and the LAUSD Career Ladder program. The Liberal Studies Program would like to acknowledge the support of Lakeshore Learning and the Matador Bookstore.

More than 150 students attended the event. Provost Harry Hellenbrand and Dean Elizabeth Say were on hand to welcome students and offer their support to the conference. Based on the positive feedback received during the event we believe this is the beginning of many more Liberal Studies conferences.
I would like to thank Dean Say for graciously welcoming me back into the CSUN community a couple of years ago and for asking me to write this column. Dean Say had noticed an article in the alumni magazine in which I acknowledged the major foundational role my CSUN education has played in all of my subsequent endeavors, from law school to school board member, to attorney representing abused/neglected children and their parents, to my current role as a superior court judge.

At the start of my college education, like most first year students, I wasn’t sure what I wanted as a career path. My first major was psychology. Although my preference would have been theatre, my father thought better of it. The psychology curriculum turned out to be a little too science-based for me, so I later did become a theatre major. But it wasn’t until I was exposed to a “Study of Drama” class through the English department that I was reminded how much I enjoyed literary analysis. It also didn’t hurt, as I had learned previously, that writing came easy to me, sitting, for example, on my dorm room bed with my typewriter at 8am, cranking out a paper for a 9am class. (Sorry, Dean Say, but I had to admit that.)

I finally graduated from CSUN in 1987 with a B.A., having majored in English literature and minored in Women’s Studies. The English Department honed analytical skills that were first sparked for me in high school English classes. The study of literature teaches students to look at a piece of writing to find its apparent themes and messages. But that discipline also teaches them to look deeper – using tools such as allusion, period references, and even instinct – to search out hidden meaning. Those skills definitely come in handy in a career in which decisions must be made based on an analysis of the law and how it applies to different fact patterns – to people’s lives.

As a multi-disciplinary program, the Women’s Studies Department exposed me to other humanities curricula, including Chicano Studies, Pan-African Studies, Anthropology, and Sociology, all of which emphasized the need to question what we are told and to take an active role in shaping society. Whether studying “A Room of One’s Own” by Virginia Woolf, the poem “Diving into the Wreck” by Adrienne Rich, or “A People’s History of the United States” by Howard Zinn, an underlying universal message is that mainstream history texts are written in a narrow and exclusionary manner. The logical conclusion is that it is left to us to question our sources of information, be constantly vigilant, and serve as beacons of a larger, more inclusive truth. This is at the core of my involvement in training judges and court staff to ensure fairness in the justice system.

And finally, my experience in student government, culminating in my year as president of the Associated Students, sharpened my political and organizational skills. Four elections later, after receiving 1.2 million votes in the run-off for Superior Court Judge in Los Angeles County, I think that I can safely say that those skills have definitely come in handy.

As a final note, I would like to acknowledge several professors and staff, many of whom are still at CSUN, who had a defining impact on me: Rudy Acuna, Jane Bayes, Elizabeth Berry, Kenon Breazeale, Howard Happ, Eloise Klein Healy, Leroy Jeters, Pat Nicholson, Mitzi Parker, Barbara Rhodes, David Rodriguez, and Arlene Stiebel. I took classes with some of them, others served as personal and/or political mentors, and some served in all of those roles. I will always be deeply indebted ... and remain in awe.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge D. Zeke Zeidler (B.A. in English, 1987)

Alumni Corner

How can you help support the College of Humanities?

Donate! All donations go directly into programming for the college.
Volunteer! Call the Dean’s office at 818/677-3301 for opportunities.
Attend events! Check the events calendar on our website and give us your feedback.
Join our college email list! Send an email to noreen.galvin@csun.edu if you would like to join.
Drop by! The Office of the Dean is located on the fourth floor of Sierra Hall, suite 461.
SAVE THE DATE!
Join us for the 2nd Annual College of Humanities International Film Festival
This event is free and open to the public

California State University
Northridge

2007 College of Humanities International Film Festival

Immigration

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 2, 2007
ARMER SCREENING ROOM
Marzetti Hall, California State University, Northridge
10:00 am—10:00 pm
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The Mission of the College of Humanities is to create a community of learners who...

- Explore and value the diversities of cultures, thought, perspectives, literatures and languages of humanity;
- Critically reflect on and analyze multiple dimensions of human identity and experience;
- Contribute to scholarship and creative production and innovation, and
- Act as responsible global citizens committed to principles of freedom, equality, justice and participatory democracy.