

WCUSPANISH GRADUATION PROFILES

The Spanish Program is proud of the students graduating this May:

Jesse Burnett

Double major: Spanish and International Studies

Minor: Hospitality and Tourism

Where do you call home?

I live in the small community of Hendersonville, which holds cute festivals and loves their music played downtown at nights during the summer time.

What are your plans after graduation?

I plan on taking a year off from school and hopefully taking an interesting trip to Asia for a few months! I want to be a full time missionary. I hope to do some freelance translating in my down time to not lose my proficiency in Spanish. I have also traveled to Mazatlán (Mexico) twice in the past two years, and the people with me always ask me to interpret for them.

Tell us a meaningful Spanish-related story.

During my last trip to towns outside of Mazatlán, we were with a group of locals and one of the teenagers there was asking us questions. He wanted to know more about English to hopefully make it to the United States one day to work in politics. One of the sweetest questions he asked us was how to pray in English. After going back to my hotel room that night and having a debriefing time with my team, I decided that I would give him my Bible with parallel translation, which shows Spanish and English right next to each other. I highlighted the Lord's Prayer for him. When I gave it to him, he cried. He noticed I highlighted the prayer, and we both said it in Spanish, then he asked me to teach it to him in English. We practiced word for word what it said in English. One of my team members also was able to capture this moment in a picture, and to this day, looking at that photo still puts tears in my eyes. *(Photo at right.)*



Any advice for students learning Spanish now?

Graduation for me is going to be a difficult time because graduating was the one thing my dad was hoping to see. Instead, my dad passed away in January this year. The knowledge that he wanted this so badly for me is the only reason why I am pulling through and graduating on time with both of my majors. No matter what life throws at you, if you find the willpower and the determination, anything is possible. Just take my story for an example.

Andrew Goodman

Double major: Spanish and International Studies

Where do you call home?

I'm from Salisbury, North Carolina.

What are your plans after graduation?

I will be moving to Concord/Charlotte with my boyfriend in anticipation of starting grad school in August.

How do you plan to use Spanish? How do you use it now?

I plan to use Spanish more in my Master's Program (and hopefully a research position!). Right now, I use it to talk to Hispanic friends and read books.

Tell us a meaningful Spanish-related story.

My most eventful one was having to communicate with a Valencian host family on a daily basis and how some things didn't translate (*The Sound of Music* in Spain is *Sonrisas y Lagrimas*, or "smiles and tears").

Any advice for students learning Spanish now?

Force yourself to read, listen to music, and converse with others in Spanish. You'll never be fluent unless you make that extra step!

Victoria Simmons

Double major: Spanish and Fine Arts

Where do you call home?

I'm originally from Winston Salem but now call the mountains of western North Carolina my home.

What are your plans after graduation?

I will be traveling cross country on a motorcycle and visiting various people and places across the US (like Che Guevara's [Motorcycle Diaries](#)).

How do you plan to use Spanish?

I plan to use my Spanish major to teach and translate in the public school system.

Tell us a meaningful Spanish-related story.

I wish I had only one story but to tell the truth, I have been so impacted by the love of Spanish-speaking people that I don't know if I could narrow it down to one story. The most recent happened just last week. Several of my dance students are Hispanic and it was picture day. The parents of my students don't speak any English, and so I had the opportunity to really sit down and talk with them about their girls and how wonderful they were doing in class. They were taken aback by the fact that I spoke Spanish and thanked me for taking the time to let them know that their daughters were excellent students and ballerinas.

Any advice for students learning Spanish now?

Get involved! The best practice is being immersed in the language and culture. I would also highly suggest studying abroad. Not only does it greatly improve your speaking and listening comprehension, it is also an incredible experience!



Allison and Anna Ashbaugh

Double major: Spanish and Psychology

Minor: Health Studies

Where do you call home?

Kannapolis, North Carolina.

What are your plans after graduation?

We are very excited about attending nursing school at the Cabarrus College of Health Sciences Fall semester of 2017 back home.

How will you use Spanish? How do you use it now?

We plan on using our Spanish with Spanish-speaking patients in the hospital. Often, when people are in the Hospital, it can be a frightening and overwhelming experience. It brings us happiness to know that we will be able to provide an added level of comfort for patients by being able to communicate with them in their native language. We have many native friends who enjoy conversing with us in their native language and also enjoy practicing our Spanish when ordering food in Mexican restaurants. Occasionally we attend Spanish church, and during the summer we like to use Spanish when working as Certified Nursing Assistants in the nursing home.

Tell us a meaningful Spanish-related story.

We never imagined graduating with a Spanish degree. We took a few courses in high school and enjoyed it, but we really fell in love with the language after taking a class with Dr. Lori Oxford our sophomore year at Western. She lovingly encouraged us to continue taking Spanish classes, and before long, the Spanish department became a home. Not only did Lori convince us to become a part of "team Spanish," but shortly after, we found ourselves following her halfway across the world to Valencia, Spain. Valencia was an amazing opportunity and a turning point for us. We encourage anyone learning an additional language to consider studying abroad at least once. While in Valencia, allowing ourselves to become completely immersed in a true Spanish environment helped us to enrich our understanding of the language. It was an exciting, very educational (but fun), and rewarding experience that made all the difference in our speaking and comprehension skills. We are beyond thankful for the opportunities the Spanish department has given us and the impact that Lori Oxford has had on our life. In addition to Lori Oxford, the faculty and staff in the Spanish department here at WCU are a special group of people devoted to helping students find success in not only learning a different language but also learning to appreciate different cultures.

Any advice for students learning Spanish now?

Spanish can be an intimidating degree, but practice really does make perfect. Often, people are uncomfortable when trying to speak Spanish in front of others from fear of making mistakes. However, making mistakes are a part of the process that helps you advance to the next level. Don't be afraid to speak out. The weekly *tertulias* are a wonderful opportunity and comfortable environment to help you overcome speaking anxieties.

Halie Kervaski

Double major: Spanish and Criminal Justice

Where do you call home?

Jacksonville, North Carolina, right on the beach.

What are your plans after graduation?

I've gone to several job interviews for different state and federal agencies. They usually take several months to a year to complete, so if any are successful I will likely spend weeks or months in interviews and intricate background checks, or even begin Academy for that agency. If not, I will still be searching and applying to law enforcement jobs and probably take up scuba diving again. North Carolina coasts have some of the best shipwreck yards around. Currently, I am joining Border Patrol and the US Capitol Police.

How do you plan to use Spanish? How do you use it now?

I plan to use Spanish in whichever agency I end up with to ensure that Spanish-speaking victims and offenders are not misunderstood or that no critical information is lost. As a first responder, I will be early on the scene for victims or witnesses, and in times of great stress or confusion we resort to our native language. I want to be able to gather all useful information without making a Spanish speaker feel obligated to speak a second language at such a critical time, thus bridging the gap between citizens and officers and strengthening community trust in rural areas. My family lives in Rota, Spain, and when I travel to visit my family there, I use it to help my family communicate better. Even though a lot of people in Spain speak English, speaking Spanish is more effective than playing charades with two languages.

Tell us a meaningful Spanish-related story.

Knowing Spanish has opened not only job opportunities, but also relationships to me over the last year. There was a girl I was interested in getting to know better, but English was her third language, and her first two were Portuguese and Spanish. We communicated in English well enough, but when we would try to find words or phrases that didn't translate easily from one language to another, we would use Spanish. For example, I spent hours trying to describe a kite to her and she had no idea what I was talking about. When I explained it again to her in Spanish she was finally able to understand and told me what it meant in Portuguese. This happened many times including trying to describe a seal. Random, right? Spanish acted as a literal bridge between our languages on more than one occasion, and it was the most surprising use I got from knowing Spanish. Sure, you can communicate at the airports and bars a lot easier, but did you know it could help you make connections with people who aren't even native Spanish speakers? I didn't.

Any advice for students learning Spanish now?

It has been phenomenal to be a part of the Spanish Program at WCU. I hated Spanish in high school and dreaded having to learn it in college. At the time, I didn't even know the benefit of knowing it for law enforcement. Eventually, after having Profe Fisher and the insane patience and understanding of Alberto Centeno-Pulido, I was convinced of its value in my future career. It wasn't until I had Lori Oxford and Santiago García-Castañón that I realized I was really interested in knowing this language just so I can know and appreciate these cultures better. Learning about the struggles and successes of countries such as Mexico, to which I have been blind all my life, even after living on the border, was mind blowing. Learning that Spain wasn't just a place that olives came from, but it was formerly one of the most powerful empires of the world, was something I never would have thought about. Traveling to Valencia, a city I had never even heard of, and having made such lasting and meaningful relationships with not just the students but with my host family (Gracias Silvia y Tía <3), and getting to know more about Lori and Alberto was just incredible. Seeing Santiago's passions about Spanish literature inspired me to look into Spanish poetry and short stories more, whereas before I would brush them aside as too complicated to try to understand. Poetry in Spanish is beautiful. From Fisher's class I learned to respect translation as extremely difficult and understood how it plays a HUGE part in making a global world that can share our literature and religious teachings across a globe. I can honestly say, if it weren't for these amazing professors, I would never have learned to love Spanish that way I do, or feel motivation to succeed at it just to show them how much I appreciate all that they do for us.



Michaila Jolly

Double major: Spanish and Elementary Education

Where do you call home?

Morganton, North Carolina.

How do you plan to use Spanish?

After I graduate and get married, I want to help ESL students by using my Spanish speaking ability to communicate with students and parents. Through this knowledge of the Spanish language my students will be able to make connections from their first language to English.

How do you use it now?

Throughout my college years, I have been able to use Spanish in many different ways. Recently, I

have been using my Spanish to communicate with parents at the school where I am student teaching. I have interpreted at parent teacher conferences, events at the school, and for the office staff. I have also helped translate communication to and from parents as well as official documents and other information for them.

Tell us a meaningful Spanish-related story.

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to go on a missions trip to Guatemala. This experience completely changed my life. I was able to experience the culture of the people in Chajul, Guatemala. These people were so happy and grateful for everything that they had and everything that we helped do for them. I worked specifically with the children, who were amazing. They were so sweet and ate up any affection they received. There was one boy named Thomas. He went to our VBS every morning and would help in our medical center in the evening. He always would be by my side and would always try to help in any way that he could. When I had to say goodbye, my heart was broken. I have been trying to go back, but have not been able to. I plan on going back and going to more countries for mission work. This opened my eyes to parts of Spanish-speaking cultures, language and people.

Any advice for students learning Spanish now?

Get involved! The best practice is being immersed in the language and culture. I would also highly suggest to study abroad. Not only does it greatly improve your speaking and listening comprehension, it is also an incredible experience!

Kristina Shostak

Major: Spanish

Minor: TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language)

Where do you call home?

I call Belarus and Asheville, North Carolina my homes. Because I was born outside the States and moved here at age eight, I consider myself a European (Belarusian) and an American.

What are your plans after graduation?

I will continue to work at my current job until next March, when I will be taking my state exams to become a certified Spanish interpreter.

How do you plan to use Spanish? How do you use it now?

I will always use Spanish after I graduate. Many of my friends and some of my family members are native Spanish speakers, speaking with them on daily basis is something I am looking forward to doing. Also, at my current job (Ross), I serve as one of three Spanish speakers who are able to interpret if needed. I use the Spanish that I know right now to help my customers at Ross to comprehend anything they might not understand, and I have also volunteered as a Spanish interpreter at the Good Samaritan Clinic in Sylva.

Tell us a meaningful Spanish-related story.

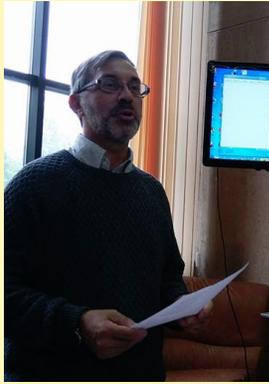
Being raised as a multilingual was already an accomplishment for me, but when I decided to volunteer at the Good Samaritan clinic I realized how many people need help because of such a huge language barrier. On my first day at the clinic, the interpreter that I was shadowing told me that I would start interpreting by the end of the day; I smiled and told him that I would just like to shadow him that day and maybe the next week I would start. A week passed and I was back at the clinic. A different interpreter was assigned for that day, and they were running late, with a few Spanish speaking patients that needed to be checked in already. The staff knew that I was volunteering as a Spanish interpreter and asked me to check in the patients with a nurse. I was terrified and with the first question that a nurse asked me made me stop for a second because I had forgotten how to say some of the words. By the end of the day, though, I was checking in patients and even had a chance to help interpret for a doctor. I had to step out of my comfort zone in order to help others and I am so happy that I did that.

Any advice for students learning Spanish now?

One of the many things I have learned being part of the Spanish program at WCU is that taking that one extra step never hurt anyone. If you have an opportunity to go and serve the Spanish-speaking community, do it! It will help in so many ways.



The following students are also graduating with a Spanish B.A. this semester: **Hernán Álvarez-Aguirre, Megan Burnette, Daniela Gamboa, Darién Hewett, Laurissa Laudenslager, Chase McIntyre, Elizabeth Piña, Hannah Rabideau, and Judia Watson. ¡Felicidades!**



Santiago García-Castañón, Professor of Spanish in the Department of World Languages, just returned from Bulgaria where he gave the lecture on “*Miguel de Cervantes y su mundo*” as a guest speaker at the University of Sofia, and a reading of his own poetry at the same institution. He also presented “*El español en la enseñanza universitaria de los EE UU: retos y oportunidades*” at the Encuentro de Profesores de Español en Bulgaria, an event organized by the Spanish Embassy and the Cervantes Institute of Sofia.

Additionally, a selection of Santiago’s poetry has been translated into Bulgarian and will be published in the next few months.

Earlier this semester, Santiago was also invited to the Dominican Republic to be part of the “*Grito de Mujer*” International Poetry and Art Festival. During his five-day stay, he participated in three poetry readings in Punta Cana, Santo Domingo, and San Pedro de Macorís, and gave two lectures on *Don Quixote*, at the Politécnico Ann y Ted Keel, in Punta Cana, and at the Liceo Gerardo Jansen, in Higüey.



Garrett Fisher traveled to San José and to Cartago, Costa Rica in March for separate events. He led a workshop titled “*Pura pedagogía: herramientas didácticas para mantener interés y participación en cursos de lenguas*” (“Pure Pedagogy: Educational Tools to Maintain Engagement in Language Courses”) and gave a lecture called “Talk to Me: How to Encourage Conversation and Evaluate Simultaneously with Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling.”

Do you know a student in the Spanish program or an alumna or alumnus with an interesting story? Is there an event of interest to Spanish study that we should announce here? Let us know! Contact the [Spanish Program coordinator](#) with your news.

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¡Muchas gracias!