Language Department hosts 33rd annual Foreign Language Contest for regional high schoolers

Each year, the Department of Modern Foreign Languages invites high school students from across the region to compete in events in languages other than English. The students prove their mettle by participating in skits, performing music, reciting poetry, speaking extemporaneously, explaining tasks (“how-to”), describing props (“show-and-tell”) and battling in quiz bowls, separated for native and non-native speakers.

On March 17, WCU welcomed students and teachers from Tuscola, Robbinsville, North Henderson, Henderson County Early College, Franklin, Carolina Day School, Pisgah, and Towns County (Hiawassee, Georgia). WCU faculty and students as well as some volunteers from the local community worked to judge the students’ performances in their respective events and to help students stay on track when moving from event to event.

The department’s administrative associate, Melissa Allen, who coordinates every detail of the event, said that this year “Some of the participating high schools have even asked us to expand the contest by adding more events in different languages.” The logistics of an expansion are complicated, given that the department already requests volunteers from the university community to help with events in underserved languages, but Allen is hopeful that future contests will be able to accommodate the increased interest and participation.

from left: Brittany Goodman, Casey Trejo, Michaila Jolly and Valeria Bittner-Kurth (WCU Spanish student volunteers); Ariel Schnell and Thomas Allison (WCU Spanish student volunteers); a prop used in the skit event.
Where are you from?
I'm from Wake Forest, NC. I've lived in a couple of other countries for brief periods of time. I lived in Viña del Mar, Chile, for six months!

What are some places you have traveled?
I've studied abroad in four different countries but visited five total within my four years at WCU. It all started with my first trip abroad to Spain! Before college, I hadn’t thought of myself as being a world traveler, and I didn’t think I was going to be that interested in studying abroad. But I felt like I should experience something new, and I knew it would be good practice and a lot of fun for me. After the trip to Spain, I caught the travel bug. After Spain, I knew I would like to travel abroad again one day, but I didn’t think I would have many more opportunities in college. I received an email about applying for a scholarship to study abroad in Costa Rica, and I figured that I should apply since that would be an incredible opportunity! I wasn’t sure I was going to be able to go if I didn’t receive the scholarship, but the thought of traveling again sparked my interest. I went ahead and planned a trip with my friend to go to Peru that same summer because I wanted to go abroad. Turns out I won the scholarship as well, so I ended up going to Costa Rica and Peru! Around that same time, I found out about the class about Cuba. I thought it would be a once in a lifetime opportunity to travel there because of the embargo. Then in spring semester of my junior year, I decided I wanted to fully immerse myself into a culture so I could become fluent in Spanish, and I spent an unforgettable semester in Chile. I’ve had so many incredible opportunities, and I’m glad I’ve taken advantage of all of them. The feeling you get from experiencing a new culture and being able to communicate with so many more people because you’ve learned a different language is one of the best feelings I’ve ever had.

Your majors are Spanish and Business Administration. Why did you choose these, particularly in this combination?
Initially, I knew that I wanted to do something with Spanish since I love the language and being able to communicate with so many different people and cultures. I later added business because I thought it would be a smart move to have, so I could get a job about anywhere I wanted. Even though I picked business for that reason, I’ve discovered that I’m very interested and great at business. Plus, I know that having a business major may end up giving me excellent opportunities in Spanish-speaking countries. My long-term goal would be to have a job in a Spanish-speaking country, whether it’s in business, translation, education, or another field.

What are your roles in student organizations or other on-campus events?
I’m a member of LASO (Latino Appreciation Student Organization), and I’m a Spanish tutor. I worked with international students as well. I enjoy my time in LASO because I get to practice Spanish and keep learning new things about different cultures. I love tutoring, because it feels so rewarding when a topic I’m tutoring clicks for my tutees, and their faces light up because they understand.

How do you use your Spanish most now? How do you foresee using Spanish in the future?
I use my Spanish to communicate with many friends and my host family in Chile. I don’t know how I’ll be using Spanish in the future, but I know I’ll be using it. Hopefully, whatever business I get into, I can use Spanish to communicate with clients. My dream would be to work in business in a Spanish-speaking country (as of now I’d love to live in Chile since I made so many lifelong friends there).

Anything else?
I have some advice for younger students. I know that many students have heard about studying abroad and think that they would be interested but they don’t have resources to get there, or they don’t believe it would be something they could see themselves doing. If I had to tell every WCU student to do one thing in college, it would be to study abroad. I’ve learned so much about myself and the world that I couldn’t imagine how I would be as a person right now if I hadn’t studied abroad. There are many things that you can’t learn just from the classroom setting in college, and all of them you can learn by studying abroad. It’s such a rewarding and humbling experience, and everyone should take advantage of the opportunities and resources provided.
Out and about:

Garrett Fisher recently presented his research at CATI, or Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters, at Meredith College in Raleigh. Fisher's presentation focused on “Scaffolded Omniscience with Technology in Translation.”

Alberto Centeno-Pulido and Lori Oxford both traveled to San José, Costa Rica in March to attend the yearly conference of SCOLAS, or the Southwestern Council on Latin American Studies. Centeno-Pulido presented his work on Mexican popular music (“Lo Cortés no quita lo Cuauhtémoc: Hibridación cultural en la música de Botella de Jerez”) and Oxford spoke about contemporary Cuban narrative (“Mystical Escapes From Dystopian Havana: Spiritual Experiences in Pedro Juan Gutiérrez and Daina Chaviano”).

Santiago García-Castañón was invited to read his poetry at several events that were part of the Puerto Rico International Poetry Festival. The festival is organized by the Universidad Interamericana and features a select number of poets from across the Spanish-speaking world.

Upcoming WCUSpanish events:

¡TERTULIA!
Come practice your Spanish with us at the weekly Spanish conversation hour (tertulia):

- Wed. Apr. 8, 4:00-5:00 at Tuck’s
- Thurs. Apr. 16, 5:00-6:00 at Tuck’s
- Wed. Apr. 22, 5:30-6:30 at Sazón
- Mon. Apr. 27, 5:00-6:00 at Tuck’s

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE:
Every semester, faculty in Modern Foreign Languages share some of their outside-of-class work with Spanish students or other interested folks from the university community. This semester’s Dialogue will focus on using the arts to promote awareness of social injustice, and will feature the following contributions:

- Lori Oxford, “Ayotzinapa somos todos: Musical Responses to a Mexican Tragedy”
- Santiago García-Castañón, “Time to reload: la poesía como arma contra la injusticia”

Come hear what your professors have to say! This Intercultural Dialogue will take place on Mon. Apr. 13 at 4:00 in McKee 121.

Any questions? Talk to your Spanish professor or to Lori Oxford about these events.
WCUSpanish proudly congratulates Bryce Payne, a Spanish and Elementary Education major, for having been selected as the recipient of the Dean’s Outstanding Scholar Award by the Department of Modern Foreign Languages. The selection process was tough, as the department boasts many talented and hardworking students. Bryce was chosen because of her excellent performance in her Spanish classes, not to mention a 4.0 both inside and outside the major!

¡Enhorabuena, Bryce!

Interested in joining Spanish Club?

WCUSpanish is ready to revive its Spanish Club! Several years ago, the number of majors in the program reached a dangerously low point, and Spanish Club disappeared as its members graduated. We in the WCUSpanish program are happy to report that the number has nearly doubled over the past two years, though, and students are asking about a club. El club de español will have a service element for effecting meaningful change in our communities, as well as social events for just having fun. Before we officially re-launch the club, though, it would be helpful to have an idea of how many students are interested in joining. Contact Lori Oxford with your thoughts, comments, or questions.

Do you know a student in the Spanish program or an alumnus/alumna with an interesting story? Is there an event of interest to Spanish study that we should announce here? Let us know! Contact Lori Oxford at lfoxford@wcu.edu.

“Like” us on facebook: WCU Spanish

Follow us on twitter: @SpanishWCU

Come by and talk to us in McKee or check us out on the WCU Spanish program’s webpage.