WCU en Valencia 2014, a Spanish experience

Nine students (eight from WCU and one from UNCA) earned six hours of Spanish credit during the WCU en Valencia program this summer. For the first time, students in the program lived with families in Mislata (Valencia) instead of in a residence hall, and as a result the students’ proficiencies in both spoken and written Spanish improved more than ever.

In addition to their regular classes and assignments, the students visited Roman ruins in Sagunto, a castle in Játiva, a vineyard in Requena, and an architectural complex in the city of Valencia that has become one of Spain’s major destinations for tourists, not to mention a weekend in Spain’s capital, Madrid.

For more info on future programs, please contact Dr. Lori Oxford in her office (McKee 128B) or write her at lfoxford@wcu.edu.
Where are you from?
I am originally from St. Petersburg, Florida, and I moved to Franklin, North Carolina when I was 11 years old, and have lived there since.

Where have you traveled?
Inside the US, I’ve traveled as far west as California, and as far north as Minnesota. I’ve also been to Europe, where I spent time in Sofia, Bulgaria and Paris, as well as parts of Greece. I have family that lives all over, and that is the reason for most of the traveling I’ve done. My dad’s family lives in California, my mom’s in Minnesota, and my aunt is Bulgarian and has lived all over Europe and speaks multiple languages.

What are your majors, and why did you choose them?
I am double majoring in Spanish and Communication Sciences and Disorders. I chose Spanish as a major because I really love languages. I studied both French and Spanish in high school, but Spanish has always been my favorite. I filled up every available elective spot I had in high school with language classes, and even was a teacher’s aide for a Spanish class because I liked being in those classes so much. I chose Communication Sciences and Disorders as my other major because it deals a lot with language and has the ability to be both medically and educationally geared. It’s the perfect major for me, because throughout my life I have wanted to work both in the medical field and as a teacher, and this major makes it possible for me to work in both of these areas.

How do you spend your time when you’re not doing school-related stuff?
When I’m not doing things related to school, I am most likely in the studio dancing. I have loved to dance since I was very little, and it is something I have carried with me throughout my life, even to college. I have done just about every style of dance, but contemporary is my favorite. This year, I am continuing to dance with my dance company, as well as choreographing, among other things.

I know language is important to both you and your boyfriend.
My boyfriend is a military linguist for the Marine Corps, so language is always something that we have been able to bond over. We are both major language nerds! We can sit for hours and talk about the differences in the languages we are studying, as well as the cultural aspects of those languages. We took Spanish classes together in high school, so sometimes I help him with his Spanish, and he attempts to teach me some Farsi, even though I sound pretty silly trying to speak it.

How do you use your Spanish most now? How do you foresee using it in the future?
I practice Spanish with apps on my phone, and I listen to Spanish music and Spanish radio on a daily basis. I also try to practice speaking Spanish as often as I have the opportunity to, which is never too often. In the future, I hope to become a speech pathologist and work with Spanish-speaking children and adults who have language and speech disorders.
What classes will you teach at WCU?
This semester I am teaching Spanish 101, 102, and 301.

Does it feel different to come back after graduating? What have you been doing since you left WCU?
It feels very different! I have seen so many positive changes since I was here in 2010. Cullowhee is growing and I see great potential for WCU in the future. Since I left WCU, I taught at Franklin High School, Southwestern Community College, and at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. I read and researched a ton in graduate school while obtaining my Masters degree in Spanish and my Graduate Certificate in translation. I also interned as a medical interpreter at a clinic in Charlotte. This was all while I got married, renovated our house, and experimented with online business.

Are you interested in other languages, too?
My wife is from Brazil, so I have a special interest in Portuguese. A linguistic phenomenon happens in my family occasionally and I call it “portañolish” since my family members are trilingual and mix the languages frequently. It is common to hear “Você quer aguacate en your sandwich?” Although it is difficult to understand occasionally, I enjoy analyzing it.

What do you do in your spare time?
What spare time? I enjoy working towards goals constantly to help myself and others improve physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. Goals are very important. I also enjoy going to the gym, spending time with my family, traveling, playing instruments, and watching Netflix.

What’s one thing that people probably wouldn’t guess about you?
Well, people on the street NEVER guess correctly when they ask me what I do for a living… or my age.

Anything else you want to include?
I was going to be a baker, but I didn’t have enough dough.
WCUSPANISH wants to recognize achievements of WCU alumni with a major or minor in Spanish.

ASHLEY CORWIN (BA, Spanish and BS, Criminal Justice, '10) has been working with the Hall County (Georgia) Sheriff’s Office since 2011. She became a certified law enforcement officer in February 2014 and was promoted to Investigator in March 2014. She works in the Persons Crime Division, which investigates crimes such as homicide, assaults, child molestation, etc. She is also enrolled in the Masters program in Teaching at Brenau University and will begin her field experience teaching kindergarten in September of this year. Ashley says: “I use my Spanish frequently because our Hispanic population here is very high. I have noticed that Spanish is a very important language to know and am very thankful that I decided to get a degree in it. It has helped me tremendously and not just in law enforcement but in everyday life, as well.”

GARRETT FISHER (BS.Ed. Spanish, '10) is working as a Spanish instructor in the Department of Modern Foreign Languages at WCU (see page 3 of this newsletter for more info).

MARY BETH (FALLIN) HUNZAKER (B.A. Sociology with Spanish minor, '10?) is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Duke University, where she studies culture, cognition, and information transmission. She completed an MA in Sociology in Spring 2014 at Duke, and her thesis (“Making Sense of Misfortune: Cultural Schemas, Victim Redefinition, and the Perpetuation of Stereotypes”) was recently published in Social Psychology Quarterly. Of her time spent studying Spanish at WCU, Mary Beth says: “I still think my research related to the Rigoberta Menchú/David Stoll controversy (particularly regarding ideas of truth perception and construction) was an important turning point for me in my academic interests.”

BRITTANY MASTROMATTEO (BS.Ed. Spanish, '14) is a Spanish teacher at Smoky Mountain High School in Sylva.

EDSON PARRA RAMOS (BA, Political Science and International Studies with Spanish minor, '12) is finishing a Masters in Public Administration at UNC-Charlotte and is working in the private equity finance sector for RoundPoint Financial.

ERIC WRIGHT (BS.Ed. Spanish, '14) is a Spanish teacher at Central Cabarrus High School in Concord, NC. He will be teaching Spanish 1 and 2 this year.

ALEX VENDITTI (BA, Spanish, concentration in Hospitality and Tourism '12) is the sales and events coordinator for Homewood Suites by Hilton in Davidson, NC, where she uses her Spanish every day to interpret communication between the Spanish-speaking staff and the general manager.

¡Enhorabuena a tod@s!
Nosotros aquí en WCUSPANISH siempre estamos muy orgullosos de todos ustedes.

Alumni: share what you’ve been up to with the rest of the WCUSPANISH community! Send your info to Lori Oxford (lfoxford@email.wcu.edu) and be sure to pass the newsletter along to your family and friends so they can celebrate your achievements along with the rest of us.

WCUSPANISH students will notice an absence around the department this fall: Dr. Santiago Garcia-Castañón was awarded a research leave for Fall 2014, which he plans to use to advance his work on an annotated edition of Descripción de las Islas Filipinas (1582). Fans of Dr. García-Castañón’s classes on Spanish literature and culture are not to worry, though, since he will return to the classroom next semester.

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

¡Muchas gracias!