



DEPARTMENT OF

Slavic Languages and Literature

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Department Newsletter

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Letter from the Chair

Karen Evans-Romaine

I have written over the past several years about change: in higher education generally, at the University of Wisconsin – Madison and in the University of Wisconsin System, and at the departmental level. This year I open our newsletter with an announcement of a major change: as of 1 July 2016, we, together with our colleagues in the Departments of German and Scandinavian Studies, have become part of a newly constituted Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic (GNS). We have combined our departments at the request of the College of Letters & Science and after a long, careful, and deliberative process, as part of a general trend at UW-Madison to merge smaller departments into larger departments that can combine our strengths and enable us to share best practices. Other language and literature departments that have been restructured or established as a result of departmental mergers in recent years include Comparative Literature and Folklore Studies (CLIFS), the Department of Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies (CANES), the Department of African Cultural Studies, and the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures.

In the coming years we will have the opportunity to think about our curricula in new and exciting ways, while maintaining our undergraduate and graduate majors and degree programs, all of which are still going strong. We hope to benefit all students through multi-disciplinary courses and to prepare our graduate students together in areas of common interest. Our first step will be a combined methods of teaching foreign languages course in the fall semester, to be



Professor Evans-Romaine

taught by Dr. Jeanne Schueller in German, with an additional one-credit, Russian-specific course taught by our stellar TA supervisor and director of our Russian language program, Dr. Anna Tumarkin. We hope in the future to consider developing GNS courses in literary and critical theory, translation theory, migration studies, theatre studies, Jewish studies, as well as cross-disciplinary courses on literature and other art forms, combining our strengths in these areas. We are delighted that two new faculty members will join GNS this coming academic year in joint appointments with the Center for Jewish Studies: Sunny Yudkoff (Ph.D., Harvard University), who comes to us from the University of Chicago, and Marina Zilbergerts, who just completed her Ph.D. at Stanford University.

While we are delighted to welcome two new faculty members to our department, we face a sad change as well: David Bethea, Vilas Research Professor and leader of this department for many years, will retire at the end of this summer. Although we will miss Professor Bethea's stellar teaching and dynamic, inspiring presence in the department, we

can still look forward to further publications, as he has numerous projects in the works and intends to devote the coming years to scholarship. He also plans to continue developing the Pushkin Summer Institute, about whose successes you can read more in this newsletter.

We also say good-bye and many thanks to our department administrator, Jane Roberts, who retired as of 1 August 2016. We will miss Jane's kindness, patience, willingness to help, and departmental team spirit, despite the many demands on department administrators, and we wish Jane a peaceful and happy retirement.

Our students' accomplishments demonstrate to us that despite the many changes, we remain as strong and vibrant in Slavic as we ever were. This was a banner year in doctoral defenses, with six students defending their dissertations this past academic year: Sergey Karpukhin, now teaching at Notre Dame University; Melissa Miller, who will begin a new teaching appointment at Notre Dame this fall; Stephanie Richards, who will continue her research and writing in Italy; Jesse Stavis, who will teach at Bryn Mawr College this coming academic year; José Vergara, who will teach this coming year at the University of Missouri; and Colleen Lucey, who will continue her teaching appointment at the University of Arizona. We are enormously proud of the achievements of our newest Ph.D. alumni.

One of these five, José Vergara, spearheaded one of our strongest community outreach efforts this year as curator of an art exhibit at the Madison Public Library and three other public libraries in Wisconsin, "Artists in Absentia," featuring the art, poetry, music, and drama of inmates at the Oakhill Correctional Institution in Oregon, Wisconsin, where he and other graduate students in Slavic, English, and Theatre Studies have been teaching Russian literature and theatre in the Oakhill Prison Humanities Project, under the direction of Professor Manon van de Water.

We also continue to reach out to high school students outside Wisconsin: this summer, 2016, was the fifth for the Pushkin Summer Institute, founded and directed by Vilas Research Professor David Bethea, assisted by CREECA Associate Director Jennifer Tishler, and coordinated by UW-Madison Ph.D. alumnus Benjamin Jens, who comes to us during the summer from his position at the University of Arizona. This unique program brings high school students from schools offering Russian to primarily

minority student populations to the UW-Madison campus for six weeks of intensive instruction in Russian language and culture and in the life and works of Alexander Pushkin, with intensive writing in English. The program is growing, from 12 in its first year to 26 this year, and is supported in part by a federally funded StarTalk grant. Four of our undergraduates, including one PSI alumna and three Russian Flagship students, were resident counsellors, tutoring and mentoring the students in a dormitory on campus. In addition, this year, for the second time after an extremely successful summer last year, 12 students traveled for six weeks to the primarily Russian-speaking city of Daugavpils, Latvia, under the direction of two of our graduate students, Melissa Warner and Brian Kilgour, to study Russian in the Pushkin Summer Institute Abroad, with funding from the State Department's National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y). You can read more about both programs in this newsletter, and you can see further information at <http://pushkin.wisc.edu>.

Our Polish program continues to be strong and vibrant, with students taking all four years of the language and a wealth of literature and culture courses. Professor Halina Filipowicz participated, together with Professor David Danaher and Professor Rachel Brenner from the Center for Jewish Studies, in a CREECA roundtable on recently published books by UW-Madison faculty whose research focuses on Central Europe. Dr. Ewa Miernowska has served as a model for language instructors across departments by offering her advanced Polish language class simultaneously in a UW-Madison classroom and by telepresence to students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, thus allowing even more students in the Midwest to pursue their interest in Polish. With the support of the Polish Student Association, Associated Students of Madison, and the Lapinski endowment, Dr. Miernowska organized this year's 25th annual Polish Film Festival. You will see the profile of one of our successful students of Polish, and more information about this year's Polish Film Festival, in this newsletter.

Our Russian Flagship program, established in 2010, continues to grow and thrive, and we received a renewal of our federal grant for 2016-20 as one of only four Russian Flagship programs in the US. This past year eight students participated in the academic-year capstone program at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in the beautiful city of Almaty,

Kazakhstan, and five will be participating in the coming year. Flagship alumni are pursuing a wide variety of career paths: in federal service and in non-governmental organizations in Washington and elsewhere in the United States; in positions in higher educational administration at UW-Madison and at other institutions; and in positions in the private sector, in Madison and elsewhere. One, as you'll read in the profiles in this newsletter, was just appointed as translator for the National Hockey League! Some alumni have continued their studies in graduate programs here at UW-Madison, at Columbia University, Duke University, Middlebury College's MA program at the Russian State University for the Humanities, and at the Higher Economics University in Moscow. Students of Russian both in and outside the Russian Flagship program received high honors in this year's American Councils National Post-Secondary Essay Contest; more details on that can be found in the newsletter as well. We are enormously proud of the accomplishments of our students and alumni.

In May, UW-Madison's Russian Flagship had the honor of hosting at Madison's Monona Terrace and Community Center the Language Flagship Annual Meeting, which brought together approximately 150 Flagship representatives, other specialists in foreign language education, and administrators from all over the country. College of Letters & Science Dean John Karl Scholz welcomed the guests with opening remarks, and Susan Zaeske, L&S Associate Dean for the Arts and Humanities, moderated a panel of fellow deans and other high-level university administrators on making such programs sustainable in the long term.

As we continue to grow and change, our gratitude to you, our supporters, remains unchanged. I would like to extend my personal thanks as I step down from the position of department chair, where I have had the honor of serving for the past three years. Our new German, Nordic, and Slavic Department will be in wonderful hands under the leadership of our own Professor Manon van de Water, whose greeting follows this letter. I extend my profound gratitude and my warmest wishes to you for the years to come. Please stay in touch. ■

Introducing the Incoming Chair of the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic

Manon van de Water

Vilas-Phipps Distinguished Achievement Professor



Professor van de Water

After a first year of getting adapted to a new intellectual environment I am by now, at the end of my second year, comfortably settled and, as you read from the Chair's introduction, groomed to take on a leadership position in the new German, Nordic, and Slavic Department.

This past year was a roller coaster with teaching, research, traveling, and taking on new tasks, such as the position of Associate Chair for Slavic and being part of the GNS formation committee in Spring 2016.

Starting in Summer 2015, it was exciting and challenging to fully immerse myself in the Oakhill Prison Humanities Project (OPHP) as faculty PI and to introduce theatre and performance to the inmates, together with my advisee and Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies Ph.D. student, Claire Mason. A new Ira and Ineva Reilly Baldwin Wisconsin Idea Endowment mini-grant made it possible to hire Claire in an hourly position to coordinate the volunteer classes with Oakhill staff, an indispensable job benefitting all involved in OPHP. For me, the classes at Oakhill are a humbling and rewarding teaching experience I look forward to. The inmates are engaged and enthusiastic. As in the other classes offered, Theatre and Drama, mostly based on Russian texts and scenes, offers the inmates a chance

to bring their own background and experiences to the improvisations, the scenes they perform (and often write), and the plays we read. And they offer unique perspectives, as in reading Maxim Gorky's *Lower Depths* as a black comedy attacking social issues they relate to, with a philosophical central question: harsh truths or comforting lies? As we continue these classes I hope to build on these perspectives, and to work on an embodied staging of some of these works.

This year's Oakhill Prison Humanities Project was highlighted by the efforts of José Vergara, who initiated and organized an arts exhibition at the Madison Public Library, plus three more regional libraries, in the spring. The exhibition came together with a number of volunteers and included visual artworks, poetry, music, and theatre and drama. Marc Kornblatt, who filmed and directed the documentary *Dostoevsky Behind Bars* two years ago, visited the Oakhill art classes in December to make another documentary. The initial edition was screened at the opening of the exhibit at the Madison Public Library. For the final documentary Marc added reactions to the art work at the exhibition from relatives and friends. The artworks (paintings and poetry) were sold through a "silent auction," the proceeds of which the artists decided to donate to the art classes at Shabazz alternative high school in Madison. For more information on the OPHP see <http://oakhillprisonhumanitiesproject.wordpress.com>; for more information on the "Artists in Absentia" Exhibition (including video clips) see <http://www.artistsinabsentia.com>.

In Fall 2015, I was approached to consider the nomination of Chair of the new Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic. I agreed after extensive deliberation with many colleagues. I have large shoes to fill, and I am sure there are many challenges ahead. But as I get more familiar with all three former departments this last spring and summer, I am convinced that Slavic will be in many ways stronger without losing or softening its unique reputation in the national and international Slavic community, as will Nordic and German keep their unique profiles. I hope to help make all stronger and especially to give the students the tools they need to make a difference in the 21st century, transnationally, interdisciplinarily, interculturally within their own area of expertise.

I look forward to the opportunities we will encounter! ■

Faculty Updates



Professor Bethea

David Bethea: 2015-16 was an eventful year for «ваш покорный слуга». On the scholarly front, I have begun publishing a series of articles on Charles Darwin and Russian culture, which hopefully will eventuate in a book, and am finally near completion of my big multi-year co-edited project *Nabokov in Context*, which is to be submitted to Cambridge University Press in September. With regard to teaching and advising, I was pleased to see José Vergara successfully defend his superb dissertation on James Joyce and Russian modernist authors in May and secure a position at his alma mater, the University of Missouri. Other defenses I participated in over the 2015-16 academic year, all of them outstanding, included Sergey Karpukhin's (October), Stephanie Richards's (April), Jesse Stavis's (June), and Melissa Miller's (June). Colleagues in the department have been extremely impressed with the high quality of dissertation work produced recently by our grads. My own teaching assignments in fall 2015, including old stand-by Lit Trans 201/203 (19th-Century Russian Literature) and a 900-level seminar on Darwin and Russian Symbolist Thought, were especially rewarding – especially because they were a swansong of sorts, as I am officially retiring as full-time professor on August 22. I will continue on as director of the Pushkin Summer Institute (pushkin.wisc.edu), which will keep me busy both administratively and pedagogically; the way the program has grown and morphed and developed a solid reputation among different funding agencies is a source of pride and optimism. Other than that, I plan to continue with research and writing, follow the Packers and Badger basketball, enjoy my soon-

to-be new role as grandparent, avoid the winter months in Madison, and in general, the fates willing, “be around” for friends, colleagues, and former students. Whatever the future brings, I feel very lucky. What’s next? Well, in the words of our poet, in the time remaining I’d like to «див[иться] божественным природы красотам» and «пред созданными искусства и вдохновенья/ Трепе[тать] радостно в восторгах умиления». Посмотрим.

Спасибо всем!



Professor Danaher, Cecil Leigh Wilson, and Dan Spika perform at the annual awards ceremony

David Danaher: I had a wonderful time teaching Tolstoy this past fall, which was a new course for me, and I’m happy to have the chance to teach it again in fall 2016. I approached Tolstoy through the framework of fiction as a kind of cognitive simulation, which works extraordinarily well (as I’m sure you can imagine) for reading dear Lev Nikolaievich.

In scholarly news, the Czech translation of my 2015 book *Reading Václav Havel* was published by Prague-based Argo Publishers in June 2016. It is the first book-length study of Havel written by a non-Czech to appear in Czech since Havel’s death. It will undoubtedly be controversial in the Czech context (oh boy, I’m going to regret writing chapter 3), but I’m looking forward to the discussion it may generate.

I’m also looking forward to coordinating a new course on Slavic Science Fiction through Literature and Film, which will hopefully be taught for the first time in spring 2017. (Anyone care for a roadside picnic? And whatever you do, don’t feed the newts!)

Karen Evans-Romaine: In addition to working on the balancing act that is any department chairmanship, I spent the last academic year mainly on projects that blend teaching and research. With the tremendous help of graduate editorial assistants Colleen Hamilton (Second Language Acquisition) and Melissa Miller (Slavic), Dianna Murphy (Associate Director of the Russian Flagship and the Language Institute) and I completed and submitted the manuscript of the first collection of scholarly essays devoted to the Language Flagship, entitled *Exploring the US Language Flagship Program: Professional Competence in a Second Language by Graduation*. The volume, to be published by Multilingual Matters, will appear in November. I worked with UW-Madison alumnus Stuart Goldberg and his colleague Vicky Galloway, Georgia Institute of Technology, and with Susan Kresin, UCLA, on a chapter about incorporating song into the Russian language classroom entitled “Language and Cultural Learning through Song: Three Complementary Contexts”; it will appear in a volume called *The Art of Teaching Russian*, edited by Jason Merrill, Evgeny Dengub, and Irina Dubinina, to be published by Slavica. Related to that topic, I gave a talk on “Music and Power” at the International Learning Community, where I teach a one-credit course each semester in Russian on some aspect of Russian culture (this past year on music and history in the fall and current events in the spring) in the Russian-language residential learning community, Russkii dom. In addition to the Russkii dom classes, I taught two courses in Russian to advanced Russian Flagship students, one on Bulgakov’s *Master & Margarita* and one devoted to contemporary Russian media.

Finally, I gave a paper on the musical worlds of Pasternak and Tsvetaeva at a Pasternak conference held at Stanford University in September 2015, and I intend to delve deeper into those worlds during my upcoming sabbatical year.

In addition to her presentation at the September 2015 CREECA roundtable on new faculty publications, mentioned in the Letter from the Chair, and her paper at AATSEEL Wisconsin (see later in this newsletter), **Halina Filipowicz** gave a lecture at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University, in connection with the 73rd anniversary of the armed resistance in the Warsaw ghetto. Her lecture was entitled “Touching

Circles of Flame: The ‘Lost’ Plays on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.”

Tomislav Z. Longinović has had a very exciting and fruitful year, although it was spent away from UW-Madison. During Fall 2015, he used his sabbatical to revitalize the course on the Representation of Jew in East European Literature, which will be cross-listed with the Jewish Studies program. He also continued research for his seminal study *The Secret of Translation*, while in residence at the Center for Historical Research in Croatia. During Spring 2016, he was invited to be a Visiting Professor at Harvard University, where he taught courses on *Conflict and Culture: The Case of Yugoslavia* and *Slavic Myth and Fantastic Literature*, which were very well received by the students and faculty. He also delivered a keynote at the Harvard Vampire Vibes Symposium entitled “Vampire Nation: The Dark Side of Enlightenment.” In March 2016, he presented a paper at the American Comparative Literature Association annual congress, devoted to “Travelling Names: From *Hister* to *Istria*.” During the spring semester, his contribution to a volume devoted to the new field of hydropoetics was published under the title “Allergic Reactions: Danube and the Ex-Centric Imaginary of Europe.” The academic year was crowned with the thirteenth international seminar on Istria he conducted in Croatia, sponsored by the UW-Madison Office of International Academic Programs.

Andrew Reynolds: The 125th anniversary of the birth of Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938) has been marked by many celebrations in Russia and a number of other countries. Particularly in the light of the somewhat surprising interest taken by the Russian State in officially recognizing Mandelstam’s importance, I felt it was highly desirable that Western scholars and writers also reassess and reaffirm Mandelstam’s place in world culture. To that end José Vergara and I have organized a number of Mandelstam panels, roundtables, and other events at the November 2016 ASEES conference in Washington, D.C. In addition I have been working on a number of publications in English and in Russian to mark this important date, and will be also be participating in conferences and events in Scotland (at the Moffat 2016 Conference on “Poetry and



Professor Reynolds

Power” and at the University of Edinburgh) and in Russia (conferences in Moscow and Voronezh). While the so-called “liberal myth” of Mandelstam the consistent foe of Stalinism has its problems, recent revisionary readings seem to do even less justice to the contradictions of Mandelstam’s life and art.

I’m also really looking forward to being one of the mentors of young faculty at Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan, a new component of the broader agreement between NU and UW-Madison, and to visiting Astana in the fall as part of this process. Among teaching highlights of the past year, I very much enjoyed teaching the Dostoevsky in Translation course for the first time in Spring 2016. Though October and November 2016 will be very busy with the travel and conferences mentioned above, I’m very much looking forward to my forthcoming sabbatical.

Irina Shevelenko: The end of sabbatical leave always takes you by surprise, especially when it also means teaching a new, reading-intensive, graduate course. I feel proud that together with the brave Slavic graduate students we accomplished this task in Fall 2015: we read several dozen novels, plays, and stories in a “foundational” survey of Soviet, émigré, and post-Soviet Russian literature. I have been continuing work on my book manuscript *Modernizm kak arkhaizm: natsionalizm i poiski modernistskoi estetiki v Rossii* throughout the past year, and sent the manuscript off to the publisher (Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie) in early July 2016. As I write this blurb, I am getting closer to finishing



Professor Shevelenko and newly-minted Ph.D. Jesse Stavis at Graduate Commencement

Student and Faculty Awards

We are fortunate, through the generosity of the Lapinski and Zawacki families, whom we recognized at this year's awards ceremony, to be able to provide awards and scholarships to undergraduates and graduates of distinction in their study of Polish language, literature, and culture. This year four outstanding students of Polish received the Michael and Emily Lapinski Undergraduate Scholarship for 2016-17: Justyna Chojnowski, Margaret Naczek, Zuzanna Sztul, and Samantha Walczuk. Two of these students, Margaret Naczek and Justyna Chojnowski, also received the Polanki Award for Outstanding Achievements in Polish Studies from the Polish Women's Cultural Club of Milwaukee. One outstanding previous recipient of a Lapinski scholarship, Natalia Chreptowicz, and one new student of Polish, Phillip Kuszel, received the Edward I. Zawacki Award for Outstanding Achievement in the study of the Polish Language, Literature & Culture. Finally, graduate student Anna Borovskaya-Ellis received a Lapinski graduate research assistantship to enable her to devote the coming academic year to her dissertation on the Russian reception of Polish culture in the Thaw and Brezhnev eras.

This year's J. Thomas Shaw Prize for the outstanding presentation at AATSEEL-Wisconsin went to third-year graduate student Megan Kennedy. The J. Thomas Shaw Prize for Undergraduate Excellence went to Tyler Juve for his outstanding work in the study of Russian. In addition, Yasmin Schamiloglu received the Shaw Award for Outstanding Progress in Advanced Russian, and Benjamin Heinz the Shaw Award for Outstanding Progress in Beginning or Intermediate Russian.

Our outstanding students of Russian were recognized on a national level as well. Tiara Luckiesh, soon to depart for Almaty, Kazakhstan on the Russian Overseas Flagship program, received this year's ACTR Post-Secondary Laureate Award for excellence in Russian. This year several students distinguished themselves in the ACTR National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest: Henry Misa, also departing for Almaty on the Russian Overseas

my work on an edited volume, *Reframing Russian Modernism*; the manuscript will go to the publisher (University of Wisconsin Press) by October 2016. Finally, just a few weeks ago, a new edition of the correspondence between Pasternak and Tsvetaeva, co-edited by E.B. Korkina and myself, with an updated commentary and errors corrected, came out with AST Press in Moscow. In the meantime, a new, exciting teaching experience awaits me in the coming academic year: for the first time, I will teach a two-semester undergraduate survey of Russian literature in translation, one of the hits of our undergraduate program. ■



Professor Alexander Dolinin and Stephanie Richards celebrate after Stephanie's dissertation defense



Gogol' and Pushkin trip over each other (again) as first-year Russian students perform an anecdote by Daniil Kharms at the annual awards ceremony.

Flagship Alumni News

UW-Madison and Russian Flagship alumnus **Timothy Butler** (2014; History, Russian Language & Civilization) has accepted a position as translator for the National Hockey League and is now moving to New York to begin the position. Congratulations, Tim!

UW-Madison and Russian Flagship alumna Meagan Dunham (2014; International Studies [Global Security], Russian Language & Literature) was featured in the Spring 2016 issue of *Discourse*, the semiannual newsletter of the Language Flagship, which describes her current duties at the National Democratic Institute in Washington, D.C.: “Dunham helps design and support the implementation of projects that build and strengthen civil society in Russia and Belarus. Her responsibilities include financial management, donor relations, and preparing reports and briefs to senior leadership on current events and security issues in Russia and Belarus. Dunham looks forward to exploring future employment in government positions that will capitalize on her Russian skills. ‘I do know for certain,’ she explains, ‘that a lot of paths are open to me ... thanks to the Flagship program.’” Dunham will be among featured participants in a roundtable of Russian Flagship alumni at the annual meeting of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEES) in Washington in November.

Russian Flagship alumna and Boren Scholarship recipient **Leah Shapiro** (2015; Biology [Neurobiology], Russian Language and Civilization) has been working at the National Defense University in Washington. After completing the Russian Overseas Program in Almaty, Kazakhstan, Leah spent a summer studying Turkish on the State Department-sponsored Critical Language Scholarship program. This coming academic year she will be teaching English in Georgia on a Fulbright. She writes: “I never would have applied for the Fulbright if I hadn’t learned about the program from peers on CLS in Turkey, I never would have applied for CLS in Turkey if the Capstone hadn’t moved to Kazakhstan, and of course I never would have gone to Kazakhstan and Russia, where I first got a taste of cultural immersion, without the Flagship Program.” ■

Flagship program, received a Silver Medal at Levels 4-5 and Tiara Luckiesh Honorable Mention at that level. Henry Meger received a Bronze Medal at Level 2, and Susan Mihalyi a Bronze Medal at Level 1. We congratulate our students on their tremendous achievements!

A number of our students received national awards for study abroad. Ariela Rivkin received a highly competitive, State Department-sponsored Critical Language Scholarship for summer study in Nizhny Novgorod. Three of our five departing Russian Overseas Flagship students – Tiara Luckiesh, Savanna Rutas, and Vera Swanson – received highly competitive Boren Scholarships to support their academic-year study in Almaty. In addition, graduate students Brad Gordon and Megan Kennedy received Title VIII scholarships to support summer study in St. Petersburg through Arizona State University’s study abroad program.

Our faculty, instructional staff, and graduate teaching assistants received awards for their outstanding teaching and service as well. Professor Manon van de Water was recognized at the International Division’s annual awards ceremony as this year’s recipient of the prestigious Wisconsin Without Borders Faculty Recognition Award for Achievement in Global Engaged Service Learning. Galina Lapina and graduate student Kristin Edwards received University Housing Honored Instructor awards. ■

Flagship Alumni Reflections

The Russian Overseas Flagship program moved from St. Petersburg State University to Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in Almaty, Kazakhstan, beginning in September 2014. Below are the reflections of three Russian Overseas Flagship alumni who studied in Almaty: Ben Hooyman in 2014-15 and Marisa Irwin and Ainsley McNerney in 2015-16. Marisa's and Ainsley's reflections are adapted from remarks they delivered at the Language Flagship Annual Meeting, held at the Madison Monona Terrace in May 2016.

Benjamin Hooyman (2015; Finance, Investment, and Banking; Russian Language & Literature)

Life does indeed go on for a graduated Russian major. After my return from the Flagship year in Almaty, I had the overwhelming feeling that the influence of Russian language and literature was growing so fast that it was threatening to take over my life. More importantly, I was happy to let it keep on growing. I decided to set aside my finance degree in favor of Russian (worrying my parents) and disappear to the reverse side of the planet for a second year of study abroad (destroying their nerves entirely), this time to participate in Middlebury College's MA program in Moscow. It seemed insensible at the time, but, as I've heard they say in the financial world, big risks lead to big returns.

I'm not trying to feed the myth of abstract self-discovery so many study abroad students describe, but I really don't know an adjective better than transformative to describe the impact of these past two years on my personal and professional life. Flagship helped me build all the foundational knowledge to be a proficient reader of Russian texts, and the year in Moscow gave me the opportunity to put that knowledge to use. I stopped feeling like a dilettante and started feeling like an upcoming professional. I stopped wondering if I'd be able to find work and began to consider where my talents would be best put to use. I stopped writing and doing research for the sake of just getting grades and,



Flagship alumnus Benjamin Hooyman in Kazakhstan on the Russian Overseas Flagship.

instead, began to strive to synthesize information that would provoke earnest academic interest. I developed a deep interest in Russian poetry, a profound mistrust of reading in translation, and the honest belief that my time and energy are flowing into an activity that I love beyond all rational and transrational explanation.

The career in academia that I have planned is slowing coming together. I'm currently finishing up my last summer in Middlebury, Vermont (heaven on earth for language learners), writing this document, and, accordingly, shamelessly breaking the Language Pledge. Several days ago, I defended my thesis on Daniil Kharm's philosophical commentary on the attainment of eternal life, and in about three weeks I'll be moving to an apartment in the Bronx to begin my Ph.D. in Slavic Languages at Columbia University. Although I'm sorry to be in continued isolation from my native Wisconsin, I'm ecstatic to be moving to a vibrant academic community encapsulated by an equally vibrant city. Life does go on for a graduated Russian major and, for this graduate anyway, it goes on pretty well.

Marisa Irwin (2016; German, History, Russian Language & Civilization)

I can say without a doubt that the Flagship program has drastically altered my future career plans. Six years ago if someone had told me that I would not only study Russian, but spend an entire year in Kazakhstan, I would have laughed at them. As with most 18 year olds, I thought I had everything

planned out. I would major in German, study abroad for a year and graduate with hopes of working as a translator in Germany. In order to be more marketable as a translator with an additional foreign language, I decided to enroll in a Russian class and quickly fell in love with Russian, especially the challenging nature of the language itself. Early on into my first semester, representatives from the Flagship program spoke during one of our classes. Upon hearing that the program's goal was helping students reach a Superior level of proficiency over the course of five years, it seemed like a perfect fit for my hopes of working as a translator. Looking back on it, it truly is amazing that in the course of five years I have gone from knowing no Russian to operating in Russian every day in both informal and formal settings.

Learning Russian and being a part of the Russian Flagship program has led me to want to pursue a career as a language analyst within the intelligence community. There is little doubt in my mind that I was able to intern as a language analyst last summer with the Department of Defense due in large part to the Russian Flagship program. As a member of the Russian Flagship, I received the basic tools needed to become a successful language analyst. I was able to receive language practice outside of the classroom, through individual tutoring and social hours, as well as extensive opportunities to study abroad.

Without time abroad, it is very difficult for a person to be considered to have a complete grasp of a foreign language. Many of the nuances of language analysis involve cultural context, something that cannot be attained if you are not well attuned to the culture. It is here where I believe the Flagship program to be unique. The Flagship program strives to give students opportunities to increase their cultural understanding of their target language not only through time abroad on the capstone year, but at their host institutions as well.

What struck me the most about the Flagship program was the passion of the staff and their willingness to work with students. Attending a large university could easily lead to a feeling of being one among thousands. Being a member of the Flagship program meant that I was able to receive all of the benefits of a smaller school (small class sizes, professors invested in my academic and professional careers long after my class ended with them), while still receiving the opportunities that a large university offers. In addition, the Flagship program directors

helped me continue to succeed within the Flagship after a year of study in Germany. Their support encouraged me to continue my studies and ultimately to participate in the capstone year abroad in Almaty, Kazakhstan this past year.

The program was challenging academically and challenged each of us to grow personally as well. We were required to adapt to a different culture for the year we spent abroad, learning to recognize cultural differences as well as strategies on how to overcome those differences. The opportunities afforded to me through my time abroad are invaluable. I had an internship this past semester teaching world history in Russian to eighth and ninth graders. My internship involved not simply observing my head teacher, but teaching three to five lessons a week independently. While I realized that some things are universal, like eighth-graders' lack of enthusiasm for history at 8:00 in the morning, I understood my host culture at a deeper level by the end of the semester thanks to my experience at school. Seeing how citizens of Kazakhstan presented themselves as well as other countries in their textbooks offered me a glimpse of how they see themselves on the international stage. During our unit on US history, I was able to see events that shaped our history (World War II, Bay of Pigs Invasion, the Vietnam War, etc.) from a new point of view. In addition, my students opened up about themselves, and I was able to build a rapport with them so that they felt comfortable asking me questions about my life and life in the US as well. By the end of the semester I viewed my role at the school not only as a student teacher, but as an unofficial cultural ambassador, since for many of these students I was the only American they had met and interacted with on a frequent basis.

I finished the program as a more understanding, thoughtful, and compassionate individual than I began, and for that I am incredibly proud to be a member of the Flagship community.

Ainsley McNerney (2016; English, Russian Language & Civilization)

The decisions I have made to get me to this point in my life are not ones I previously anticipated. I vividly remember freshman-year orientation, when I had every intention to enroll in Chinese courses. I walked out of my consultation with a completely

different class schedule. The day I decided to enroll in Russian courses my life changed forever.

That very decision inspired me to enroll in the Russian Flagship program. Since then, I've had the blessing of living in St. Petersburg, Russia and Almaty, Kazakhstan. On my journey I not only learned a lot about myself, but also about the world. Leaving one's comfort zone, family, and friends to live in a foreign land, operate completely in a foreign tongue, and survive on foreign resources is not for everyone. The program itself, in an academic sense, is extremely challenging. When coupled with the emotional and physical strain of living in a foreign country, completing the program seems unfathomable. Of course, we were warned of this very thing, but you're never quite prepared until you find yourself enveloped in the chaos. Despite the difficulty, thanks to dedication and hard work, we completed the program and returned safely home as changed people.

The beauty of such a program is that it puts people in vulnerable positions, which is something that most humans try to avoid. But it is when you are most vulnerable that you can truly take in what is going on around you because you are hyperconscious. Due to this enhanced awareness I was able to fully immerse myself into Kazakh culture. I made lifelong friends, expanded my family, and learned more about myself than I would have been able to in the comforts of the United States. My command of the Russian language improved, thanks to a combination of academics and my social surroundings. I consider it a great accomplishment for all the students who completed the program in Kazakhstan this year. This program has opened many doors for me with endless possibilities. The Flagship Program has proven to me that life is a series of unexpected turns; there's no better example than the quick move we made from St. Petersburg to Almaty. Thanks to that turn of events, my immediate future has been shaped in a way that I could not have imagined. I fell in love with Almaty and I'm happy to return there in August, where I will work at a university. I would like to extend my thanks to the domestic Wisconsin Flagship team, without whom I would not have been adequately prepared for the capstone in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Thanks to everyone and a combination of crazy decisions on my part, my life is heading in an exciting direction. ■

AATSEEL-Wisconsin 2015

Zachary Rewinski

The 2015 AATSEEL-Wisconsin Conference continued the success and intellectual engagement of previous conferences. Held October 9-10 at the UW-Madison Pyle Center, the conference featured graduate student presenters from the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature and the Department of Comparative Literature and Folklore Studies at UW-Madison, as well as the Slavic Departments of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of California, Los Angeles.

At the conference's opening pizza lunch, graduate students discussed the field and professional development with returning alumnus Clint Walker (Ph.D., 2006) of the University of Montana. A highly stimulating poetry translation workshop with keynote speaker Jonathan Bolton of the Harvard University Department of Slavic Languages and Literature followed. Professor Bolton's keynote lecture, "Displaced Tyrannies: Allegories of Repression in East Central European Literature," focused on Czech poetry and drama of the mid-20th century, and stimulated a lengthy and productive discussion of Aesopic and subtextual modes of political resistance across Slavic literary traditions. The conference continued on October 10 with panels oriented around a variety of topics. Clint Walker's paper "Breaking Free but Paying His Respects: Revisiting Pushkin's «Станционный смотритель»" displayed the strong tradition of Pushkin studies that emanates from the UW-Madison Slavic Department. Faculty presenter Halina Filipowicz's paper "Reconsidering the History of Holocaust Memory in Poland: Two Case Studies" created great excitement about her forthcoming book. Among many excellent presentations by graduate students, including several by first-time presenters, Megan Kennedy's paper "'My Soul Merges with His': Platonic Eros in Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata*" deserves special note as the recipient of the J. Thomas Shaw Prize. The conference concluded with a reception at The Fountain, during which lively discussion of the many excellent papers and ideas presented at the conference continued. ■

Pushkin Summer Institute

Benjamin Jens (Ph.D., 2013)

With the help of the federally funded STARTALK initiative, the UW-Madison Slavic Department, the Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia, CREECA (especially Associate Director Jennifer Tishler), and many other UW-Madison units, July 2016 saw the successful completion of the fifth session of the Pushkin Summer Institute at UW-Madison, under the directorship of Professor David Bethea. This year we were delighted to have 26 wonderful high-school students from Chicago (Pritzker College Prep and Noble Street College Prep) come to Madison for six weeks to experience life on a college campus, take Russian language classes, develop their academic writing in English, and enjoy the sites in the Madison area. Professor



PSI students, counselors, and instructors at a Picnic Point bonfire

Bethea, with help from José Vergara, saw great improvement in students' writing in English over the course of the summer; students' essay assignments were based on weekly readings and lectures on the life and works of Alexander Pushkin. Led by Anna Nesterchouk, Faculty Assistant and ESL instructor in the Department of English, our language instructors – Jambul Akkaziev (History), Anna Borovskaya-Ellis (Slavic), and Thomas Tabatowski (Slavic) – helped the students make strong gains in Russian and introduced them to various aspects of Russian culture, such as dance, holidays, music, etc. Our undergraduate resident counselors – Jacob Aehl, Stephanie Sandoval, and Yasmin Schamiloglu – and

student assistant Elisia Cintron mentored the students and helped orient this year's cohort in the Leopold Hall dorm, building strong friendships along the way. Special mention should go to our head counselor, Savanna Rutas, who once again did an excellent job coordinating in the dorms and assisting on-site director Benjamin Jens with the extracurricular program, which included trips to Devil's Lake State Park, the Wisconsin State Capitol, and the local Russian store, among other events and activities. This summer was the largest group yet at the PSI and, judging by the many tearful goodbyes on departure day, the students greatly enjoyed their experience in Madison. We look forward to encouraging this year's cohort to apply to the State Department National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y)-supported PSI Abroad (Daugavpils, Latvia) program in 2017; next summer will also see the addition of The Noble Academy in Chicago to the PSI's group of partner schools, promising further opportunities for PSI and the chance to work with yet another impressive group of students in 2017. ■



PSI students learn about life in Latvia during a video chat with PSI Abroad students

Pushkin Summer Institute Abroad in Daugavpils

Melissa Warner

For the second summer in a row, the Pushkin Summer Institute (PSI) Abroad sent twelve high school students from Chicago and Alaska to Daugavpils, Latvia for six weeks to study Russian language. PSI Abroad is made possible by a grant from National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y). NSLI-Y is funded by the United States Department of State Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs and is administered by American Councils for International Education. UW-Madison Slavic Department graduate students Melissa Warner and Brian Kilgour accompanied the students as Resident Directors. While in country, students lived with Russian-speaking host families, took intensive Russian language classes, participated in cultural activities (such as cooking class), and met with Russian peer tutors several times a week. Students also learned about the history, religions, and educational system of Latvia from guest speakers. The program included excursions to the beach town of Jurmala, the capital city of Riga, Rundāle Palace, Bauska Castle, the city of Aglona, and more. By the end of the program, all students had made great progress in their language abilities and cultural knowledge! ■



Whether they are studying in Madison or Daugavpils, PSI students have a chance to visit Devil's Lake



2016 PSI Abroad students and staff sit down to dinner together during a trip to the banya



PSI Abroad students learn to make pel'meni



PSI Abroad students and peer tutors

Life after Polish Studies

Sebastian Skarbek

(2014; French, Polish)

I remember the day that I decided to fully commit to Polish and French literature and abandoned my previous plans to major in biochemistry and attend medical school. As far as my interests and intellectual curiosity, I was absolutely certain that I was making the right choice. Nevertheless, despite my appreciation for the liberal arts, I admit that I was filled with newfound worry about the chasm of “professional life” that awaited me after graduation. What could I do with Polish studies? Was I now chained to a future as a translator, academic, or government agent? Would I find a job? I was well aware of recent articles which pointed to the value of skills gained by a liberal arts education. It was difficult to imagine, however, how these benefits would apply to me specifically. I continued to work hard and drowned my anxieties in the works of Słowacki and Molière, graduating from UW-Madison in May 2014 with degrees in Polish and French.

Straight out of college I decided to teach English in France. The teaching assistant program provided me with the opportunity to continue experiencing French culture and language beyond my studies while giving me valuable insight into teaching as a profession. Emulating my wonderful professors from the French and Slavic departments, I was able to engage with my high school students on a wide variety of contemporary issues. While the work was rewarding, it wasn't without its difficulties – finding innovative content and learning to listen in order to better share and engage with my knowledge and experiences was challenging in a different cultural context. I improved my French and sharpened my communication skills. As I looked for the “next step” along my path I decided to go back to Madison in search of a job.

After a few weeks of readjusting to life back in the States, I found myself preparing a presentation for my job interview. The subject matter of the presentation was “Contemporary and Historical Contexts of Sarmatism in Polish Society” (Sarmatism was the dominant social, political, and cultural ideology of the Polish noble class from the 16th to 18th centuries). Along with my presentation, I talked

at length about writing lengthy papers and a thesis brimming with integrative content – “project management,” as they say in the business world. Lastly, I was able to expound on the wonderful opportunities provided to me through the Slavic department. My current employer found great value in my experiences coordinating the annual Polish Film Festival as well as taking initiative for leading language tables and other educational activities. And so I began my job as a software implementer at Epic early this year.

While my professional path did become less clear for a while, that didn't mean my academic choices wouldn't be able to take me far. Every day I am challenged to apply my communication skills with detailed research. Working with healthcare organizations, I help assess needs and how Epic applications and workflows can meet them. Even though there isn't much “Slavic department content” in my day-to-day responsibilities, the skills I learned studying Polish language and literature help me excel in various situations. I still profit from the “Slavic content” on a personal level by having a deeper look into contemporary events in Central and Eastern Europe and by having richer cross-cultural encounters and dialogues with various people I meet.

I am very grateful for the opportunities and professors I met at UW-Madison, especially in the Slavic and French departments, who helped develop my skills that will guide me for my entire lifetime.■



Sebastian Skarbek

The 25th Annual Polish Film Festival at UW-Madison (November 2015)

Ewa Miernowska

The Festival was launched at UW-Madison 25 years ago and is one of the longest-running film festivals in Madison. The Annual Polish Film Festival has been organized by the Polish Student Association and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature with the generous support of Associated Students of Madison, CREECA, the Polish Heritage Club of Madison and the Wisconsin Union Directorate at UW-Madison, which rents us the Marquee Cinema. All the movies featured during the Polish Film Festival come to Madison courtesy of the Society for Arts in Chicago, a non-for-profit organization established in 1981 with the objective to promote Polish arts and film in the United States.

In order to celebrate the 25th edition of the Festival, we invited Karolina Bielawska, a renowned Polish documentary movie director. She came to Madison with *Call me Marianna*, her latest documentary about a transgender person who has to choose between her sexual identity and her family. This multi-award-winning powerful account of one individual's struggle to gain acceptance was followed by a lively discussion with the director. This year's program also featured four other recent movies, including *Warsaw 44*, an acclaimed picture of the tragic 1944 Warsaw Uprising.

In a span of twenty-five years, we have shown over 120 Polish films. The Festival serves the needs of many audiences. Students in Polish classes receive valuable out-of-classroom language and cultural training. The University community gains exposure to Polish culture and world-recognized Polish cinema.

The Festival serves an important function as part of the Wisconsin Idea. Each year, members of the Polish community and many Madisonians show up for the event, and learn more about University of Wisconsin and Poland at the same time. The 25th Annual Polish Film Festival was attended by over 600 people.

Please join us for the 26th Annual Polish Film Festival that will take place in November 2016. ■

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Alumni!

We'd love to know
where you are now
and what you're doing.
Please send updates to
info@gns.wisc.edu

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