



**Tennessee**  
TECH

**Department of Foreign Languages**

*Due to the ongoing pandemic, this is an abbreviated issue of our annual newsletter.*



# The Polyglot Fall 2020

## Academic Year 2019-2020 Brought Unique Challenges



*Martin Sheehan, Ph.D.,  
Interim Chair*

This past academic year, like many have said, was unprecedented. Like many universities and colleges across the country, faculty and students at Tennessee Tech were forced to transition to fully online instruction at the end of March 2020 due to the pandemic. I applaud our faculty because they put in many extra hours of time, care and attention to help our French, German and Spanish students complete their courses for the semester.

The timing of this pivot also meant that our majors had to be advised remotely. Happily, our dedicated faculty advisors were able to complete this task in a timely manner while adjusting to all the teaching changes.

Many events scheduled for spring also had to be cancelled. For example, the department had to postpone

its Tennessee World Affairs Council roundtable about the professional advantages that come with foreign language learning. In April 2019, Dr. Debbie Barnard, Associate Professor French, helped bring the roundtable to our Tennessee Tech campus for the first time in years, and it was unfortunate that we could not host the discussion again. However, we are happy to announce that the event has been rescheduled to take place virtually in October.

Another result of the pandemic was that we were unable to formally induct our strongest students into Tech's Eta Psi chapter of Alpha Mu Gamma, the national honor society for foreign language students. We nonetheless congratulate them on their accomplishments. Please see the back of this newsletter for their names and more details.

Although cancelling events was the right thing to do, I lament the necessity of doing so because activities like these help foster the kinds of connections that the university experience is all about.

Another effect of COVID-19 was that all study abroad

experiences were cancelled after March 2020, including Dr. Julia Gruber's scheduled GERM 4910 course trip to Berlin and Vienna. I spoke with several students who were crushed by the news that they could no longer travel to Japan, Italy, Spain, Korea and many other countries due to COVID travel restrictions. Hopefully, some study abroad opportunities will reopen in the not-too-

distant future. Ultimately the virus will determine when it is safe to resume international study and in-person events.

While these times are very challenging, we look forward to returning to campus and resuming club meetings and special events. Once we are back together, let us remember to never take these opportunities for granted. Best wishes and good health!

## Addition of Two New Lecturers Reflects Growth in Department



*Elena Kazakova, Ph.D.,  
Lecturer of French*

After conducting nationwide searches, we are happy to announce the addition of two full-time faculty members to our department.

Dr. Elena Kazakova, (Ph.D, Johns Hopkins University) was formerly a visiting assistant professor at Whittier College in Los Angeles. She has joined our French program as a lecturer.



*Cristina Humita, M.A.  
Lecturer of Spanish*

Mrs. Cristina Humita, (M.A., University of Cincinnati) was selected as our new lecturer of Spanish. Mrs. Humita may look familiar to some of you because she taught in our department for three years as an instructor.

We look forward to the contributions of both these new faculty members. Welcome to the department!

## Congratulations to New Alpha Mu Gamma Members



Although we were unable to hold our annual Alpha Mu Gamma induction ceremony in Spring 2020 due to the pandemic, Dr. Michael Olsen (assistant professor of Spanish and faculty sponsor of the group) is happy to report that there are 15 new members of the Eta Psi chapter of this national honor society for foreign languages. Here are their names and the language(s) they studied:

### Spanish

Macinsie Bennett  
Ellie Buckner  
Huyen Dam  
Alea Harrison  
Erin Perdue  
William Roshak  
Alizza Schremp

### German

Joseph Hunt  
Michael Lewis  
Ian Sweetin  
Nancy Rose Webb

### French

Allison Doll  
Sydney Hildebrand\*  
Heath Howard  
Hannah Logue

Congratulations to each of these students for their hard work in the study of French, German and/or Spanish. We encourage them to always watch for other opportunities to continue to learn about other languages and cultures.

*\*also qualified in German*



### Gruber Wins Teaching Award

Dr. Julia Gruber, associate professor of German, was one of two faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences awarded the "Innovative Teaching Award" for the 2019-2020 academic year. Dean Paul Semmes presented the awards at the college's meeting just before the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester. Congratulations!



## DFL Introduces New Int'l Studies Minor

For students interested in adding an international perspective to their programs of study, a minor in International Studies (INST) is now available. This minor will help students meet growing demands in a world that increasingly requires internationally focused graduates and employees.

The INST minor requires a total of 15 credit hours of courses (9 cr. hrs. lower-division and 6 cr. hrs. upper-division). Many students choose to take one or more of these courses while studying abroad. For more information, please go to [www.tntech.edu/cas/fl](http://www.tntech.edu/cas/fl) and click on "Majors and Minors." You can also e-mail the DFL at [languages@tntech.edu](mailto:languages@tntech.edu).

## Your Gifts Directly Benefit Current FL Students

Students need financial support now more than ever. To make a gift that benefits FL students, go to [www.tntech.edu/cas/fl](http://www.tntech.edu/cas/fl) and click on the gold "Make a Gift to Foreign Languages" button or contact us at [languages@tntech.edu](mailto:languages@tntech.edu) or 931-372-3432 for more information. Thank you!

## Ten FL Majors Complete Senior Capstone Projects

Here are the foreign language majors, their topics and the faculty with whom they worked for their Senior Capstone projects:

**Maci Arms** (w/Villalba), *La explotación de la mujer en Indicios pánicos de Cristina Peri Rossi* [The Exploitation of Women in Cristina Peri Rossi's *Indicios Pánicos*]

**Emma-Leigh Bryan** (w/ Groundland), *Una interpretación de la vida y el arte de Frida Kahlo* [The Life and Art of Frida Kahlo]

**Victoria Chaplin** (w/ Gruber), *Deutschland nach 1945: Wiedergutmachung statt Wiederbetätigung* [Germany after 1945:

Reparation Instead of Resurgence]

**Shelby Clement** (w/ Villalba), *Endoculturación de los estudiantes universitarios Guatemalteco-americanos* [Enculturation of Guatemalan-American College Students]

**Rebecca Franey** (w/ Barnard), *L'industrie de publication en France : Le Progrès de diversité* [The Diversification of the French Publishing Industry]

**McKenzie Graybill** (w/ Villalba), *Un enfoque cultural a las obras de Francisco de Goya y Lucientes* [A Cultural Interpretation of Francisco de Goya and Lucientes' works]

**Ryan Jones** (w/Barnard), *L'Américanisation de la culture française* [The Americanization of French culture]

**Jessica Oliver** (w/ Groundland), *Un estudio del machismo venezolano y estadounidense por el cine contemporáneo* [Venezuela and American Machismo in Contemporary Film]

**Sydney Robbins** (w/ Villalba), *Las representaciones de la feminidad en el cine español actual* [Feminine Representations in Contemporary Spanish Cinema]

**Kaelie Ryan** (w/Barnard), *La Marque française* [The French Brand]