



Intensive Language Instruction Program (ILIP) returns

Learning a language can seem daunting, especially if you've been out of the classroom for a while.

A newly returned language program is easing some of that uncertainty by helping students from all walks of life take that first step.

The **Intensive Language Instruction Program** (ILIP)—formerly known as the Intensive Foreign Language Instruction Program, or IFLIP—took place this summer 2024 after a hiatus due to the pandemic. The program is designed to accelerate language learning through an immersive classroom atmosphere. Students receive 30 hours of instruction, maximizing exposure to their target language to help them meet their learning goals. The program, which ran from May 13-24, was open to both members of the university community and to the public.

"It is the perfect way to begin a language you've always wanted to learn or to better communicate in a language with which you are already familiar," said **Jude Krushnowski**, director of ILIP and the World Teacher Education Program.

Katie VanDyne (PhD, '24, Spanish linguistics) is no stranger to language learning. She's starting as a professor of Spanish at Truman State University in Missouri this fall but found herself with some extra time in the interim. She decided to fill the gap by taking Italian through ILIP.

"I love learning new languages, but even as a linguist I find it challenging to begin a new language and stay motivated completely on my own or with an app," VanDyne said. "ILIP

seemed like a great opportunity to jump into learning something new in a guided yet low-pressure setting."

Along with Italian, this year's program offered classes in Arabic, French, German, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Modern Greek, and Spanish. There were also intermediate classes in Mandarin Chinese and Spanish and an advanced section of Spanish.

Laura Jean Poulosky (MA, PhD, '01 French literature; MS, '07, library and information science) has a long history with the program. She co-taught a session of intermediate French and first took beginner Chinese through the program two decades ago.

Poulosky said the initial draw to the program was a personal one, but there's one key aspect that keeps her coming back: "My husband and I adopted our daughter from China nearly 20 years ago, and I've been interested in improving my Chinese ever since. I enjoy studying languages and love the opportunity that this program gives me to study languages with other interested students. I appreciate that all the students are there purely to learn, not just to earn credits or high grades."

Classes are designed to be fun, welcoming, and low stress, with minimal homework, no attendance policy, and no academic credit. While the content of each course varies, the focus is on conversational skills, travel preparation, and language survival skills.

"This is not [your typical] travel survival class, i.e. not just a collection of useful phrases, but a real class in basic Spanish, perhaps equivalent to 10 weeks of college level Spanish 101," said **John Abelson**, a retired professor of materials science and engineering and beginner Spanish student.

While the classes themselves are accelerated, Krushnowski hopes the impact of the program will be long-lasting.

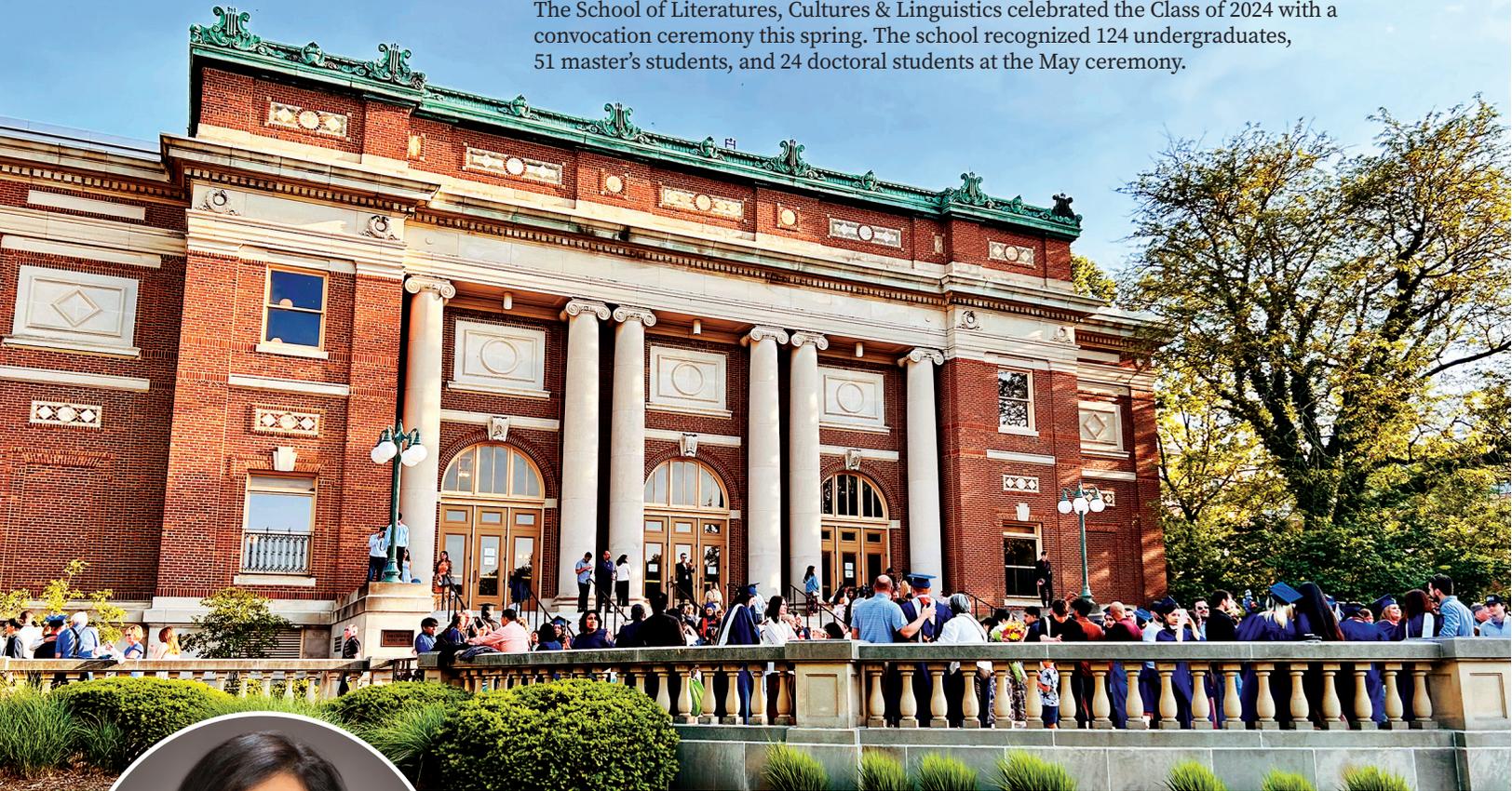
"I hope ILIP will help build bridges within our community by bringing people together to deepen their understanding of different languages and cultures," he said. "Champaign-Urbana is a profoundly diverse place, and I would like to see ILIP promote an appreciation for multiculturalism and multilingualism. In my opinion, there is nothing quite as humbling and empowering as learning another language."

VanDyne said that diversity is what made her classroom experience so enjoyable.

"The mix of different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives helped to cultivate a very interesting learning environment and one that you don't always find in more traditional courses," she explained. "This is a unique opportunity that I feel we are lucky to have on our campus. The instructors are excellent and create a welcoming environment for all. You can start with no prior knowledge of the language, and you will be surprised at how much you can easily pick up in only two weeks...and you'll have a lot of fun, too!"

SLCL CELEBRATES CLASS OF 2024

The School of Literatures, Cultures & Linguistics celebrated the Class of 2024 with a convocation ceremony this spring. The school recognized 124 undergraduates, 51 master's students, and 24 doctoral students at the May ceremony.



Letter from the director

As the 2023-24 academic year—and my first year as director of our school—comes to a close, I am taking time to reflect on this year's successes and plan for what is yet to come.

I had one overarching goal as I stepped into this role: to build a cohesive intellectual vision for the school, centered on the areas of culture, literature, language-related research, and pedagogy.

Paramount to this goal is engagement with the community in alignment with our mission of preparing our students to succeed in a global workplace. I believe culture,

language, and literatures are key to gaining the knowledge we need to live and work in our increasingly diverse world.

With all of this in mind, I spearheaded two important initiatives.

First, the school worked on the submission of the **Intercultural Competence Certificate**, which was approved by the College of LAS this past spring and will launch this fall. This certificate offers students the chance to develop crucial global and communication skills. Our goal this year is to share the certificate widely so all students on campus can benefit.

Second, the school worked hard to bring back intensive language courses for the community by reinstating the **Intensive Language Instruction Program (ILIP)**—formerly known as the Intensive Foreign Language Instruction Program, or IFLIP.

Under the supervision of **Jude Krushnowski**, director of the **World Language Teacher Education program**, ILIP was a great success. In-person language instruction of Arabic, French, German, Italian, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Modern Greek, and Spanish was open to members of the university and to the public.

Our goal next year is to expand the program to central Illinois and Chicago and offer more language courses, such as Polish, Ukrainian, Latin, Swahili, and Wolof, among others.

These initiatives position SLCL as the place where intercultural competence, multilingualism, and international expertise in the areas of literatures, cultures, and linguistics are achieved.

Finally, we closed our year with the **2024 SLCL Convocation** at Foellinger Auditorium, where we celebrated the achievements of our students. Our speaker, **George Reveliotis**, shared a powerful message of perseverance and the impact education has on the path to success.

I look forward to another year of growth and celebrating the innovations and achievements of the alumni, students, faculty, and staff that make up our SLCL community.

Mariselle Meléndez

Professor of Spanish
Director SLCL

Remembering ELENA DELGADO

By Mariselle Meléndez



This spring, our school suffered a great loss: **Luisa Elena Delgado**, professor of Spanish and former director of the School of Literatures, Cultures & Linguistics, passed away after a long battle with cancer.

Elena was both a great colleague and dear friend with whom I had the privilege to work for 23 years. I shared these words about her contributions in the areas of research, teaching, student mentoring, leadership, and service during her retirement celebration in March.

I met Elena back in December 1999. From the moment I set foot on campus for my visit, Elena showed true collegiality and empathy when I needed to set up my interviews with a break so I could sprint to the Illini Union hotel to breastfeed my 4-month-old baby. She was accommodating and understanding and made sure my visit went well even amid a winter storm. When I joined the department in January 2000, her kindness, guidance, and mentorship were key in my acclimatization into the department. It was the beginning also of a close friendship that lasted until she passed away.

It was in early 2018, when I served as head of the **Department of Spanish & Portuguese** and was writing a letter of nomination for the prestigious University Scholar award—which she received that year—that I was able to comprehend even better her contributions to the department since she joined in 1990.

Elena was a specialist in Spanish literatures and cultures with a special emphasis on 19th century modernist

literature and the cultural production of Spain in the 20th and 21st centuries. She was a literary and cultural critic, whose work on contemporary Spanish culture and politics had a major impact, both in the field of Hispanic studies at large, as well as on current public debates on the role of culture in plural, multilingual democratic states. Her latest sole-author book, *La nación singular. La cultura del consenso y la fantasía de la normalidad democrática española* [“The Singular Nation: The Culture of Consensus and the Fantasy of Spanish Democratic Normalcy”], published in 2014, cemented her reputation as one of the most important cultural critics of contemporary Spain.

But research was only one of Elena’s strengths. She was also an outstanding teacher. Although she was hired as a specialist in 19th and 20th century Spanish literature, in the last 10 years of her tenure, the focus of her research and teaching expanded to include all forms of cultural production.

During her years at Illinois, she consistently received ratings of “high” or “very high” in a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses. Her name often appeared on the list of Teachers Ranked as Excellent. She supervised more than 10 doctoral dissertations and participated in numerous dissertation committees in and outside the department.

Elena did a formidable job in mentoring undergraduate students on campus and abroad and in helping graduate students become successful members of academia. She was committed to contributing to the

excellence of our Spanish program, actively participating in all major curriculum revisions.

In her leadership position as director of SLCL between 2020-2022, she demonstrated a strong commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration among SLCL units while advocating to the College of LAS on our behalf. She led the 2021 intercultural competency initiative as part of the **Presidential Initiative to Celebrate the Impact of the Arts and the Humanities**. She was devoted to the wellbeing of her employees and worked very hard to make SLCL a strong community.

As a colleague, I always admired her commitment to equity, transparency, and to making sure that the initiatives we pursued were sought to benefit the unit as a whole. She always contributed to our discussions with brilliant ideas, thorough knowledge, care for others, and intellectual respect. She was a doer and in that sense, the famous quote by Bell Hooks fit her perfectly: “What we do is more important than what we say or what we say we believe.”

Here is to an academic career full of success and the extraordinary friendship that I was able to share with her. **Mil gracias por todo.**



Alumni help bring Korean studies scholar to campus

A new Korean studies scholar is joining the **Department of East Asian Languages & Cultures** this fall, thanks in part to the support of a group of alumni.

Anna Jungeun Lee, a historian specializing in Korea's transnational consumption, is the department's second faculty member in Korean studies.

Her research centers around the topic of "Buying into Consumption: Transnational Consumption in Developing Modern Korea." She has published articles in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, the *Journal of Korean Studies*, and *Acta Koreana*.

Jeeyoung Ha, director of the **Korean Language Program** and assistant head of EALC, said the initiative to bring Lee to campus coincided with the 100th anniversary of Korean students at the university.

"This milestone celebration strengthened the longstanding relationship between

our institution and Korea," explained Ha.

She said the **Korea Chapter of the Illini Alumni Association** reached out to her, expressing their desire to commemorate the occasion through a contribution. Under the leadership of **Sang Hoon Lee**, president of the Korea Chapter, they pledged \$90,000 toward hiring a new faculty member, citing the importance of revitalizing the Korean studies program, and supported EALC's successful application to the Korea Foundation Support for Establishment of Professorship program. The grant supported 70 percent of the professorship, for the first five years once the position is established. The Korea Chapter collected donations from Korean alumni to help with the remaining 30 percent.

"A century ago, Korea was not even an independent country, but a colonized one. For the last 100 years, Korea has transformed itself from one of the poorest countries in the early 20th century to a developed economy in the 21st century," said **Hyungseok Hahm**, secretary general of the Korea Chapter. "To align with this, the Korea Chapter found the best way to celebrate the centennial anniversary was by giving back to our beloved alma mater and the Korean community in the States. We hope the new hire will sow the seeds of improving partnership between Korea and the States for another century to come."

Hahm said there was also a personal factor to his interest in giving back.

"It has been 17 years since I left the University of Illinois in 2007," said Hahm. "Looking back, the seven years I spent in Champaign-Urbana marks some of the happiest memories in my life. My son was born, and I made lots of life-long friends.

No matter how long I've been gone, Champaign-Urbana will always be my second hometown. The good memories have been a main drive for me."

Ha said the addition of Lee signifies a transformative step for EALC and the broader campus community.

"Given the robust enrollment in Korean language courses and the growing interest in Korean content, this hire will strengthen our capacity to lead in Korean studies education and research," said Ha. "Having a vibrant Korean studies program will also strengthen our ability to win Title VI support in the years ahead, create research synergies with other departments and colleges on campus, and give our university a voice in contemporary discussions of South and North Korea's influential roles in the East Asian region and global affairs."

Ha said it was the joint efforts between EALC, the College of LAS, alumni, and the Korea Foundation that made this hire possible. She hopes it's the beginning of a long partnership.

"This three-way collaboration, which harnesses alumni support and external funding from the Korea Foundation, establishes a precedent for future partnerships in advancing Korean studies at Illinois," said Ha. "This innovative approach not only secures immediate resources but also lays the groundwork for sustained growth and engagement. Moving forward, I'm really excited about continuing and expanding these collaborative efforts to make our Korean studies program even better and to stay connected with our Korean alumni community."

Intercultural Competence Certificate launching in Fall 2024

The School of Literatures, Cultures & Linguistics is launching a new certificate focused on building intercultural skills this fall.

The **Certificate in Intercultural Competence** is designed for undergraduates across a broad range of majors, offering students the chance to show they have the global skills needed to succeed in and out of the classroom.

Intercultural competence refers to the ability to effectively and respectfully communicate, interact, and collaborate with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, while navigating and appreciating cultural differences.

Research shows that employers and graduate programs are actively looking for graduates with these skills. In a recent publication of the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the "ability to engage and include people from different cultures and backgrounds" was

listed in the top 8 "career readiness competencies" (2024). Similarly, the Association of American Colleges and Universities ranks "teamwork and the ability to work with diverse others" as a key attribute employers look for in college graduates (2023).

Students who complete the certificate will be able to include the credential on a resume or application for advanced study.



THE JOY OF LEARNING

Learning may begin in a classroom—but it doesn't have to stop there.

Few people embody that idea more than **Douglas Kibbee**, former director of the School of Literatures, Cultures & Linguistics and emeritus professor of French.

For him, learning isn't a means to an end. It's a lifelong journey.

"That's the joy of being a university professor," said Kibbee. "You're constantly learning. I don't think I ever taught the same course twice, for example. Even if the name of the course was the same, at least 40 percent of the material was new every time. That was just part of the joy of learning. I've now been able to pursue that joy for a lifetime."

Kibbee began his tenure at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 1985. He started out as an assistant professor, teaching French linguistics. While he has since retired, that doesn't mean he's stopped his pursuit of knowledge.

"I retired in 2010, but I've remained a very active scholar," he said. "I consider it continuous from '85 to today, so almost 40 years now. And the university, through its various support programs for research and teaching initiatives, has given me so many opportunities I treasure over those four decades."

With the university's support, Kibbee had the freedom to research what he wanted

to. His research has largely focused on the history of the French language, and how a standard was created and imposed on the French people. Kibbee also became interested in issues of language policy.

Kibbee said his most niche interest came about thanks to the university. He was asked to teach a course on translating English to French and French to English, which sent him down the Alice in Wonderland rabbit hole.

"There aren't that many books that get retranslated," he explained. "When I first started collecting Alice in Wonderland in the late 80s, I discovered about a dozen at that point that had already been made. Now, we're up to 51, so it was that opportunity to compare multiple translations of a single work that first drew me in. Then, as I got more into it, I found the text itself fascinating and challenging."

Kibbee said it all goes back to the university's support.

"It made it possible to not only support my own little corner of obscure academia, but it also gave me the opportunity to engage with colleagues who are all at the top of their field and taught me so much more than I ever thought I could learn," said Kibbee.



It wasn't just his colleagues he learned from, either.

"Every class was a new challenge to my mind," said Kibbee.

While Kibbee was endlessly seeking new knowledge, he was also making an impact on his students and colleagues. The **Douglas A. Kibbee Prize** was created on the occasion of his retirement by Kibbee's peers, friends, and students in honor of his distinguished career and service as first director of the school. The prize is awarded annually to the recipient of an **SLCL Dissertation Completion Fellowship** whose project is judged by a committee to be the most outstanding.

"Much of the funding for the prize came from my colleagues, but I continue to contribute to it because I believe in it," said Kibbee. "It's exciting to see the future faculty of the world coming out of our programs, and the ideas they have, the projects they're developing, are just amazing. I want them to enjoy the kind of support I've always received here."



Two programs of study within SLCL have undergone name changes

The Foreign Language Teacher Education program is now the **World Language Teacher Education** program.

The request to rename the program was unanimously approved by campus committees in 2023-24.

The new name has a more inclusive qualifier in "world," representing the diverse community of students and educators the program serves. The term "world language" also aligns with the Illinois State Board of Education's standards.

Meanwhile, the Program in Comparative & World Literature (CWL) is now the **Department of Comparative & World Literature**.

Faculty voted unanimously to reorganize into a department in 2007 and again in 2021. The proposal received approval from the Illinois Board of Higher Education in fall 2023.

The change was made to match CWL's pioneering reputation and structure—which was comparable to other departments on campus—with its classification.

A milestone of learning and service

There's a sentence from one of **Annie Abbott's** students that's seared into her memory: "I used to think immigration was a problem." The sentence had been written on an exam in Abbott's course, **SPAN 232: Spanish in the Community**. Abbott recalls how powerful it felt to read this sentence as it represented a perspective changed by what's become a meaningful and popular mainstay course on campus.

Twenty years ago, Abbott, professor and director of undergraduate studies in the **Department of Spanish & Portuguese**, created SPAN 232 as the university's first and only general education course that is not taught in English.

Since then, the course has grown from having about 12 students a semester to about 60 students a semester. Each student in the course volunteers with community partners for 20 hours, meaning that each semester Abbott's students deliver about 1,200 service hours.

This past semester, students volunteered in the dual immersion programs at International Prep Academy in Champaign and Leal Elementary School in Urbana, where they helped in classes where students needed help understanding English. Other students volunteered at Urbana Adult Education Center, where they helped adults learn English. These experiences give students a



chance to practice conversational Spanish while gaining new perspectives. **Madeleine Meehan** (BA, '23, molecular and cellular biology) recalls how her language learning went beyond surface level and gave her new perspective.

"It's easy to detach from what we learn in class but experiencing the realities of our lessons provides a lens of humanity," said Meehan. "In this class it was not simply exams and memorization. We learned by doing, by experiencing. We were able to see the real people, children, and peers that were experiencing the topics we studied in class."

The course originated in 2004 from an intensive Spanish course and was launched after Abbott and a colleague proposed Spanish in the Community to the vice chancellor of public engagement at U of I at the time. The course concept was accepted and funded to help build community-based learning courses.

When the course first began, The Refugee Center in Champaign was the only community partner. Students answered phone calls, greeted clients, accompanied clients to appointments, and helped clients study for the citizenship test.

Over time, the specific ways that students volunteered changed along with the ways that immigration has changed. Abbott noted that understanding

immigration and the way it changes and evolves is essential to her course.

"When you work with the community, when you do engaged teaching or engaged scholarship, you have to be very flexible," Abbott explained. "You have to adapt to changes, and you have to really be attentive to what's going on. You can't just create a model and then think that that's going to be the same forever."

While some specific volunteering roles have changed, the interactive backbone of the course remains: Abbott wants to give all students a collaborative learning experience.

"When reflecting on my college experience as a whole, this class comes to the forefront of my mind," Meehan said. "I think Professor Abbott deserves the credit in making this class what it really is, and I regard her as one of the best educators I have had the privilege of learning from."

Abbott has made it her goal over the past 20 years to teach students not only the language of Spanish but the cultures that are around it.

"Spanish is a language of people," Abbott said. "There are students who think of it as something that you learned for a grade, think of it as something that you use in the classroom or maybe when you travel on vacation or go to a restaurant. But in this class, you can learn about and experience Spanish as a language of your neighbors, as a language of exchange and support. You can connect with people, learn from those people, and help them in some way."



AN EVERLASTING IMPACT

Your first and last name are some of the first things you learn as a child, when you're only just beginning the long journey to find your place in the world.

They're also arguably the most important.

That was the key message **George Reveliotis** (BA, '96, history) wanted to share when he walked into Foellinger Auditorium this May as the speaker for the SLCL Spring 2024 Convocation.

"A person is identified by a first name and a surname," said Reveliotis. "The first name connotes an individual, but the last name connotes belonging to a family. You come from somewhere. For many of us, there are people who have facilitated [our journeys from childhood to adulthood]. Always remember that, and whatever warmth and encouragement you received, pass it on."

The concept of "passing it on" has been a crucial one for Reveliotis, founder and managing

partner of Reveliotis Law, P.C., a property tax and real estate law firm in Park Ridge, Illinois. A strong supporter of the **Department of Classics**, he pledged \$1.5 million to set up the **George N. Reveliotis Family Hellenic Studies Endowment** in 2019. The gift, which he pledged over 10 years, is being used to support a lecturer, scholarships, professorships, and graduate fellowships.

For Reveliotis, it was that immutable tie to his family that inspired him to give back.

"My parents came from Greece," he said. "Greek was my first language. Growing up, we learned about Greek culture and history, and having traveled extensively to Greece throughout my life, I love everything Greek. We are proud of our heritage and our contributions to the world."

Reveliotis said there were a few things he hoped to help accomplish through his support: emphasize the importance of Greek language, history, and culture; showcase Greek influences via the sciences, mathematics, and literature; and fill

in any potential voids in the teaching of the history of the Eastern Roman Empire.

He sees study abroad as one crucial way to achieve these goals, having designated part of his gift into the **George N. Reveliotis Family Hellenic Studies Travel Scholarship Fund**.

"Studying abroad helps put everything into context," he said.

Most of all, he wanted to bolster the work that was already happening in the department's Ancient and Modern Greek programs.

"I was drawn to what they were doing, and I wanted to be a part of it," said Reveliotis. "I believe educators are the brightest individuals in our society. If my support can [encourage them] to continue their work, that gives me a great sense of pride."

At the end of the day, it's that human element that Reveliotis cherishes the most.

"To me, it's investing in human minds and souls," said Reveliotis. "I could have bought [material things,] but those are going to sap away in some land disposal site one day. But if you can invest in people's minds and souls, that's something that stays forever."



BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN LANGUAGES



Interpreters play a crucial role in ensuring access to justice and healthcare for all, but there often aren't enough professionals to fill that need.

Hebba Abulsaad (MA, '23, translation and interpreting studies) saw that gap and took it upon herself to help bridge it—all while working to complete her master's degree on time.

"I feel that bridging the gap between languages is rewarding and empowering," said Abulsaad. "I have a deep fascination with different languages and cultures, and I have always had a strong desire to help others and promote cross-cultural understanding."

Abulsaad does Arabic < > English interpretation and translation and is a certified judiciary and health care interpreter, in addition to managing her own small company.

She said her work as a certified interpreter is crucial in facilitating communication between individuals who speak different languages in legal and medical settings.

"As a court interpreter, I work during trials, hearings, depositions, and other legal proceedings. My responsibility is to accurately convey spoken statements and evidence

between parties who do not share a common language," said Abulsaad. "As a medical interpreter, I assist in healthcare settings such as hospitals, clinics, and doctor's offices. My role is to help patients and healthcare providers communicate effectively, ensuring that medical history, symptoms, diagnoses, and treatment options are accurately conveyed."

Abulsaad said the format of the **Program in Translation & Interpreting Studies** was a huge help when it came to juggling her interpreting work and studies.

"The online format of the program was immensely important for me as a working professional," she said. "It made it easier for me to enhance my skills and qualifications without interrupting my career."

2024 SLCL AWARD WINNERS

The School of Literatures, Cultures & Linguistics is proud to present this year's service, fellowship, and scholarship awards.

SLCL DIVERSITY & ENGAGEMENT AWARD

This award recognizes alumni or members of the community at large who have made significant contributions to the SLCL community.

- Eman Saadah, linguistics



XIAOHUI ZHANG DIVERSITY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AWARD

This award honors members of the school who have contributed to our mission of promoting a diverse, inclusive, and engaged academic community.

- Luis David Gaytán-Soto, Spanish & Portuguese



MARITA ROMINE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

This award honors a selected staff member for outstanding contributions to the school.

- Nate Payne, facilities operation coordinator



- Marcia Bellafiore, assistant to the director



SLCL students receive awards for study abroad

Five students from SLCL are taking their studying out of the classroom during the 2024-25 academic year with the help of various prestigious awards and scholarships.

CRITICAL LANGUAGE SCHOLARSHIPS

This program provides full scholarships to students to spend eight to 10 weeks abroad studying one of 14 critical languages.

Shireen Aydogan

- Molecular and cellular biology and Arabic studies
- Language: Arabic
- Location: Nizwa, Oman



Sylvia Techmanski

- Speech and hearing science and Spanish
- Language: Portuguese
- Location: Brazil



BEINECKE SCHOLARSHIP

This award supports graduate study in the arts, humanities, or social sciences.

Justin Wytmar

- History and Italian
- Research area: exchange of culture and ideas between France and Italy
- Plans to complete a doctorate in history



FULBRIGHT FELLOWSHIP

These awards allow students to pursue international education, research, and teaching experiences around the globe.

Lydia Alvarez

- Spanish and Latina/Latino studies
- Teaching English in Spain



Amelia Kolany

- Spanish and psychology
- Teaching English in Spain



Andrew Schwenk

- Germanic languages & literatures
- Conducting research for dissertation in Germany



Linguistics faculty member selected by Department of State for ELS project

The U.S. Department of State has selected a faculty member from SLCL for their English Language Specialist Program.

John Kotnarowski, who teaches in the **English as a Second Language** program in the **Department of Linguistics**, was selected for a project focusing on teaching academic writing in Kazakhstan. He's part of a select group, with only 250 projects supported by the program each year.

"The goal is to share strategies and 'best practices' for teaching academic writing, especially at the high school level," said Kotnarowski. "Hopefully, if the participants find the experience useful/valuable, they will consider taking the



materials and sharing them with their colleagues at their home institutions."

The English Language Specialist Program is the premier opportunity for leaders in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) to enact meaningful and sustainable changes in the way that English is taught abroad.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN SLCL

SLCL SUMMER FELLOWSHIPS FOR SPECIALIZED FACULTY

These fellowships are designed to support summer research by specialized faculty and academic professionals.

- **Michelle Dutton, Spanish & Portuguese**
- **Ali Saeedi, linguistics**
- **Kara Yarrington, Spanish & Portuguese**

SLCL DISSERTATION COMPLETION FELLOWSHIPS

These fellowships provide advanced doctoral students with an academic year of support to complete their dissertations.

- **Soraya Cipolla, French & Italian**
- **Julia Gorham, French & Italian**
- **Mai Mohamed Eida, linguistics**
- **Nobuto Sato, comparative & world literature**

DOUGLAS A. KIBBEE PRIZE

This prize is awarded annually to the dissertation project that is deemed to show particular scholarly significance and promise.

- **Julia Gorham, French & Italian**

SCHEIDEL SCHOLARSHIP

These awards are given to undergraduate students who have overcome significant hurdles to achieve academic success. This scholarship fund was established in 2007, thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Frances Scheidel.

- **Michael Caplan, Spanish & Portuguese**
- **Molly Moomaw, classics**
- **Tallulah Trezevant, classics**
- **Mia Vavaroutsos, Spanish & Portuguese**

WLTE FUTURE TEACHER AWARDS

These awards from the World Language Teacher Education program recognize the professional and academic excellence of teacher candidates and provide financial support to assist them with the costs related to student teaching during their final semester.

- **Sophia Caruso, Spanish & Portuguese and teaching English as a second language**
- **Sophia Warnement, classics**

SLCL projects funded by Illinois and University of Birmingham

Two faculty members from SLCL have received Birmingham-Illinois Partnership for Discovery, Engagement, and Education (BRIDGE) Seed Fund Grants for the 2024-2025 academic year.

Jonathan Ebel, head of the **Department of Religion**, will collaborate with a professor from Birmingham on a project titled: "New Directions in Interfaith Education and the Study of Jainism."

Valeria Sobol from the **Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures** will collaborate with a professor from Birmingham on a project titled:

"Russophone Literary Diversity and Peripheries."

The BRIDGE Seed Fund supports collaborative projects between the University of Birmingham and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, with a focus on developing faculty networks, building cognate research areas, expanding educational exchange opportunities, and strengthening strategic aspirations for institutional engagement.

Twelve projects received funding this year.





Photos by Ezldean Shalabi

U OF I HOSTS U.S. UNIVERSITIES ARABIC MIDWEST DEBATE CHAMPIONSHIP

The inaugural U.S. Universities Arabic Midwest Debate Championship was held at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign this spring.

The event was coordinated by the **Less Commonly Taught Languages** program (LCTL) and the **Arabic Language Program** in the **Department of Linguistics** in collaboration with the U.S. Arabic Debate Union and many on-campus cosponsors.

Leading the organizing efforts were **Eman Saadah**, who serves as

director of LCTL and director and language coordinator of Arabic, and students **Shireen Aydogan** and **Nareen Aydogan**, who are a part of the Arabic program.

They said organizing an event of this scale was a challenging but fulfilling experience.

“This was the first-ever Arabic regional debate championship and was solely organized by the U of I,” said Shireen Aydogan. “Without a blueprint to follow, planning and execution were particularly challenging. From securing over \$20,000 in funds to communicating

with debating teams across the U.S., handling hotel reservations, classroom bookings, and managing design and media, we worked tirelessly. Overcoming these challenges made the event’s success even more rewarding.”

The regional championship brought 10 debate teams together for a chance to qualify at the national championship next year, as well as 15 judges.

“It was both a national and local triumph: nationally, we attracted top Arabic debate teams from the Midwest, and locally, our team from Illinois secured the runner-up title,” said Saadah. “Establishing this groundbreaking event has also paved the way for other institutions to look to us as a model for success.”

Training Qualified IEP Interpreters project underway at Illinois

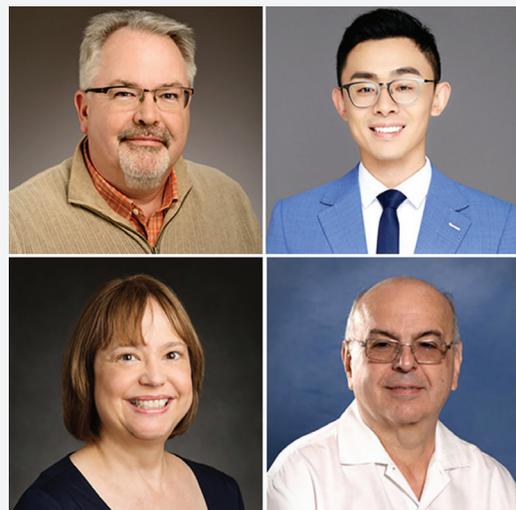
Experts at Illinois are developing a training program for interpreters, following a state law that requires qualified interpreters to be present when teachers and parents meet to discuss individualized education programs (IEPs) for students with special educational needs.

Faculty from **Second Language Acquisition & Teacher Education**, the **Department of Linguistics**, and the **Program in Translation & Interpreting Studies** are working on language proficiency tests and training modules in special education and interpreting to meet this need.

The five-year, \$5 million project—called Training Qualified IEP Interpreters (TQII)—has made significant progress since launching in 2023 with funding from the Illinois State Board of Education.

The project’s interpretation team has fully implemented training modules for two cohorts in the past year. Meanwhile, the testing team has developed and piloted English and Spanish versions of the language proficiency test. These will be officially launched this academic year.

The team is also working on tests in Russian, Arabic, Urdu, Polish, and Mandarin Chinese. They hope to pilot them this year and launch the tests gradually in the upcoming years.



Left to right: Kiel Christianson, director of SLATE; Xun Yan, professor of linguistics; Joyce Tolliver, director of the Program in Translation and Interpreting Studies; Reynaldo Pagura, professor of translation and interpreting studies

SLCL faculty members receive named professorship positions



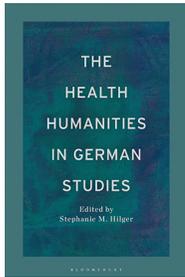
Two SLCL professors are the recipients of named professorship positions within the College of LAS.

Silvina Montrul, professor of Spanish and linguistics, and **Harriet Murav**, professor of Slavic languages and literatures, both received Marjorie Roberts Professorships in Liberal Arts & Sciences.

The professorship is named for the late Marjorie Roberts from the Class of 1923. Upon her death, she left part of her estate to the College of LAS. The professorships are granted to recipients based upon their record of scholarship, contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and contributions to public engagement.

Montrul is a renowned scholar in bilingualism, while Murav’s work is dedicated to innovative scholarship within Russian and Jewish studies.

GLL professor publishes The Health Humanities in German Studies



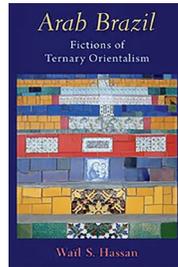
A professor in the **Department of Germanic Languages & Literatures** is bringing together the fields of health

humanities and German studies through her new book.

“The Health Humanities in German Studies,” edited by **Stephanie M. Hilger** and published by Bloomsbury in June, is the first full-length study of its kind.

The book features contributions from a range of scholars and provides important new insights into the intersections between the two fields. In their contributions, the scholars engage with disability, critical race, gender/embodiment, trauma, and animal/environmental studies.

Uncovering the experience of Arab immigrants in Latin America



In 2007, **Wail Hassan** was writing a book about the literature of Arab immigrants in the United States and Britain when he uncovered something intriguing.

By reading the works of multiple Latin American writers of Arab descent, he found that Arab immigrants who lived in Latin America had consistently more prominent levels of achievement than those who lived in the U.S. This perplexed Hassan, a professor of comparative and world literature, as he knew that Arab immigrants faced discrimination and prejudice in both places.

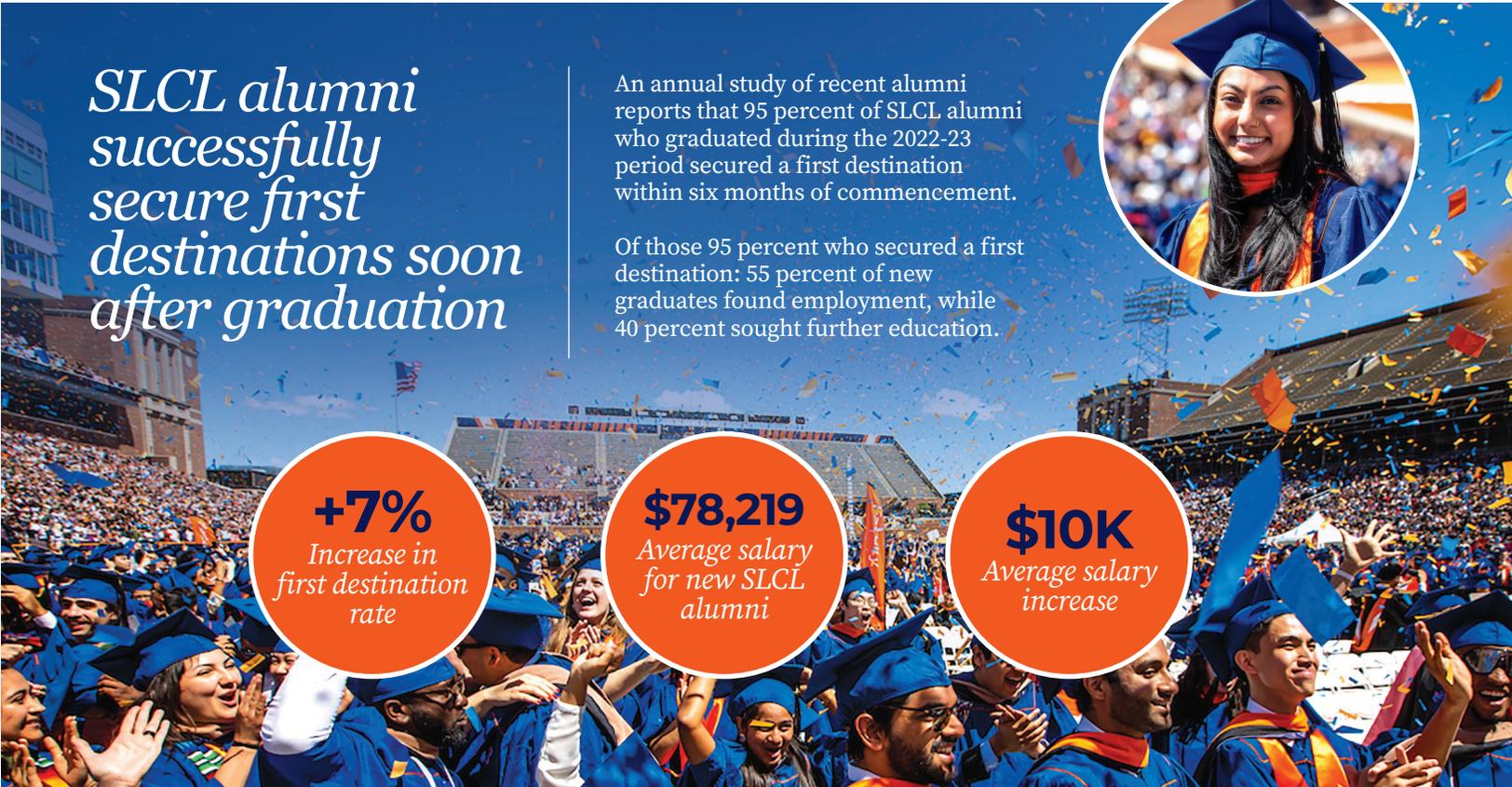
He set out to explain the difference, and he recently detailed his discoveries in a new book, “Arab Brazil: Fictions of Ternary Orientalism,” published by Oxford University Press in March. The new work explores the representation of Arabs and Islam in Brazilian literature.

SLCL alumni successfully secure first destinations soon after graduation



An annual study of recent alumni reports that 95 percent of SLCL alumni who graduated during the 2022-23 period secured a first destination within six months of commencement.

Of those 95 percent who secured a first destination: 55 percent of new graduates found employment, while 40 percent sought further education.





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U of I students select best French novel of the year

How do you decide which book deserves to be named the best work of French literature of the year?

That's the question students from the **Department of French & Italian** asked themselves this spring as they participated in **FR 322: Movements and Perspectives**, which centered on the 2024 US Goncourt Prize Selection.

The Prix Goncourt, or Goncourt Prize, is one of the most prestigious francophone literary prizes, awarded each year since 1903 by the 10 members of the Académie Goncourt in Paris.

"It's kind of the Pulitzer Prize equivalent in France," said French student **Finn Marloft**.

The Choix Goncourt, or Goncourt Prize Selection, gives students from campuses across the globe the opportunity to participate in the selection process, and this year, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus was chosen as one of only 10 participating campuses across the U.S. Illinois was the only Midwestern school selected.

"It's kind of a point of pride that we were [in that mix,]" said French student **Rebecca Arden**. "I think it's a great representation of the Midwest."

The group of six students read and analyzed the four nominated novels, took turns leading discussions, reflected on the themes, literary merit, and impact of each work, and chose a winner. They then elected a delegate who traveled to New York to defend their choice, deliberate with the delegates of the other nine participating campuses, and name the next "Choix Goncourt des États-Unis."

"I was lucky enough to be chosen to be the representative to go to New York and represent U of I for the first time, which was really cool," said Marloft.

He and his classmates selected "**Triste tigre**" by **Neige Sinno**—described as a poignant narrative of childhood trauma—as their winner, as did the other delegates.

"We had kind of unanimously decided on that book already, so there was very little deliberation, which was interesting. I heard it was the first time in a while that's happened," Marloft said. "It's a tough story. Sometimes it

The student jury with author David Diop and Cultural Counselor of France Mohamed Bouabdallah at the Villa Albertine headquarters in New York City. © Jasmina Tomic / Courtesy of Villa Albertine



makes you want to put the book down, but it pushes you to think about these things. The author is also so transparent with the reader, and that was something we all gravitated towards."

While the students were able to find a lot of common ground during the selection process, they said it also allowed them to speak their minds, be vulnerable, and learn from each other's diverse perspectives and experiences.

"It kind of felt like a book club a little bit," said Arden. "Not only did I get to express what I think, but other people think very differently from me, so I got to understand the book on a deeper level by talking to other people."

"Triste tigre" will be published in English in April 2025.



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