This issue of MLC Newslines highlights faculty and their research. Baylor’s strategic vision, Pro Futuris, calls upon faculty to engage in compelling scholarship.

The new strategic plan from Baylor’s College of Arts & Sciences, A&SPIRE, echoes this aim as it highlights Baylor’s goal of becoming a nationally recognized research institution.

Faculty in Modern Languages and Cultures actively contribute to the research and scholarship mission of the College and the university. Each year, departmental faculty members publish books as well as dozens of articles in scholarly journals. Our scholarly research includes scores of presentations at professional conferences across the United States and around the world.

If you would like to support MLC students and programs, please visit www.baylor.edu/mlc and click “Give to MLC.” Happy reading, and I would love to hear from you.

Heidi Bostic, Chair
Heidi_Bostic@baylor.edu

NEW FACULTY JOIN MODERN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

A number of new faculty joined the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures in fall 2014, and others were promoted in rank. The group is comprised of newly-tenured faculty, associate professors, senior lecturers, regular and temporary lecturers.

Three departmental faculty received tenure and promotion to Associate Professor: Dr. Karol Hardin, Div. of Spanish and Portuguese, Dr. Adrienne Harris, Div. of German and Russian, and Dr. Theresa Varney Kennedy, Div. of French and Italian.

In addition, Dr. Michael Boerm, Div. of French and Italian received promotion to Senior Lecturer.

The Division of Asian and African Languages added three new faculty. Dr. Yiming Shen is the Visiting Exchange Professor from Tsinghua University in Beijing, China. Also from China, Xiuli “Hope” Zhang filled in for Dr. Shen before his arrival in Waco and will teach a section of beginning Chinese in Spring 2015. Dan Reilly, experienced translator for the US military, began as Temporary Lecturer in Arabic.

Eva Hruska was hired as a Regular Lecturer in the Division of German and Russian.

Serena Dal Pont joined the faculty of the Div. of French and Italian as a Temporary Lecturer in Italian.

The Division of Spanish and Portuguese added several new faculty, in-
This academic year, the department of Modern Languages and Cultures welcomed a new colleague, Dr. Alex McNair, as Associate Professor of Spanish and Director of the Division of Spanish and Portuguese. An Austin native, as an undergraduate Dr. McNair was a double major in Anthropology and Spanish. He also studied Latin and Portuguese. He completed his M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin, focusing on Hispanic Literature, especially the medieval era and the Golden Age. He also studied Spanish-language poetry and the contemporary Latin American novel.

Following a year as a Lecturer at the University of Texas, Dr. McNair accepted a tenure-track position at the University of Wisconsin Parkside, where he taught for 14 years. He coordinated the lower-level Spanish courses and taught many upper-level courses in civilization and literature, both Spanish and Spanish-American.

When asked why he was interested in coming to Baylor, Dr. McNair replied: “Baylor is an awesome place to be right now. It’s in the national spotlight in a lot of different areas. I was also anxious to get back to Texas and I felt like I had a lot to contribute to the Division of Spanish and Portuguese.”

As Division Director, Dr. McNair counsels students from a variety of academic areas across campus, in particular those who have questions about transfer credit and placement issues. Scheduling classes is also a big part of the job, as there are 41 instructors of record in the Division this year. Dr. McNair is also eager to “help the Division in thinking about a bright future” in areas such as increasing the number of majors and creating more interdisciplinary connections. Dr. McNair remarks: “Interdisciplinarity is part of my background too. I did a lot of directing of interdisciplinary programs and working across department lines at U-W Parkside.”

His current research is also interdisciplinary. He is currently exploring the connections between folk religion, folk belief, and official religion. He enjoys working between literary and oral traditions. He is eager to counteract what he calls the “high-culture, elite bias” that would favor canonical literary texts over other cultural forms. In Dr. McNair’s words, whether great literary work or folktale, “It’s all verbal art.” He adds: “One of the things I love about the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures is its focus on language in a holistic way. Folklore is a huge part of that.”

Dr. McNair and his wife, Anna, have been married for 22 years. They have 3 sons, the youngest of whom just started this year at Midway High School. Anna, who holds a BBA in Accounting, began her professional life as an accountant and now teaches kindergarten. She is also a native Texan. When he is not at work, Dr. McNair, who calls himself “a cardio addict,” loves to swim. (In response to the question, “Do you swim in the Brazos River?,” his response was an emphatic “No.”) He also enjoys reading contemporary fiction.

Dr. McNair loves being a Baylor Bear thanks to the colleagues and students. He remarked: “What really impresses me about my colleagues in Spanish and Portuguese is their professionalism and their tireless dedication to students.”

“One of the things I love about the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures is its focus on culture and language in a holistic way.”


NEW FACULTY JOIN MLC CONTINUED...

continued from page 1
cluding a new Division Director, Dr. Alex McNair, who is featured on page 2. The Division added four Regular Lecturers: Dr. Fernanda Bueno, Dr. Rosario Colchero-Dorado, Isabel Colorado-Edwards, and Louis Mazé, who is also teaching in French. In addition, three Temporary Lecturers joined the division: Gabriela Gutierrez, Tracey Jones, and Ana Luna Hoyas.

The Master of Arts graduate program in the Division of Spanish and Portuguese continues to grow. Five new graduate students began the program in fall 2014, bringing the total number of graduate students to nine.

New first-year graduate students are: Abbey Allison, Paige Myers, Sarah Rabke, Katie Samples, and Kelsey Schlicting.

Students continuing in the second year of graduate studies are: Esther Hur, Hipatia Medina, and Ben Moss.

Dr. Lilly Souza-Fuertes was successful in arranging once more for a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant to work at Baylor. Camila Oppelt of Brazil is this year’s Fulbright FLTA, who teaches Portuguese and leads students in extracurricular activities.
On December 4, 2014, ten student groups from Modern Languages and Cultures sang Christmas carols in their respective languages as part of Baylor’s annual “Christmas on 5th Street” celebration. Students in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish performed Christmas carols accompanied by instruments such as guitars, a trombone, and sleigh bells. The event took place outdoors in the SUB Bowl. A large crowd of spectators enjoyed the music and unseasonably warm weather. Modern Languages and Cultures faculty members guided each group, helping to choose the carols and organizing rehearsals to make the event a great success. Prof. Yoshiko Gaines (Japanese) was the primary organizer of the event, assisted by many students and colleagues from MLC and from Baylor’s Global Community Living Learning Center (GC-LLC). Students from GC-LLC served as emcees for the event. They also sold t-shirts benefitting Mission Waco. At the conclusion of the singing, the emcees announced that next year, the GC-LLC will be renamed “Baylor and Beyond Living Learning Center.” It will move into the newly-renovated North Russell Hall and will be home to nearly 400 Baylor students. See www.baylor.edu/baylorandbeyondllc/.