Reconnect with the Language Schools

Alumni of all the Middlebury summer Language Schools are invited to return to campus on the weekend of August 1–4, 2008, to spend some time in their former school and attend school activities.

The weekend will feature films, sports, and concerts—the kind of co-curricular activities you will remember from your time as a Language Schools student. On Saturday, August 1, you are invited to attend an afternoon-long symposium (in English) on globalization and national identity in international cinema and literature. The annual alumni career panel will take place on Monday, August 4, at 4:15 p.m. The Language Pledge will be suspended for this event.

Alumni are welcome to purchase tickets to dine with their school, but we ask that you find lodging off campus since the Language Schools—all 10—are bursting at the seams, and every bed on campus is taken by a summer student.

For details on arrivals, lodging, activities, and RSVPs, please go to http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/ls/alumni/weekend or call 802.443.2110 to request information by mail.

You may also contact Elizabeth Karnes Keefe, assistant dean, at 802.443.5685 or karnes@middlebury.edu.

We look forward to seeing many of you in August!

Transition in the Escuela Española

This fall the Language Schools will make the transition to a new director of the Spanish School, saying adiós to Susan Carvalho after six years of exceptional service and welcoming her successor, Jacobo Sefamí, who will become director in September.

Carvalho has held various administrative positions in recent years, beginning as acting chair of the political science department at the University of Kentucky. She was selected by the American Council on Education as an administrative fellow, serving a one-year internship in the Office of the Chancellor and Office of the Provost at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, during academic year 2005–2006.

Upon returning to the University of Kentucky, Carvalho was named associate dean for faculty affairs. This year, she became assistant provost for international programs, spearheading the process of campus-wide internationalization. In this capacity, she is working to connect the international research agenda with opportunities for student mobility, both for Kentucky students who want to study abroad and for international students interested in coming to Kentucky.

Muchas gracias y adiós, Susan!

Sefamí is well known to many of you through his association with the Spanish School in Vermont, where he has taught during several summers since 1987 and, most recently, with the program in Guadalajara.

He received his Ph.D. in Spanish and Latin American literature from the University of Texas at Austin and now serves as chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of California, Irvine, where he is professor of Spanish. A respected scholar in the field of Latin American poetry, his publications include nine books of criticism, anthologies, five poetry editions, many articles and book reviews, and Los dolientes, his novel about a Jewish family of Syrian origin living in Mexico City.

Sefamí is associate editor of Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicano, contributing editor of the Handbook of Latin American Studies, and a member of the editorial boards of other
journals. He has taught an array of courses, juggled roles as an administrator and professor, and received many academic honors, awards, and grants.

A native of Mexico City, Sefamí is conversant in French and Hebrew and will add a new chapter to the distinguished history of directors of our Spanish School, now in its 91st year. While it is hard to imagine the Middlebury Spanish School without Susan Carvalho, we are confident that in Jacobo Sefamí we have found a most worthy successor.

**Study in Poitiers**

Beginning this year, students in the French School will be able to complete the MA in a series of summer sessions on the Vermont campus and one summer in a new program hosted by the University of Poitiers, France. This program is open to MA students in their second, third or fourth summer, as well as to DML students, for whom this summer in France can count as part of their residency requirement. For full information, go to: http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/ls/french/.

**Kathryn Davis Fellowships**

One hundred students from around the country and the world have been selected for the 2008 Kathryn Davis Fellowships for Peace. The fellowships are made possible by a multi-million dollar gift from Kathryn Davis. Now in its second year, this program is intended to address today’s critical need for greater proficiency in languages that are less commonly taught but are critical to international relations. Fellows will use their language training to foster international engagement. Examples of their career plans include international conflict resolution, arms control negotiations, promotion of international business, intelligence analysis, and community development.

Fellowships cover the full cost of a summer of language study at the Middlebury College Language Schools. Students may be at any level, from beginner to graduate, but must be studying Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Japanese, Portuguese, or Russian. Each grant covers the full comprehensive fee (tuition, room, and board) for one summer, plus a stipend to assist in defraying program-related expenses. For more information on scholarships for summer 2009 and beyond, please go to http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/ls/fellowships_scholarships/kwd.htm.

**Language Education Reforms Spark Debate**

Ever since 9/11, the American public has been keenly aware of a language crisis that leaves Americans dangerously out of touch with events and opinions in other parts of the world. Last year, a committee of the Modern Language Association released a report examining how foreign language educators can address that crisis at the university level. Members of the committee included Michael Geisler, Middlebury’s vice president for Language Schools, Schools Abroad, and Graduate Programs, and Karin Ryding, a 1964 graduate of Middlebury College who is now a professor of Arabic and linguistics at Georgetown University.

The committee’s report, “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World,” has become one of the most widely discussed documents in recent MLA history. It calls for sweeping reforms in the way foreign language education is structured in the United States. Among its key recommendations: colleges and universities need to provide advanced language students with a strong background in culture and area studies, rather than concentrating exclusively on literary history.

“Deep cultural knowledge and linguistic competence are equally necessary if one wishes to understand people and their communities,” Geisler says. “The committee recommends moving towards a goal of both linguistic and transcultural competence. Students need enough proficiency in the language to converse with educated native speakers, combined with a deep analytic knowledge and understanding of history, societal values, norms, and traditions.”

The full report is available on the MLA Web site at: http://www.mla.org/flreport.