



# Foreign Language Newsletter

University of Montevallo

## US-Brazil Arts and Culture Initiative

In May 2007, the University of Montevallo approved the Memorandum of Understanding for the US-Brazil Arts and Culture Initiative. The Initiative is funded through a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and its Brazilian counterpart the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Nível Superior (CAPES) and runs through the 2009-2010 academic year. The Initiative brings together three U.S. institutions: the University of Montevallo, Gadsden State Community College, and Augusta State Technical College and two Brazilian institutions, Universidade Federal de Viçosa and Universidade Federal de Goiás. The grant funds student and faculty exchange as well as assistance

with Portuguese language training for U.S. participants. The primary focus of the exchange program will be in the areas of arts, music, literature, and languages. It is also expected that the participating institutions will coordinate a conference on U.S. and Brazilian culture at the conclusion of the grant. Dr. Charles Hill, Academic Director for Language and Fine Arts at Gadsden State, is the Project Director. Dr. Eric Vaccarella, Assistant Professor of Spanish, is the program representative at Montevallo. Currently, four Brazilian students, (Gabriela Augusto and Ronaldo Gomes, from the Universidade Federal de Viçosa and Karina Salomão Costa and Lídia Dos Santos Freitas, from the Universidade Federal de Goiás)



Students and faculty from the Universidade Federal de Goiás.

are enrolled at Montevallo for the Fall 2007 semester. Two UM students, Leah Hamby (Spanish major) and Christoph Berenotto (Political Science major), have been selected to study in Brazil beginning Spring 2008. We encourage current UM students to apply next year.

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### Special points of interest:

- *Montevallo in Mérida.*
- *Jensen Award.*
- *The Cynthia Acosta Gravlee Scholarship.*
- *Brazilian Students at the University of Montevallo.*
- *FL Faculty comments.*

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## The Cynthia Acosta Gravlee Scholarship

The Cynthia Acosta Gravlee Scholarship is a new scholarship established by the Department of English and Foreign Languages. It will be awarded annually to a junior majoring in English with a minor or second major in Foreign Language. The scholarship will be awarded based on academic achievement (a minimum 3.0 GPA) and evidence of humanitarian concerns through campus and community service. It

is renewable for up to one year if the recipient continues in the English and Foreign Language programs and maintains the required grade point average. The scholarship was established thanks to a generous endowment made by Professor Cynthia Acosta Gravlee, who retired from the Department in 2006 after nearly 20 years of service. The first recipient is Jessica Reeves, who has been

awarded \$1000 for the 2007-2008 academic year. Jessica is an English / Language Arts major with a minor in Spanish. It is hoped that this new award will stimulate greater interest in foreign language among English majors and encourage more students to explore language, literature, and culture across academic disciplines.



## Stacey Ayotte, Assistant Professor of French

Bonjour!

This is my third year at UM. I have enjoyed teaching at a small liberal arts institution as it feels similar to what I experienced as an undergraduate at Hope College in Michigan.

During May 2007, I led an eclectic group (students, parents, and family) to France and Italy. We visited Paris' famous landmarks: la Tour Eiffel, le château Versailles, le Louvre and Notre-Dame. In Italy, we enjoyed tours of Pisa, Florence and Rome. My favorite

part of the trip included a cable car ride up a mountain on the island of Capri in southern Italy. The views were gorgeous and I was mesmerized by the beauty of the Mediterranean sea that surrounded me. As with any international travel, it is necessary to savour the local cuisine--our group did just that. We pigged out on French pastisseries and Italian gelato at every meal. One of my short-term goals is to establish a study abroad program in France so that UM students can benefit from

living abroad and experience true Francophone culture!



## Rosa María Stoops, Assistant Professor of Spanish and French

Hello, My name is Dr. Rosa Maria Stoops. For two and a half years now, I have taught Spanish and French at UM. After attending big universities in the North and South of the US as a student, I enjoy very much teaching in a small liberal arts university.

During the months of May and June of 2007, I traveled to France and Italy for study and recreation. Here, I am at the famous Avenue of Les Champs Elysées in Paris, having as a background the

Arc de Triomphe. After a week in Paris visiting all the famous landmarks and museums, I traveled to Tours to study at the Institut de Touraine where I took language, literature, and art history classes.

My aspiration as a professor at UM is to get students to be passionate about foreign languages, literature, travel, and other cultures just as I am.



## Eric Vaccarella, Assistant Professor of Spanish

The highlight of the summer of 2007 for me was a trip to the Universidade Federal de Goiás in the city of Goiânia, Brazil, to help promote the U.S.-Brazil Arts and Culture Initiative, a federally funded exchange program that will allow UM to host Brazilian students and to send students to Brazil through the 2009-2010 academic year. During my visit I delivered two academic lectures on Spanish Colonial literature as well as a presentation about opportunities for study at Montevallo. I also had the chance

to meet with students who will be participating in the exchange program and with faculty who will be working with Montevallo students in the future. My visit also allowed for time to tour some of the fascinating historical sites around the region, including a trip to Goiás Velho, the colonial capital of the state, which is designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In this photo, I am standing with my son, Philip, on the campus of the Universidade Federal de Goiás.





## Leonor Vázquez-González, Assistant Professor of Spanish

During Fall 06 and Spring 07, I did extensive research on Luis de Lión, an Indigenous Guatemalan author killed in 1984 during the Civil War. This summer I went to Guatemala for a week to continue, and experience first hand interactions between Mayan people and mainstream Guatemalans. I have realized that Guatemala is full of cultural contrasts, which make it so appealing to go back and learn more about it. I enjoyed this trip for several reasons, but

one of them was the landscape. This small country has more than 20 volcanoes! And when I was there the *Volcán de Fuego* erupted!

This picture was taken in Antigua, the former capital city of the country. There was an earthquake in 1773 that destroyed most of the city, and these are the ruins of “La iglesia de las monjas clarisas.”

I encourage you to travel to any Latin American country or Spain and to share your anecdotes with us through our

Newsletter. I am sure you would love and treasure your trip!



## Leslie Hinson’s Study Abroad anecdote in France

After spending the entire spring semester in France, I find myself looking back fondly on the strangest little memories. Of course I miss my international friends and my wonderful French teachers, but I keep retelling the same story that I’m sure I will never forget. Four friends and I decided to rent a car and drive to Amsterdam and Brussels during a long weekend. I’m not sure how far we had gotten before we realized that we couldn’t get the car to re-

verse. In case our bright baseball caps, backpacks, blue jeans, and tennis shoes didn’t point us out as the most American tourists to ever hit Amsterdam, we had to physically push the car in and out of parking spaces. Although we were incredibly embarrassed at the moment, I love to remember it now. We found out upon returning to France that in order to put a European car in reverse, you have to lift up on a silver ring at the base of the gear shift. I hope that

tip eventually keeps someone from looking as conspicuous as I did!



## Jensen Award: “Habla para ganar”

Junior Amanda Waligora was the recipient for the Jensen Award 2007.

The Jensen Award is given annually by the department to the non-native speaker student who is deemed to speak most proficiently the foreign language he or she is studying.

On Tuesday March 13th, the department held the contest at the Palmer

Commons. Tia Johnson, Nicolas Ludvik, Amanda Waligora, and Sarah Warren were the participants. Each student had to talk for about 5 minutes about a topic that they selected by random.

Congratulations to Amanda!

**Alumni with interest in supporting the University of Montevallo Foreign Language Program please contact:**

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# THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO

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## Montevallo en Mérida

For the third time, in summer 2008, UM Spanish students will have the opportunity to experience an immersion program in Merida, Mexico. Local families will host our students for a month; so that UM students will be able to improve their linguistic skills while at the same time living the “Mexican” life. Students will also learn about the rich Mayan culture in the Yucatan Peninsula by visiting different Mayan ruin sites, such as Chichen Itza, Tulum, Palenque, and Uxmal. This learning experience cannot be complete without enjoying the Caribbean coast of the Peninsula! Students will snorkel in the second largest coral reef by the Riviera Maya. Dr. Eric Vaccarella is in charge of this year’s program.



For more information about the Summer Study Abroad Program contact  
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Left: Hotel in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas.

Below: Main plaza in Mérida City, capital of the Mexican State of Yucatán.

