Featured Accomplishments

8,000 San José State University students and their supportive friends and family watched the 2013 “Sammy Spartan Graduates” film at graduation on May 25, 2013. The film was written by Darren Rae (’13 RTVF) based on a storyboard by Kevin Yang (’13 Animation/Illustration). The film was produced by Spartan Film Studios. With cinematography by Shaan Aslam (’14 RTVF), the film is yet another example of the high quality, professional work done by our students here in the College of Humanities and the Arts. The film depicts Sammy joining the Alumni Association, saying his nostalgic farewells to campus, and hugging his proud parents as he packs up his dorm room. Watch the fabulous film on YouTube.

Animation and Illustration students made several wonderfully creative trailers for Latin American author Isabel Allende’s new book, Maya’s Notebook. The book focuses on a troubled teenager making her way in the world, and the trailers capture the great sense of adventure and imagination expressed in the novel. Watch the trailers here.

The SJSU Choraliers sang with the Rolling Stones twice in the month of May (in Oakland and San Jose). Professor and Director of the School of Music and Dance Joseph Frank and I nearly had heart failure during the sound check, when we were on stage with a few of rock and roll’s greatest, including Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Ronnie Wood, Bonnie Raitt, and John Fogerty. Reviews highlighted our Choraliers and praised the Stones for still going strong after 50 years. Incredibly, director Jeffrey Benson was only able to conduct one night since he had the amazing honor of being a guest conductor at the Kennedy Center on the night of the second gig. Professor Benson may be the only music professor to ever have turned down the Stones! Don’t worry, Dr. Benson: an audience member captured the Oakland performance. Watch it here.

Congratulations to Linguistics and Language Development Chair Swathi Vanniarajan, and to Mr. Peter Young, Director of the Silicon Valley Center for Global Studies, for their United States Department of State University Partnership contract valued at $1.1 million dollars. The contract will establish a partnership in applied linguistics with the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in Muzaffarabad, Pakistan. Swathi will direct the program and Peter will be the principle investigator.
Summer News and Events

I am proud to announce that, for the fourth time, Professor Susan Shillinglaw (English & Comparative Literature) will co-direct a National Endowment for the Humanities summer institute for high school teachers with Dr. William Gilly. The three-week institute provides a professional development opportunity for teachers to learn more about “John Steinbeck: the Voice of a Region, a Voice for America.” Read more about the institute here.

Professor Amy Glazer’s production of Abigail’s Party opened at the San Francisco Playhouse and runs through July 6. Read more about the production here.

Spartan Film Studios will once again offer a select group of students the opportunity to create their very own feature length films this summer. Trailers from student films made in previous summers can be found here.

Our new Associate Dean, William H. Street, will begin work in the College on August 1, 2013. Currently an Associate Dean in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta, Dr. Street has his doctorate from Northwestern University. A saxophonist by training, he brings deep knowledge and dedication to humanities and the arts to this new position. Read more about Dr. Street here.

It’s a Dean’s Life

Never has a Dean posted more enthusiastic tweets and Facebook posts than I did during our three-day graduation extravaganza last week. We all have much to be proud of: 1,000 students graduated with BA and MA degrees from H&A! Every student’s success is a testament to the power of public higher education to create opportunities for people from all walks of life. All of us—faculty and staff alike—have committed our lives to the idea that education is indeed the basis of a democratic society and the basis for a better future.

I felt honored to be included in our numerous departmental graduation celebrations and humbled to be on the platform watching more than 8,000 SJSU students receive degrees at the university-wide ceremony. The 1,000 degrees granted to our talented students affirm that the College of Humanities and the Arts takes great pride in providing a high-quality liberal arts education. Our investment in our students pays off in their lives in tangible and intangible ways. To note, SJSU was ranked among best educational investments in the country last month: a study by AffordableCollegesOnline.org ranked SJSU 31st out of 875 campuses listed as having the best return on investment.

Our dedication to our students and to quality education has been in plain evidence in the work we have accomplished together this year. I am pleased to say that the first phase of our strategic planning is complete. I invite you to read the Executive Summary and the other documents now posted on the College Strategic Planning site and to provide input in the coming months about the mission, values, and goals discussed as a result of the consultations that occurred over the year. The success of the planning process speaks to the willingness of faculty and staff to engage in thoughtful deliberation about critical issues and to think creatively about how we can best position the College for an even more successful future.

Summer is a time for reflection and renewal. As I reflect on this year, I am in awe of all we have been able to accomplish with limited resources. In this important way, we are the face of public higher education in California; we demonstrate on a daily basis what great things can be accomplished when talented, hard-working people put their hearts and souls into the work of educating the next generation.

I am proud to be a member of this wonderful College and truly grateful to be part of this community of educators wholly devoted to humanities and the arts. Thank you all for what you do to make the success of our students and our College possible. May you have a restful summer.

Sincerely,
Lisa Vollendorf, Dean

Do you have events or accomplishments to announce? Please continue to send us your news, events, photos, and video links. We will continue to post emerging news items on our Facebook page and on Twitter (@lisavol).