

## **Dr. Laura Kanost, Kansas State University Excellence in Engagement Award**

**Project Title:** Language and Culture with Community: Conversation, Bilingual Leadership, and Translation through Service-Learning

**Abstract:** Dr. Kanost has worked with local and international partners to develop service-learning curriculum and research on service-learning as pedagogy for Spanish language education.

**Nomination Narrative** (written by Dr. Kanost): I am committed to service-learning as a high impact teaching practice that forms positive relationships between universities and communities. I have taught SPAN 420, Spanish Conversation, as a service-learning course at Kansas State University for ten semesters. I do this because student progress and reflections have me convinced that by using their language skills in mutually beneficial community interactions, students make greater gains in confidence and motivation than they do in a conventional classroom. My students have developed their Spanish through service at Manhattan High School, the Crisis Center, and Flint Hills Job Corps, along with other local organizations.

In 2012-13 and 2013-14 I was given the opportunity to teach a freshman learning community centered on leadership, Spanish, and service-learning locally and abroad. Through this program, the “Spanish in Action” Connecting across Topics Community course I teach was paired with a Spanish 4 course and Introduction to Leadership Concepts, for a faculty-led service-learning and language immersion program. This was the first program of its kind at Kansas State University. Working with the K-State First initiative and the Office of International Programs, I designed and led this fall coursework and January intercession for freshman to travel, learn, and serve in a rural community in Costa Rica. To capture student learning, I developed a survey to track student self-perceptions throughout this process in 2013-14, and will develop a manuscript based on those results. The program has been a success for student learning and high impact engaged teaching, the University has committed funds and to support continued development of these service-learning collaborations.

In my role as 2013-14 Kansas Campus Compact Engaged Faculty Fellow, I have successfully integrated a new service-learning component into SPAN 575, Introduction to Spanish Translation. The service layer provides students with a professional experience interacting with local translation clients (Crisis Center, Manhattan Public Library, Junior League, Flint Hills Adopt-a-Family) and using CAT software to draw from and add to a community translation memory database. Students worked directly with community clients to identify documents and information that needed to be translated into Spanish. They then followed-up with clients to edit documents in order to optimize their usability for the community. Information was fed into the CAT software throughout the process to build the capacity of the software to translate future documents. Through this engagement, students learned about the Spanish language broadly by practicing translation skills. They interacted directly with local social service providers that brought to light community issues that required additional access to information for a growing population of Spanish speakers. Finally, Thelma Carley, a local legal interpreter and graduate of my SPAN 575 and 771 translation courses, assisted me with editing the student translations. To capture their learning, students reflected on how their decision-making processes as translators related to the document purpose. Finally, community feedback on the usage of the translated documents has been requested and will impact future work. This course will be featured in my proposal for a panel on service-learning and translation for the November 2014 American Translators Association conference.

I am part of a small network of service-learning faculty at Kansas State University who are working with administration to find ways to support service-learning at an institutional level. I participated in the K-State Service-Learning Task Force charged by Vice Provost Dandaneau with drafting a university-wide definition of service-learning in fall 2012. In May 2013 I traveled with an

interdisciplinary team from KSU to attend the Service-Learning Institute at IUPUI. Through this work, I supported the implementation of the first campus Service-Learning Institute in the fall of 2013.

Although my primary research interests are Spanish American literature and literary translation, I feel compelled to link service-learning to my research in order to better understand how this pedagogy works. I conducted a survey comparing student self-perceptions and reported language use after taking a service-learning section of SPAN 420 versus after taking a conventional section of SPAN 420. Their responses suggest that the students who experienced service-learning generally describe themselves as more confident language users who continue their studies and use Spanish in their everyday lives at higher rates. In contrast, students who had completed the conventional sections tended to focus more on information learned and a greater percentage of them reported going on to study abroad. This study is forthcoming in the *Journal of Service-Learning in Higher Education*. I have also presented on teaching Spanish conversation through service-learning at two international conferences of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, once with a student co-presenter. In February, I will present with my colleague Adelia Peña Clavel of UNAM in Mexico City two sides of the Skype conversation partnership we coordinate for our students: hers in the context of autonomous learning and mine framed as community service-learning. This paper, "Autonomy and Community: Two perspectives on the UNAM-KSU Skype Partnerships," is part of the International Meeting on Foreign Language Learning in Tandem at the University of Miami.

This year, I am working with two colleagues from around the state on a collaborative research project for the Kansas Campus Compact Engaged Faculty Fellows program. Our project emerged from our recognition that community organization feedback on service-learning partnerships suggests that what makes or breaks the partnership is often what faculty do (or don't do), since faculty are a vital connection between the organization and the students. We are developing a survey to assess Kansas faculty knowledge and usage of service-learning best practices; a secondary goal of this survey is to promote awareness of best practices by providing participants with a succinct summary including links to further information. The survey will be deployed later this semester; we will present the results this fall.

**The Partnership(s):** There are really multiple partnerships embedded in the three classes through which I work with engaged teaching and research. In each partnership, I worked directly with the students and community to outline partnership expectations and make decisions about the nature of the work.

**SPAN 420, Advanced Conversation:** The primary role of service-learning in this course is to work toward developing and sustaining the local community through language, this includes ongoing partnerships with Flint Hills Job Corps, Manhattan High School, and the Crisis Center. *F07, S08, F08, S09, F09, S10, F10, S11, S12, S13*

- Authored article on Job Corps project for 2008 *Guide to Service-Learning Colleges and Universities*, Student Horizons.
- In Spring 2010, assisted student Rebecca Walmann in translating fifteen documents into Spanish for The Crisis Center, with editing collaboration from Yasmín Díaz, a donated service equivalent to \$800.
- Spring 2013, organized student-led "Español for Everyone" children's program at Manhattan Public Library and Spanish Club at Boys and Girls Club of Manhattan.
- Conversation Partners Program: Collaboration with Adelia Peña Clavel of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, matching 20 to 30 K-State Spanish students each semester with UNAM English learners for language practice and intercultural exchange via email, chat, and Skype. Includes SPAN 420 students as well as other K-State Spanish learners, 2007-present.

**SPAN 575, Spanish-English Translation:** Through this course students worked with local organizations to provide translation services for their documents.

- Supervised student projects to create Spanish language materials for the **Manhattan Public Library** and the **local court system**, fall 2012.
- Student groups gaining professional experience using SDL Trados to translate materials for the **Crisis Center, Manhattan Public Library, and Flint Hills Adopt-A-Family**, with assistance from Thelma Carley, supported by Kansas Campus Compact Engaged Faculty Fellows program. Estimated value of donated translation services: \$775, fall 2013.

**Spanish in Action CAT Community:** Through this course, I designed and led a service-learning and language immersion course to Costa Rica. Student reflections and project descriptions are available at: [ksuspanishinaction.blogspot.com](http://ksuspanishinaction.blogspot.com)

- Class created an annotated list of bilingual picture books for **Manhattan Public Library** and led Spanish Conversation Center for children at the Manhattan Public Library and **Boys and Girls Club**, fall 2012.
- Service-learning and language immersion in Atenas, Costa Rica. Class painted mural and developed butterfly garden for **Santa Eulalia School**, January 2013.
- Class read bilingual books and served as mentors for children at **Boys and Girls Club** of Manhattan, fall 2013.
- Service-learning and language immersion in Atenas, Costa Rica. Class painted the interior of the **Santa Eulalia Nutrition Center**, January 2014.

**Lessons Learned and Best Practices:** Through this work, I have faced challenges in organizing the logistics of the service-learning experiences, these challenges have also served as some of the greatest lessons learned that I can reflect upon. Personally communicating with multiple community contacts to identify shared goals and to structure the partnerships in order to reach those goals proved hard to balance with my other work at the university. As the faculty contact, I maintained community contact in order to best structure the student learning process and so establish a relationship with the community. It was (is) my responsibility to ensure that satisfactory progress is being made throughout the partnership.

I also learned that reflection as a process may need to continually be refined to maximize student learning. Over the process of working with this curriculum, I have continually refined the reflection component to maximize student awareness of learning and ability to articulate that learning clearly.

**Scholarship:** (described in last two paragraphs of above narrative)

“Spanish after service-learning: A comparative study”. Forthcoming, *Journal of Service-Learning in Higher Education*.

Framing Conversation Partnerships as Service-Learning: Why and How. Annual Conference of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, San Juan, Puerto Rico, July 8, 2012. <http://charlandoenlamanzanita.blogspot.com/>

Aprendizaje-servicio en un curso de conversación en Manhattan, Kansas: Motivos, métodos, reacciones y retos. (*Service-learning in a Conversation Course in Manhattan, Kansas: Rationale, Methods, Reactions and Challenges.*) With undergraduate co-presenter Ashley Westover. American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. Guadalajara, Mexico, July 2010. (75-minute session.) <http://charlandoenlamanzanita.blogspot.com/>