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Message from Humanities Dean Elizabeth A. Say

I am certain that those of you who receive our newsletter are aware of the fiscal challenges facing the CSU. I'm not going to dwell on these except to say that the College of Humanities is planning for the worst and hoping for the best! We won't know how the CSU will fare in the state budget until after the Fall 2012 election so until then we will keep to our chartered course. As you will see in this newsletter, we have much to celebrate. Eleven new faculty members joined the College this year; I know you will enjoy getting to know them. Also joining the College this spring is a new Director of Development, Ms. June Kim Penrod. June brings a rich background in fundraising and we know that the College will benefit from her experience. As the state of California continues to reduce funding for higher education, the importance of private support becomes increasingly important. So, we are delighted to tell you about the bequest left to the College by an English Department alumna, Linda Nichols Joseph, and the naming of the English Reading Room in honor of her generosity. We are also pleased to announce that the College received a \$100,000 federal grant to support our developing program in Russian language instruction. Finally, our new University President, Dianne F. Harrison, will arrive on campus this summer. I look forward to working with her as we begin this next chapter in CSUN's history.



Elizabeth A. Say,
Ph.D. Alum 1981

College of Humanities Awarded \$100,000 Startalk Grant

Submitted by Teresa K. Morrison

The College of Humanities has been awarded a \$100,000 Startalk grant to fund the summer residency component of its Russian Language and Culture Immersion Program. This six-week intensive program is geared toward preparing students to enter a global workforce, providing accelerated training for highly motivated students who wish to expand their professional options and whose academic and/or career trajectories would be greatly enhanced by Russian language and culture proficiency.

Project Director Dina Mokhnatkin has taught Russian language courses at CSUN since 2007, and since 2008 has coordinated its summer immersion programs—including a study-abroad component—as part of the CSU Consortium for the Strategic Language Initiative. Past immersion program participants are currently making use of their multilingual proficiency in business, academic, government, and military careers.

Recognizing the successes of participating students in the Strategic Language Initiative and understanding the value of

investing in less commonly taught, vitally important world languages, the College of Humanities has significantly expanded its Russian programming to include a Russian studies minor and a Russian studies pathway for Liberal Studies Interdisciplinary Program majors. Together with the summer residency and overseas immersion programs, these initiatives offer CSUN students unprecedented access to one of the 10 most commonly spoken languages in the world. The College is grateful for the funding support the Startalk grant provides to advance language learning, cultural awareness, and professional skill sets among students who are often unable to afford the cost of immersion language programs and the accelerated proficiency they offer.

Startalk is a component program of the National Security Language Initiative, which seeks to expand and improve the teaching and learning of strategically important world languages that are not widely taught in the United States.

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Not quite the PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE... with apologies to Vanity Fair and Marcel Proust



This academic year the College of Humanities welcomed an extraordinary 11 new faculty members, who in the fall brought their considerable talents to seven departments and programs: Asian American studies, Chicana and Chicano studies, English, Linguistics/TESL, Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures, Philosophy, and Religious Studies.

As our new faculty entered their second semester at CSUN, we asked a number of them to respond to a brief, modified

Proust questionnaire, so named for the writer Marcel Proust, who answered the somewhat probing personal questions twice during his lifetime — and because his answers were preserved for future generations, this onetime parlor game lives on.

Many thanks to the participating faculty members who so willingly shared with us their time, thought, wit, and honesty. Each answered the questions to which they most wanted to respond.

Tomo Hattori, Assistant Professor Asian American Studies

Dr. Hattori earned his Ph.D. in English literature at McMaster University in Canada. His areas of specialization and interest include American literature—subspecializing in Asian American literature and Asian American children's literature — ethnic and cultural studies, and critical race theory.



Photo courtesy of Tomo Hattori

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Some of that is personal, but there would also have to be lots of family, food, sunshine, and sleep.

What is your greatest fear?

Failure. Or success.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

Laziness.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Laziness.

What is your greatest extravagance?

Jogging and other fitness activities.

When and where were you happiest?

A peak of joy dwells in every moment. Duh.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

How will I know until I am dead?

If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what do you think it would be?

A person or a thing.

What is your most treasured possession?

Time with my daughter and wife.

What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?

Ignorance.

What is it that you most dislike?

Ignorance and Sloth.

Which talent would you most like to have?

The ability to play a musical instrument.

What is your motto?

I don't go by mottos much. When I was younger, though, I did appreciate the saying that living well is the best revenge.

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**Not quite the PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE . . .
Part Two**

**Clement Lai, Assistant Professor
Asian American Studies**



Photo courtesy of
Clement Lai

Dr. Lai earned his Ph.D. in ethnic studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Prior to coming to CSUN, he was a faculty member at Cornell University. His areas of interest include race and space, social movements, politics and public policy issues, and multiracial formation.

Clement Lai was recently selected as the College of Humanities' 2012/13 University Research Fellow. During his fellowship semester in fall 2012, Lai will complete revisions on his book *Between Blight and a New World: Urban Renewal and the Multiracial Neighborhood*, for which he

conducted 45 oral histories to examine and give voice to differing outcomes for neighboring Japanese Americans and African Americans in San Francisco's Fillmore District following post-World War II redevelopment.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Driving across the country (I've done it five times) with my wife, Kelly, and our dog, Mochi. The stereo is playing a punk song, probably the Clash, and there's several hundreds of miles of road still ahead of us. Bright, clear skies. We've just shared a joke or maybe I'm trying to sing the lyrics (off-key and out-of-tune, of course), and I couldn't be happier.

With which historical figure do you most identify?

Richard Aoki was born in San Leandro, Calif., in 1938 and was interned in the Topaz Internment Camp during World War II. After camp he grew up in a multiracial, working-class Oakland neighborhood and later served in the U.S. Army. These experiences politicized him and he later cofounded the first Black Panther Party chapter with Bobby Seale and Huey Newton. He also played a key role in the Third World Strike to found ethnic studies at UC Berkeley. I met him years later at UC Berkeley as a graduate student. He was courageous, inspiring, and funny. A great organizer and storyteller. A comrade. The only person who I've met who greeted you with a power salute. He passed in March 2009. I miss him deeply.

Which living person do you most admire?

Ruthie Gilmore. She's a founding member of Critical Resistance, one of my advisors, and currently a professor at CUNY. The definition of scholar and activist. Great sense of irony, too.

What is your greatest extravagance?

I like and collect handmade electric and acoustic guitars. There's

something magical about being able to talk with a luthier about building an instrument. You talk about what styles of music you like, what aspects and characteristics of guitars you like (e.g., neck width, depth, and shape/profile), and what kinds of tones you're looking for in the combination of woods for fretboard, neck, top wood, and body wood. I'd like more guitars than I could ever afford, but at least I have fun dreaming.

When and where were you happiest?

July 29, 2007. My wedding day. No kidding.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

On a professional level, honestly being an effective mentor and teacher who's made an impact on students' lives and gotten them to think that they can change the world—collectively, slowly, but assuredly. On a personal level, being a good son to my parents and housebreaking my dog (that was herculean). On the level of mayhem, founding and playing in an Asian American anarcho, reggae, country, ska, funk, punk band.

If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what do you think it would be?

I'd come back as Joe Strummer on my musically inclined nights. He could rock.

What is it that you most dislike?

Avarice and hubris.

Which talent would you most like to have?

I wish that I were funnier, because my sense of irony is only above average. Actually, my wife says that I should be a better cook, and frankly I wish that I were more artistically inclined.

**Martha Escobar, Assistant Professor
Chicana and Chicano Studies**

Martha D. Escobar obtained her Ph.D. from the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, San Diego and is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Chicana/o Studies at California State University, Northridge. She is a member of Critical Resistance and California Coalition for Women Prisoners, grassroots organizations dedicated to dismantling the U.S. prison regime. Her interests center on the racialized and gendered connections between prisons and immigration control. By making these connections she attempts develop conversations between the prison abolition movement and the immigrant rights movement.

**Francisco Tamayo, Assistant Professor
Chicana and Chicano Studies**

Dr. Tamayo earned his Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition at Washington State University. His primary areas of expertise include teaching English as a Second Language, developmental English, and comparative ethnic studies.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

The equal distribution of power at all levels of society.

What is your greatest fear?

Losing my humbleness.

Which living person do you most admire?

People who fight against racism, classism, sexism, and

homophobia.

When and where were you happiest?

Once there is an equal distribution of power at all levels of society.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Being a father.

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**Not quite the PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE . . .
Part Three**

**Nathaniel Mills
Assistant Professor, English**



Photo courtesy of
Nathaniel Mills

Dr. Mills earned his Ph.D. in English language and literature at the University of Michigan. His primary interests are 20th-century African-American and U.S. literatures, African-American radicalism, U.S. communism and the mid-century U.S. literary left, Black Power and 1960s/70s Black nationalism, Marxist theory, and authors Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Being in love.

What is your greatest fear?

The denial of personal, political, or intellectual freedom.

Which living person do you most admire?

Angela Davis.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

Every academic's weakness: self-questioning and self-doubt.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

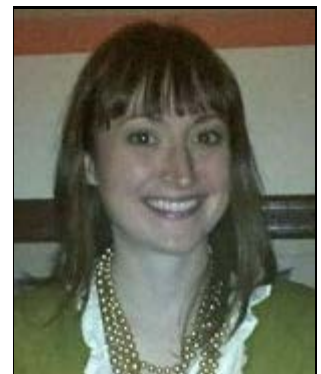
Any lack of compassion and empathy when passing judgment on others or when forming political or moral opinions. In other words, the attitude F. Scott Fitzgerald described as "I'm sorry but business is business." Or "You ought to have thought of that before you got into this trouble." Or "I'm not the person to see about that."

What is it that you most dislike?

Anti-intellectualism

**Danielle Spratt
Assistant Professor, English**

Dr. Spratt earned her Ph.D. in English at Fordham University. Her fields of specialization include 18th-century British literature, the novel, the history of science, gender studies, cultural studies, early modern bio-medical writing, and satire. She is also interested in writing pedagogy and service learning/community engagement.



What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Unlimited time for reading, movie watching, and hiking/walking around/exploring new areas.

What is your greatest extravagance?

Since I'm recently out of graduate school, nearly everything seems like an extravagance still! Probably going out to eat a fair amount.

If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what do you think it would be?

Maybe a painting in a museum. Assuming that as an object I could still hear, it would be fun to hear conversations from the range of people who go to museums—from kids who are dragged there by parents or classes, to serious art students, to general patrons.

What is your most treasured possession?

This isn't just *one* possession, but any older family photos that I've been given—a picture of my 91-year-old grandmother from when she was about 11, for example.

What is it that you most dislike?

In general, I dislike polemical rhetoric that positions itself as being fair and representative—as we see too often in public and political discourse, people are increasingly unable to have constructive conversations or debates. No one wins in situations like this, especially in politics. I like to think that the classes we teach in the university setting, and especially in the humanities, help to counteract this tendency.

Which talent would you most like to have?

I would like to be more musically adept, and I would like to be better at math. Either or both of those would be excellent talents to acquire.

**Anna Joaquin
Assistant Professor, Linguistics/TESL Program**



Photo courtesy of
Anna Joaquin

Dr. Joaquin earned her Ph.D. in applied linguistics at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her areas of specialization include primary and secondary language acquisition, neurobiology of language learning, and the role of interaction in language proficiency.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Being content and grateful in the present.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

Being apathetic.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Apathy.

What is your greatest extravagance?

Getting a massage and then spending a day by myself at a coffee shop with a book.

When and where were you happiest?

Not sure, but I'm certain it was sometime in elementary school before 7th grade.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

I don't think I've done it yet.

If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what do you think it would be?

A book.

What is your most treasured possession?

The relationships that I have with people and my 1998 Toyota Corolla with nearly 200K miles.

What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?

Feeling like I haven't done my best.

What is it that you most dislike?

I don't like being poked to get my attention.

Which talent would you most like to have?

I wish I could play any instrument—preferably the piano.

What is your motto?

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he can't lose." —Jim Elliot

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**Not quite the PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE . . .
Part Four**

**Drake Langford
Assistant Professor of Japanese, MCLL**



Photo courtesy of
Drake Langford

Dr. Langford earned his Ph.D. in East Asian languages and literatures at Yale University. His areas of specialization include Japanese classics, pre-modern Japanese drama, and early modern Japanese literature.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

In no particular order: fresh bread with butter, a hammock at midday, my wife's smile (any time of day), a tall Hairy Eyeball with my brothers, long urban walks, moleskins, the smell of fresh

ground coffee, storytime with my daughters, BBQ, marathon reruns on TV, vinyl records, hotcakes with maple syrup, *onsen*, meandering conversation with honest friends, country roads, used book stores...

What is your greatest fear?

Boarding the school bus in just my socks and underpants.

Which historical figure do you most identify with?

Marcel Proust's poor cousin? I do suppose it's heartening that the best work of playwright Tsuruya Nanboku came in the autumn of his life. I suspect that's a form of identification, wishful as it may be.

Which living person do you most admire?

Ah, but why name just one person among many friends, each of whom I admire for different and unique reasons?

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

Inertia.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Happiness *combined with* success. (One or the other, okay; but both?!)

What is your greatest extravagance?

Watching TV reruns in bed on my iPhone (but please promise not to tell).

When and where were you happiest?

Asleep in a dream.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Lately, watching TV reruns in bed on my iPhone—without getting caught!

If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what

do you think it would be?

First, allow me a quick *Namu Amida Buddha*. Okay, next question?

What is your most treasured possession?

Sorry, that's secret.

What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?

Mute loneliness.

What is it that you most dislike?

I'd say personality questionnaires are high on the list today.

Which talent would you most like to have?

The ability, at will, to acquire any talent I want. More modestly, though, I'd settle for the capacity to mono-task.

What is your motto?

Lately, "Less is more."

**Kenneth Luna
Assistant Professor of Spanish, MCLL**

Dr. Luna earned his Ph.D. in Hispanic languages and literatures at the University of California, Los Angeles. His areas of specialization are Spanish phonetics, phonology, and intonation; dialectology; syntax; and Caribbean Spanish. He subspecializes in Portuguese linguistics and romance linguistics.



Photo courtesy of Kenneth Luna

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

Being a workaholic.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Not walking your talk.

What is your greatest extravagance?

Collecting fountain pens.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Getting my Ph.D.

What is your most treasured possession?

All the knowledge I have acquired throughout my life.

What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?

Ignorance.

What is it that you most dislike?

Mediocrity.

Which talent would you most like to have?

Being a violinist.

**Julie Yoo
Assistant Professor, Philosophy**

Dr. Yoo earned her Ph.D. in philosophy at Rutgers University. Her primary areas of specialization include philosophy of mind and metaphysics. She is also interested in cognitive science, feminist philosophy, and philosophy of language.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

A long evening filled with lots of good food and wine shared with family and friends.

What is your greatest fear?

Being underprepared!

Which historical figure do you most identify with?

I don't identify with these people, but I certainly admire them: Benjamin Franklin, Julia Child, Bertrand Russell, and Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia.

Which living person do you most admire?

Aside from my parents, Noam Chomsky.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

Being a sore loser when I lose at Scrabble.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Aggression (especially in the Whole Foods parking lot).

What is your greatest extravagance?

The precious garage space I gave up to convert into my office. (Fortunately, my car enjoys the egalitarian camaraderie of street parking.)

When and where were you happiest?

I get pretty close to ecstatic after I grade a pile of papers.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

TBA

If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what do you think it would be?

I'd definitely want to be reborn as a (free) dolphin. Definitely.

What is your most treasured possession?

My 2000 VW Golf.

What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?

I get pretty close to abject misery when I hear people misuse the expression "begs the question."

What is it that you most dislike?

When students start playing with their phones and computers to ignore my lecture.

Which talent would you most like to have?

When students start playing with their phones and computers to ignore my lecture, I'd like the ability to freeze their device. I guess this is more of a superpower...

What is your motto?

"One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well." —Virginia Woolf

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Meet our new Director of Development

Submitted by June Penrod



Photo courtesy of
Jenny Donaire

June Penrod's background is as diverse as the College of Humanities. She spent the last five years at a development marketing company, assisting charities nationwide and speaking at conferences on various topics in fundraising. She also has worked as a gift planner at a small liberal arts college, working with donors in achieving their giving goals.

June hails from New York City, where she worked with inner-city children for three years, raising their achievement standards in a Bronx public school. Currently, she resides in Simi Valley with her husband, Todd, and their little Bichon, Charlie

Brown, a pup who seeks love and attention even in his sleep. She was kind enough during her first busy week on the job to sit down and tell us more about her decision to join the College of Humanities team.

Why development?

"I used to be in the for-profit field, working with many charities across the country in improving their development efforts. Whether it was feeding the hungry, healing the sick, or educating the youth, I had the opportunity to work with many different nonprofits. But the commonality of all these different organizations is the passion of the individuals who stand behind each of their missions. The greatest joy I had working with these nonprofits was building the relationships with the friends and donors of the institutions. Working with all these nonprofits made me realize how much I wanted to go back to working with donors."

Why CSUN?

"I married into it! When I lived in the San Fernando Valley, of course I came across many friends who were alums of CSUN. But it wasn't until I met my husband that I realized the importance of CSUN in this community. You see, CSUN saved my husband's life. It made him work hard for his education and allowed him to set a goal to achieve something better for himself. I married my husband because of his persistent nature and resilience. I believe that achieving his college education at CSUN helped him obtain those great qualities in him today; qualities that help him succeed in his professional career, too!

"I want alums like my husband to realize the true value of a CSUN education. I want them to see how it changed their lives, too. I look forward to meeting many more alums like him and listening to their own stories of how CSUN changed their lives."

Why the College of Humanities?

"I believe that we are all students of the humanities, no matter where your interests may lie or what you do as a career every

day. With that said, it isn't everywhere that you can speak about social justice, equal rights, and other provocative topics in a safe environment. CSUN is one of those places where the members of its community are privileged to be able to voice their opinions while learning to respect and listen to others. I have been craving that environment for quite some time and it's very exciting that I can do that every day as part of my *job*.

"I am excited to partner with Dean Say, as I know she is a tremendous asset to this college. I feel very privileged to work with someone who is so well respected by students, colleagues, and friends of the community. It just makes my job here that much easier and more enjoyable."

Next steps?

"My goal is to be out of my office, visiting with people and having meaningful conversations about the college. If you have a passion for the work at the College of Humanities, I want to hear from you! I would love to hear about your ideas and how they might make a greater impact in this dynamic college."

To contact June Penrod, please call her at (818) 677-7135 or email her at june.penrod@csun.edu.



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The Linda Nichols Joseph English Reading Room and Merit Scholarships

Submitted by Teresa K. Morrison

A dedication ceremony was held April 12 to honor the establishment of the Linda Nichols Joseph English Merit Scholarships and the naming of the Linda Nichols Joseph English Reading Room, where the event was held. Both are the result of a generous bequest made by CSUN alumna Nichols Joseph, née Linda G.I. Nichols, who graduated cum laude with a degree in English in 1981, at age 40, after having initially interrupted her studies at San Fernando Valley State 20 years prior to help her family after her father's death.

Linda returned to college to complete her degree after her marriage to James Joseph in 1978. James notes that Linda, who was also deeply committed to architectural planning in the Laguna Beach community where they spent much of their time, was an "avid reader" of all sorts of literature—fiction, nonfiction, serious, popular—and that her positive experiences studying English literature at CSUN remained prominent throughout her life. James recalls her speaking particularly fondly of several faculty members who helped and inspired her, including Richard Abcarian, Larry Gibson, and Warren Wedin. When Linda passed away in 2011, she left her entire estate to the English Department. The department and the College of Humanities, in which it is housed, learned of the bequest only upon Linda Nichols Joseph's passing.

"As we assimilated the surprising news of Linda's bequest, our ad hoc committee thought long and hard about how best to make use of it in ways that would reflect Linda's own achievements and struggles as a student," says Dr. Jackie Stallcup, chair of the English Department. "She graduated with honors and was clearly a high achiever in many aspects of her life, but she also knew firsthand what it meant to have to put her plans and her studies on hold and work to help care for her family. These are issues that resonate deeply with many of our students and it is these students in particular whom we will now be able to help." To honor the donor's legacy, the committee resolved to establish and endow the Linda Nichols Joseph English Merit Scholarships. Up to four scholarships of \$2,000 apiece will be awarded each fall to high-achieving undergraduate English majors who demonstrate need for financial assistance to complete their degrees.

To show their deep gratitude for Nichols Joseph's generosity, the English Department will also attach her name to its Reading Room, a spacious, book-lined suite in Jerome Richfield Hall that acts as a locus for all manner of gatherings in the department, including celebrations, readings, awards presentations, meetings, and memorials. In addition to the classics of English literature, the Linda Nichols Joseph English Reading Room's library houses faculty publications dating from the founding of CSUN. It also contains hardcover volumes of graduate students' master's theses and undergraduate students' honors theses from 1974 forward.

The English Reading Room has always served as a place of honor and recognition, and dedicating it in Nichols Joseph's name is a strong tribute to the meaning the department attaches to her legacy gift. "I hope she had some idea of how much we would be touched and moved by her remembering us in this way more than 20 years after she graduated," says Dr. Stallcup. "If I could have said anything to her, I would like to say 'Thank you. From the bottom of our hearts and on behalf of the many, many students who are going to be helped, thank you.' "



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Mission

Departments and Programs

Asian American Studies
Chicana/o Studies
English
Gender & Women's Studies
Liberal Studies & Humanities
Interdisciplinary Program
Modern & Classical Languages & Literatures
Philosophy
Religious Studies
Office of Interdisciplinary Studies:
American Indian Studies
Central American Studies
Jewish Studies
Linguistics
Queer Studies
Russian Studies
Sustainability Studies

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The Mission of the College of Humanities is to create a community of learners who...

Explore and value the diversities of cultures, thought, perspectives, literatures and languages of humanity;

Critically reflect on and analyze multiple dimensions of human identity and experience;

Contribute to scholarship and creative production and innovation, and;

Act as responsible global citizens committed to principles of freedom, equality, justice and participatory democracy.