

Art and Design  
Communication Studies  
English  
Film Studies  
History  
Honors  
Languages and Cultures  
Masters of Fine Arts  
Masters of Liberal Arts  
Music  
Philosophy  
Theatre Arts  
Women's Studies



# Arts & Humanities

Fall 2007

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*Cover photo: A panoramic image compiled from digital photographs created by Dan Reetz. Article on Page 4.*

## ***Greetings, alums and supporters of the College of Arts and Humanities at Minnesota State University Moorhead!***

On Friday, May 11, Mr. Craig Smith, Class of 1971 (Bachelor of Science, Speech/Theatre) gave the 2007 Commencement Address for the College of Arts and Humanities and the College of Education and Human Services. He demonstrated in a moving and dramatic “story-telling” of his life after MSUM, the power of education, hope, compassion, and hard work to make a difference in this oh-so-complicated world. Mr. Smith spoke of the adoption of his children



*Dean Kathleen Enz Finken*

from Africa, three brothers, two to whom he and his wife were first introduced by letter in Lower Manhattan the day after 9/11. These young people represent the power of hope. This is, in fact, why we do what we do every day at MSUM.

This was a banner year for the university and the college in so many ways, and we are, indeed, preparing ourselves to meet the needs of our students in this highly-complicated world. Most significant is the fact that MSUM was re-accredited for ten more years by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, receiving extremely high praise from the external review committee.

This year, we began phasing in the new Dragon Core curriculum, our new general education requirements. This program is focused on the core content, competencies, and skills our grads need to be successful in the world today. In addition, we are launching another new program, Graduation with Distinction in Engagement, which encourages and recognizes student engagement in learning, service, and citizenship both on and off campus.

I am so very proud of the many accomplishments of our faculty, staff, and students this year. They have won prestigious grants and awards in the visual and performing arts and in the humanities; published scholarly articles, books, and reviews in all disciplines represented in the college; published outstanding fiction and poetry; debated the ideas and issues most pressing in our nation and the world today; exhibited thought-provoking and technically excellent artwork; produced and directed award-winning films; and entertained, educated, and enthralled audiences with dramatic, instrumental, and choral performances. They have volunteered their time, energy, and expertise to help others by serving as translators, teaching English to new immigrants, teaching history lessons to home-schooled children, designing posters for non-profit organizations, and holding musical workshops for area K-12 children, among many other things. They have served the university, the community, and the region in numerous meaningful ways.

Based on feedback from readers last year, we have made some changes to our newsletter which now includes feature articles about alums, students, faculty members, and programs. This newsletter also conforms in format to the new standards for design which were developed as part of a campus-wide public relations effort this year. So, although we gave up the beautiful format of last year’s newsletter, we recognize and support with this document the greater university’s efforts to spread the word about this wonderful institution. As always, we are interested in your feedback and welcome suggestions for articles and news for future editions.

Best wishes for a healthy and happy year.

Dean Kathleen Enz Finken



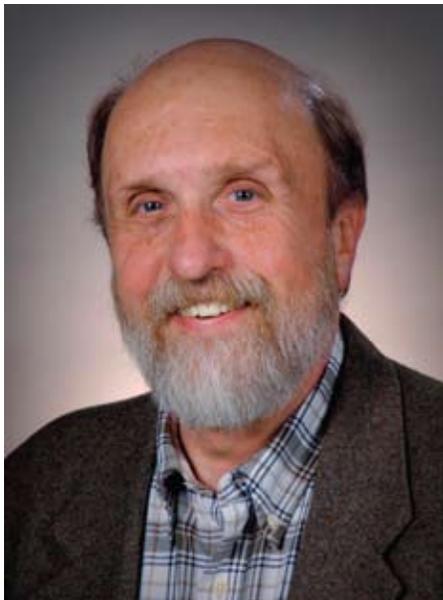
**For more information about Craig Smith, visit  
<http://www.phoenixtheatreensemble.org/index.html>**

## Whether Writing or Teaching, Mark Vinz has Always Probed the Center

By Glenn Tornell, MSUM Publications Office

Even Mark Vinz's birth was a metaphor. It happened in Rugby, N.D., the exact geographic center of North America, in 1942.

Ever since, Vinz has been prying, with words, into the spiritual center of things—everyday experiences, the prairie landscape, death, K-Mart shoppers, fishing, students, himself. As if what's deep inside offers some kind of surprise—like a lunker walleye lurking in a dark forest lake. Or maybe something more important, like an epiphany or two.



Dr. Mark Vinz

In honor of his career as a poet, editor, teacher and mentor, the university published a special limited edition collection of his poetry entitled *North of North*. All proceeds from the sale of the book will go to the MSUM Foundation to establish a scholarship fund in his name for student writers.

Named Associate Poet Laureate of North Dakota in 2005, Vinz is the author or editor of more than 15 collections of poetry and

prose and has won three Minnesota Book Awards. His poems, short stories, essays and reviews have appeared in over 200 magazines and anthologies.

His colleague, poet/professor Thom Tamaro, who collaborated with Vinz on two award-winning anthologies, put it this way: "Mark's poems have this uncanny ability to reveal beauty in this harsh and sometimes unforgiving landscape of the Midwest. His poems help us stand in awe of its mysteries. The quotidian world comes alive for us. The ordinary is made extraordinary."

His mark on students is as enduring as his writing. "I try to model myself after him," says Debra Marquart, a former student who now teaches creative writing at Iowa State University. "He has a real gentle teaching style, not overwhelming students with suggestions about what's wrong."

For 30 years, he's been faculty advisor to the campus literary magazine, now called *Red Weather*; for 10 years he edited the poetry journal *Dacotah Territory*; and for two decades, he's co-directed MSUM's Tom McGrath Visiting Writers Series, exposing students to authors ranging from Carol Bly and Jon Hassler to Tim O'Brien. He also helped develop and was the first director of the university's MFA program in Creative Writing.

Poetry, Vinz insists, should be central to our lives. "It's about those enduring human emotions—what's most important in our lives. It can stir something very deep in you, as a reader or a writer. That's not ephemeral, not sissy, not irrelevant."



**Copies of *North of North* are available through the university's Alumni Foundation Web site at <http://alumni.mnstate.edu>**

## A Week in the Life of the Student President



*Leigh Wilson-Mattson*

Leigh Wilson-Mattson completed her term as the MSUM Student President in May 2007. An Art and Communication Studies double-major, Wilson-Mattson was asked to chronicle a week in her life for the newsletter. Reading her entries will provide a glimpse into the multi-tasking world of today's MSUM students.

### **Monday March 19th**

It's the first day back to school after spring break, and everyone has hit the ground running. I started my day off going to the Student Activity Budget

Committee. As soon as that ended, I was reminded that this week is student senate's Diversity Week, and it's my turn to sit at the table to sell t-shirts. At 1:00 p.m. I had the Student Success Committee, and then at 3:00 p.m. I attended the Student Technology Fee Review Committee. After that committee, I ran home, ate, and left for my night class at NDSU.

### **Tuesday March 20th**

I am looking for a summer job—oh, the joys! I have decided to apply for an internship with Minnesota Public Radio. I put together a cover letter, got my resume, and put together a packet including some of my newspaper clippings. Once I dropped that off, I went rushing to class. My first class of the day is Argument and Debate. As soon as that is over I go to my honors class, Tellings and Retellings. I went running home and realized I still needed to call a friend's mother about senate. In November a woman who used to be the treasurer on senate died. She was a friend of mine, and she was ill for a long time. Senate decided to purchase a piece of art work (with the help of the Comstock Memorial Union) in her name. I called her mother today to let her know.

### **Wednesday March 21st**

For the past few months senate and I have been working to get a polling place on campus. My last step is completing the packet I'm sending to the city today. I attended the Facilities and Grounds Committee meeting, asking for their support and coming up with locations that will meet the federal requirements. I gave a short speech and answered questions. Thankfully, it went well. Today was my friend's birthday, so I went out to dinner with her after class.

### **Thursday March 22nd**

Diversity Week has been going really well! We have a senate meeting tonight. I sent out the agenda, and we have a few interesting items coming up. A librarian is coming to talk about the library re-design and study space, and the director of the health center is going to speak about the budget. This morning I went to the University Planning and Budget Committee. Then I went to class. I had to get up at 3:30 a.m. this morning to get all my homework done. Needless to say, I'm exhausted.

### **Friday March 23rd**

I have another early morning schedule. My first meeting was at 8:30 a.m. I went to a committee that discusses clustering of offices like financial aid, where to put the book store, etc... Today, MSUM had its annual Celebration of Nations. It was my first time to go to the event. It was really neat. Students were wearing the clothing from their home countries and serving different kinds of food. I had fry bread and mango juice. They also had dancers. I am definitely going to go again next year!



**For more information about the MSUM Student Senate,  
visit <http://www.mnstate.edu/stusen>**

## Alumni Profile:

### *Dan Reetz, Doctoral Student at NDSU*

The mission of Minnesota State University Moorhead is to inspire a lifetime of learning for our students. For one Art and Design student, the learning hasn't stopped since his graduation from MSUM.

Dan Reetz—blogger, game developer, and archivist—is currently a doctoral student at North Dakota State University. His path from MSUM to NDSU took him around the world.

Following graduation from MSUM, Reetz worked with the World Wide Web Instructional Committee at NDSU, a group of faculty dedicated to developing Internet-based educational software. Though trained as a sculptor, Reetz quickly adapted his visual arts training to the computer medium.

But Reetz also wanted to develop his skill in speaking Russian. He explained, “I became aware of a few Russia-related grant-making opportunities, but didn't stand a chance without the language.” Using some connections he had made in Fargo, Reetz moved to Russia in 2006. Reetz lived for a time in Moscow, working briefly for some gaming studios there. While overseas, Reetz also spent time in Germany and France.

Reetz has returned to Fargo, studying Cognitive and Visual Neuroscience at NDSU. Reetz explained that because his background isn't in neuroscience, “I'm spending the first semester or two catching up.”

Still, he has been working as a research assistant calibrating a Brightside High Dynamic Range display. “It's been the perfect introduction to laboratory work,” he said. “It has taught me a lot about the equipment, experimental needs and designs.”

“While my graduate studies take up the majority of my waking hours, I spend some time each day working on art or music, photography, and studying Russian language,” he explained.

Reetz has plenty of projects to keep him busy. “Most of my artistic pursuits, at the moment, are more technological experiments, seeing what I can do with high dynamic range images (synthetic and photographic), 3D modeling, as well as electronic music and, occasionally, hardware,” he explained. Reetz also has a “strong interest in preserving old things and making them freely available.” His work includes archiving two decades of Soviet postal stamps and every movie poster from the beginning of Russian film until the mid-1970's.

As Reetz reflects on his studies at MSUM, he noted the important influence of a number of faculty mentors. “Again and again, the most salient feature of my education was the quality and commitment of faculty,” he said.

In addition to his training in visual arts, Reetz also recognizes the logic and critical thinking skills from his Philosophy classes, the work ethic developed by the faculty and staff of the Art and Design Department, as well as the dedication of faculty to ensuring that he finished his degree. “I've been very fortunate as an artist and I owe it, at least in part to formative experiences at MSUM and practical opportunities on grant-funded projects at NDSU.”



**To view Reetz's projects, visit his  
Web site at  
<http://www.danreetz.com>**

## Alumni Profile:

### *Renee Stromme, Executive Director North Dakota Women's Network*

A path through the English Department and Women's Studies program has led one Minnesota State University Moorhead graduate to a career of serving others.

Renee Stromme, Class of 1996, is co-founder and Executive Director of the North Dakota Women's Network. In this position, she's working to improve the lives of North Dakota women through communication, legislation and increased public activism.



*Renee Stromme*

"My degree was English, with a Women's Studies minor," Stromme explains. "Upon graduation, my father questioned what I could do with such degrees — especially Women's Studies. But clearly my path to the ND Women's Network was shaped by my studies."

To enhance this pathway for students, MSUM recently created a major in Women's Studies so students can now earn a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Women's Studies. Women's Studies Director Laurie Blunsom explained, "The

Women's Studies program centers on the study of women's roles in society and culture, and on the impact of gender on important issues, such as the workplace, health care, family life, politics and education."

In fact, a Women's Studies class requirement that Stromme volunteer for the Women's Network of the Red River Valley highlighted for her the importance of volunteering. "This involvement really instilled a strong understanding that volunteer activism is incredibly vital to the success of many endeavors," she said.

Following graduation from MSUM, Stromme lived in Arizona, where she worked at a domestic violence shelter and domestic violence legal advocacy clinic. In 2000, she returned to ND for a position with the ND Council on Abused Women's Services (CAWS). Putting her writing skills to the task, Stromme worked on a large federal grant to reduce violence against women on campuses in ND.

Joining with other women throughout the state, Stromme founded the North Dakota Women's Network in 2004. The organization emerged because there was no single voice to advocate for North Dakota women in the areas of health and well-being, employment and earnings, reproductive rights, social and economic autonomy, and political participation.

Stromme is currently leading the group's efforts to build membership, monitor legislative activity and conduct research focus groups around the state. "The focus groups' goals are to identify current and emerging issues for women in order to develop an action plan, along with finding out women's preferred communication methods in order to develop a communication plan," said Stromme.



**For more information about the  
North Dakota Women's Network, visit  
<http://www.ndwomen.org>**

## Film Program Supports Fargo Film Festival

The Fargo Film Festival has quickly emerged as one of the showcase events on the region's arts calendar. The seventh annual event concluded its three day run in March. The festival provides educational, networking, and community outreach opportunities for Minnesota State University Moorhead's Film Studies students and faculty.

Faculty members Rusty Casselton, Tom Brandau, and Kyja Kristjansson-Nelson were extensively involved in the event, serving on the festival planning committee, chairing selection committees, contributing to panel discussions, and hosting various events throughout the festival.

Casselton worked closely with about 40 MSUM students to create and staff the festival's second screening venue. The students transformed the former Ivers Funeral Home on Roberts Street into a theatre space with seating for 120. The venue also served as the hospitality area for the festival and the place where all of the panel discussions and luncheons were held. MSUM students were involved in each aspect of the venue and they also handled all of the projection needs for the screenings. Several students also applied their knowledge and evaluation of filmmaking while serving on judging committees that selected films for the festival.

Though staging the festival required a lot of work, the MSUM students benefited from the experience. For those who aspire to be filmmakers, the festival gave them a firsthand opportunity to see what makes a film successful or not.

The festival also provided plenty of networking opportunities for the MSUM film students. "I met some incredible female filmmakers and made some valuable contacts," said Katie Diiro.

Because their experience with the film festival is so valuable, MSUM offers academic credit to students who take part. "Our students

benefit in many ways," said Brandau. "They get a fantastic opportunity to view many award-winning films and meet many of the filmmakers associated with those films—filmmakers from all over the world. Our students also get to attend all of the panel discussions which gives them a chance to hear from industry professionals concerning future career/higher education possibilities."



*MSUM Film Studies students prepare to shoot a scene from "They Walk Among Us." The film won an award at the 2007 Fargo Film Festival.*

In addition to providing volunteer support, two MSUM student projects were selected to receive awards at this year's festival. The films are "They Walk Among Us" (Filmmakers: Gaib Wimmer, Amber Hagle, John Pavlik)

which received the award for Best Comedy (Student category) and "Re-storing Hope" (Filmmakers: Elijah Larson, Gaib Wimmer, Brian Heald, Andy Halling) a documentary short that promotes local Habitat for Humanity efforts, which received the Prairie Spirit Award. The Prairie Spirit Award, sponsored by Prairie Public Television, honors films that "reflect the unique strength of character that is the legacy of the Northern Plains."



**Complete details about the festival can be found at  
<http://www.fargofilmfestival.com>**

## Music Faculty Perform What They Teach

A central aim of Minnesota State University Moorhead is to contribute to the cultural life of the region. Frequent any of the popular nightspots in Fargo-Moorhead and you're likely to be serenaded by faculty members of the MSUM Music Department. A number of faculty ensembles entertain and delight local music fans on a weekly basis.



*Dan Phillips performs original jazz music as part of "The Dan Phillips Group."*

The music faculty perform in a wide variety of ensembles ranging from jazz to funk to classical. The performances provide a venue for the musicians to hone their talents, promote the university, and serve as role models for students.

In addition, ten MSUM faculty members and three students were members of the Fargo-Moorhead Symphony Orchestra for the 2006-2007 season. Kirk Moss, Assistant Professor of Music, served as guest conductor for the symphony on February 3 for its Chamber Series Concert II.

Simon Rowe, Assistant Professor of Music, agreed: "As an artist/performer/teacher it is essential to maintain a high level in one's own art and craft. Not only does this type of activity renew the energy needed for effective teaching, it also creates a 'real-live' forum for students to observe the professors with whom they study."

MSUM music students are frequent audience members. For them, the experience of watching their faculty mentors perform is a valuable learning opportunity. Assistant Professor of Music Dan Phillips said,

"The students benefit by being able to observe and listen to live music performed at a high level. The things they are studying and working towards are demonstrated for them. I have had many students tell me they want to 'go home and practice' after listening to a performance. I also had a student recently become inspired to compose his own music and lead his own group as a result of hearing mine."

The growing number of venues in the Fargo-Moorhead community has created new opportunities for MSUM faculty to perform. The Hotel Donaldson is a popular venue for the artists where they perform as part of a series called "Nightclub After 9."

The local performing groups serve as a magnet for national performers who frequently join them on stage. Rowe explained, "By inviting national level artists such as Debbie Duncan and Lucia Newell to work with us in our community, we are initiating a level of artistry and entertainment typically experienced only in large cities. These artists in turn help to spread the news of the growing culture of excellence in the arts in the F-M area."



**For information about upcoming performances by these groups, visit the following Web sites:**  
<http://www.danphillipsmusic.com>  
<http://www.hoteldonaldson.com>

## History Classes Live History

Proclaiming “My fellow Athenians,” a student begins the class session. He offers a prayer to Zeus and figuratively sacrifices a small pig. Before the class ends, a small military incursion to Persia is successful and a security wall is built to fend off attack from the Spartans.

Students don’t just learn about history at Minnesota State University Moorhead, they live it. History Department professors Dr. Margaret Sankey and Dr. Sean Taylor are using game-type simulations in their classes in order to improve learning and teach valuable skills.

Taylor explained, “I can lecture at them all I want, but they will not really remember this information in any meaningful way. However, if they have to work together to make arguments they will remember this much longer.”



*History students debate proposed laws in Dr. Sankey's class.*

“These games force students to try out ideas from all parts of the political spectrum. It also exposes students to the mechanics of debate, decision-making, and practical speech,” Sankey said. Because their success in the game rests on these skills, students take the course

seriously. Sankey said, “Your argument had better be good, and you’d better listen to the arguments of others, because you’ll be publicly questioned about your stances and your policies.”

Julianne Lowe, a student in Sankey’s class, agreed. She said that the students had to spend time outside of class researching their roles so they could achieve their character’s individual objectives. “I was a radical democrat so I had to do research by reading articles on JSTOR (a library database) and information given to us by Dr. Sankey to know what my character and my group would want to fight for,” she explained.

The simulations are created by the Reacting to the Past program founded by Mark Carnes, a professor of American History at Barnard College, where they are used for freshmen seminar courses. Following a training session at Bemidji State University, Sankey and Taylor began using the simulations at MSUM for their courses.

Sankey summarized the value of the simulations: “Students today can go through life hearing only the opinions they agree with, watching only the news they like, and hanging around with people who match them. This is devastating to engagement with ideas, politics and the community.”

At MSUM, students do not just learn about history, but become engaged with it. Lowe said, “I can honestly speak for the whole class when I say that this class is an amazing learning experience.”



**Read more about the Reacting to the Past program at**  
<http://www.barnard.edu/reacting/>

## Honors Program Provides “Exceptional Experiences”

Aiming to attract the “best and brightest,” the Honors Program curriculum has been significantly revised this year and the program is reaching out to the community and campus through a series of new events and programs.

Program director Dr. Stephen Hamrick, Assistant Professor of English, hopes the revised program will attract the best and brightest students to MSUM. “The program seeks to model scholarship, leadership, and service to the community,” he said. “I hope to achieve a program that is known for its excellence and its excellent students.”



*Dr. Stephen Hamrick*

Students begin the program with a core curriculum, the Honors Foundation, which includes Honors sections of writing, speaking, mathematics, and critical/multicultural thinking courses. Building upon this foundation, the Honors Colloquium is structured to encourage open discussion of current issues, controversial ideas, and broadly interdisciplinary intellectual themes.

A series of Honors Seminars provides advanced classes taught in a variety of departments, but that are unified by broad ideas and interdisciplinary issues. In the senior year, the Capstone Experience enables students to use and extend skills and abilities developed over the course of their experience.

Hamrick explains, “A typical Honors class seeks to create an engaged, rigorous, and enjoyable seminar-like experience of intellectual inquiry that advances students’ critical thinking, reading, writing, and research capacities in a professional environment of respect and serious inquiry.”

Students join the program not only for the recognition they’ll receive at graduation, but because the program will help them develop their intellectual abilities. Tarver Mathison, a sophomore Honors student from Reiles Acres, North Dakota said, “I have no doubt that the intellectual skills fostered by the program will give me a greater chance of being accepted to the next level of my career.”

In addition to the curricular offerings, the program has launched a new lecture series, a series of brown bag talks, and a discussion group. Starting this fall, Honors students also have the opportunity to live with other Honors students on a specially-designated floor in Snarr Hall and receive special mentoring from faculty members involved in the program.

“With the new Honors Program, we have a fantastic opportunity not only to attract, but to excite and educate high-achieving, intellectually strong students,” said Dr. Kathleen Enz Finken, Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities.



**The Honors Program Website**  
**(<http://www.mnstate.edu/honors>)**  
**provides more information about the program**  
**and its related events**

## Rhoda Hansen Honored by Theatre Program

For more than 30 years, Rhoda Hansen contributed her time and talent to the students of the Minnesota State University Moorhead theatre arts program. Working during the day as a full-time teacher at Fargo North High School, she spent her evenings working with MSUM theatre students to prepare them for roles in upcoming productions.



*Rhoda Hansen addresses those gathered to dedicate the Green Room in her honor. Rhoda's husband Delmar looks on.*

Former Professor of Theatre Arts Delmar J. Hansen and his wife, Rhoda, formed a strong team that established the MSUM theatre program as one of the best in the region. While Delmar directed actors on the adjacent main stage that bears his name, Rhoda provided extra attention to performers in the “Green Room,” the room just off-stage where actors wait for their entrance on the stage.

In recognition of Rhoda Hansen's dedication to the theatre program, service to the community and contribution to excellence in the arts, MSUM dedicated the “Green Room” in the Roland Dille Center for the Arts in her honor in a ceremony on April 27, 2006.

A framed photograph of Hansen now hangs outside the “Rhoda Hansen Green Room.” Students for years to come will hear of her contributions to the program as they rehearse, attend class, or prepare for a show.

“In my mind, the Green Room for any theatre is a safe place for actors and artists to congregate, celebrate, and be themselves,” said Dr. Robert Littlefield, a former student of Hansen's at Fargo North High

School and three-year member of the Straw Hat Players. “I always felt that I could be myself when I associated with Rhoda and I recognize that she remains the most influential teacher and mentor I had the good fortune to experience.”

Former students recall her work with their voices and characterizations, remembering her work as transformative. Doug Hamilton, a former student, recalls, “Rhoda Hansen was a remarkable dialogue coach. Her interpretation of a poem for Brecht on Brecht was so remarkable that I still hear her voice whenever I read it.”

The dedication also marked the launch of the Rhoda Hansen Scholarship, which will be available to theatre majors who perform on stage or behind the scenes. “Anyone who contributes to the scholarship will help ensure that our students are able to devote their time and energy to their education and performances,” explained Craig Ellingson, Director of Theatre at MSUM.

Inspired by the Hansens, MSUM theatre has always strived for excellence, a point actress Kristin Rudrud emphasized at the dedication. “What they really gave us was what they had between them. It was such a true gift of their marriage that these two people had such a partnership—a partnership that was so alive. They gave us a passion for excellence.”



**To contribute to the Rhoda Hansen Scholarship, visit  
<http://www.mnstate.edu/theatre>**

## Study in Cuernavaca Offers Firsthand Experiences

Each spring, the Minnesota State University Moorhead Languages and Cultures Department sponsors a study abroad program to Cuernavaca, Mexico. Students who participate take classes at the Universidad Internacional (UNINTER) in Cuernavaca during the six-week trip.

Last year's trip was led by Dr. Cecilia Mafla Bustamante, Associate Professor of Languages at MSUM. This year, Dr. John Hall is taking the trip. "The students not only become more fluent in Spanish, but they become familiar with the Mexican culture," Dr. Mafla-Bustamante said.

One of the unique features of the full immersion program at UNINTER is that all language classes are limited to five students per class,



*Students take a break from their studies to enjoy the sites of Cuernavaca.*

allowing for substantial individual attention to each student. Students were also enrolled in culture courses and literature or education courses, depending on the participant's declared emphasis.

To further enhance the immersive value of the experience, students stay with Mexican families and go on excursions to nearby cultural attractions. "My host family was amazing," said Stephanie Simonson, a student who took the trip. "I got to intern at a local orphanage and work with little kids two or three times a week. I worked with them on learning English."

"By the end of our studies we were able not only to communicate with our Mexican families about our plans for the day or weekend, but about greater issues such as world events and our opinions about them," observed Kayla Klemetson, a student on the trip.

Since Cuernavaca is located only an hour and a half from Mexico City and three hours from Acapulco, students were able to visit these cities. In Mexico City, students visited the Ballet Folklórico and the Museum of Anthropology.

In addition to the annual trip to Cuernavaca, the Languages and Cultures Department has study abroad programs in Asia, including Nankai University in China and Kanda University, Nagoya Gakuin University, Kanto Gakuin University and Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, all in Japan. Additionally, the department sponsors short-term trips to countries such as Japan and France.



**For more information about the study abroad programs of the Languages and Cultures Department, access their Web site at**  
<http://www.mnstate.edu/language/StudyAbroad.htm>

## Philosophy for All



*Dr. Mark Chekola*

Driven by a desire to spark philosophical discussions in a non-academic setting, Dr. Mark Chekola, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, launched a series of meetings with others in the community interested in philosophical discussions. Started in 2004, the group is still going strong today.

The group, Philosophy for All Fargo-Moorhead, is open to everyone interested in philosophy. Its aim is to approach philosophical problems in a non-technical way to enable everyone to participate in discussion and debate. It aims to combine serious philosophical activity with an informal exchange of

ideas and views. “The group provides a venue for discussion of philosophical issues of interest to many people,” said Chekola.

At a typical gathering there is a presentation followed by discussion, explained Chekola. “Sometimes we do a ‘Socrates Café’ at which the people present or choose a topic and then discuss that topic,” he said. The results are often lively, spirited, amazing discussions.

The group has covered a wide range of topics, from “How Free Are We?” to “Doing Philosophy At the Movies,” to “Confucian Virtues in the 21st Century.”

Chekola modeled the Fargo-Moorhead program on others that had been started around the world. “I attended the World Congress of Philosophy in Istanbul in August, 2003, and there met Anja Steinbauer, who started Philosophy for All in London,” explained Chekola. “In

2004 I visited their group. I met with some interested people here and we decided to pattern our group after theirs.”

The MSUM Philosophy Department has supported the group since its inception by covering the printing of flyers and postage expenses. In addition, the philosophy faculty have each done several presentations at meetings.

Dr. Phil Mouch led a discussion in February of “Job’s Question”—the philosophical and theological struggle to explain good and evil.

The group meets at a room at the Plains Art Museum once a month, typically the third Thursday, from 7-9 p.m. Average attendance is 35 people. “Afterwards some of us adjourn to Nichole’s Pastry Shop and continue the discussion,” Chekola said.



**For more information, contact Dr. Chekola at [chekola@mnstate.edu](mailto:chekola@mnstate.edu)**

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Key contributors for this issue include:

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Alumni are invited to send us news and contact information. We'd like also your feedback on the newsletter.

Please send us your suggestions or comments!

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**The College of Arts and Humanities explores the richness of human experiences. We value teaching and learning from creative, critical, historical and multicultural perspectives. We pursue knowledge through reflective and active engagement with ideas. We cultivate ethical and civic responsibility in the individual and community.**



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