

College Updates



Students in the Korean House. Photo by Juno Baik

1 A Foreign Language Student Residence by Any Other Name

The Foreign Language Student Residence has changed its name to the Language Immersion Student Residence, or LISR. The name change clarifies that the LISR is available to any student interested in language immersion—for “foreign language” students, not for foreign “language students.” The LISR is primarily a language immersion experiential learning program sponsored by the College of Humanities.

The LISR currently offers nine languages in this immersive style: ASL, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. While physically living at the LISR, residence students pledge to speak only their house language. This creates an environment that immerses them deeply in the target language.

2 New College Leadership, Effective July 1

DEPARTMENT OF GERMAN & RUSSIAN

Professor Jennifer Bown (Second Language Acquisition) replaced Professor Grant Lundberg (Slavic Linguistics) as the chair of the Department of German & Russian. Bown anticipates her service will include navigating the current geopolitical situation between Russia and Ukraine as it affects faculty, students, and university programs. She also hopes to increase student interest in German and Russian language and culture.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Associate Professor David Jensen (Ethics and Value Theory) recently replaced Professor David Laraway (Philosophy of Art, Hispanic Literature) as the chair of the Department of Philosophy. Previously, Jensen served on the College Rank & Status Committee and as associate chair of the department. Jensen brings administrative, teaching, and research experience to the department.

ASSOCIATE DEAN

Professor Grant Lundberg (Slavic Linguistics) replaced Professor Frank Christianson (19th-Century Transatlantic Culture) as associate dean in the College. Lundberg served for six years as chair of the Department of German & Russian prior to this appointment.

HUMANITIES CENTER

Professor Rex Nielson became the new director of the Humanities Center (see page 13).

3 College Convocation Prelude Music Celebrates Cultural Diversity and Female Composers

As masses of parents and friends shuffled inside the Marriott Center on Friday, April 22, 2022, they were greeted by the welcoming sounds of organ music played by Associate Professor Miranda Wilcox (Early Medieval Religious Culture). The prelude and recessional music included composers from the many cultures represented by the departments within the College.

Wilcox was excited for the first in-person convocation since COVID-19 began, so she volunteered to compile the songs and play the organ for the event. As she prepared, Wilcox decided that each of the eight departments within our college deserved to be represented in the convocation. She selected lesser-known composers to find one that she felt represented each department. Wilcox specifically chose five female composers (Pei-lun Vicky Chang, Elizabeth Stirling, Nadia Boulanger, Elfrida André, and Florence Beatrice Price) to recognize women whose music is often underrepresented. Her efforts created a warm and inviting atmosphere for attendees.

4 College Hosts First Conference on Gender and Women’s Studies

On March 24–25, 2022, the BYU Global Women’s Studies (GWS) program hosted the first annual Utah Southwest Regional Conference on Student Research in Gender and Women’s Studies. BYU and Weber State University (WSU) programs came together to share and to celebrate their research in this two-day inaugural event. This conference was specially designed to provide students opportunities to connect with peers and mentors in their field from places outside of their own university program. Professor Valerie Hegstrom (Spanish Literature), director of BYU Global Women’s Studies, and WSU Professor Melina Alexander (Special Education), director of WSU’s Women and Gender Studies, organized the conference.

The event was held primarily in the Kennedy Center and the Harold B. Lee Library, where students and faculty from both universities met for exhibits, a speed-networking luncheon, and, of course, student research presentations. In addition, three special keynote sessions shared the spotlight with the students.

5 BYU Student Takes Second Place in Regional Chinese Competition

BYU student McKay McFadden (Mechanical Engineering, Chinese '25) took second place in the 21st annual Chinese Bridge language competition, held from April to June 2022. The theme for the competition essay was "One World, One Family." McKay competed in the Washington, DC, region along with eleven other students from nine other schools around the United States.

McKay's talent (calligraphy) and essay were inspired by the book *The Anatomy of Peace*. His submissions focused on the importance of seeing people as complex individuals. McKay tied his essay's theme to his talent by performing calligraphy of a Chinese poem called "Climbing White Stork Tower" by Wang Zhi-huan from the Tang dynasty. His essay took first place.

6 Graduate Students Fuse Academic Discipline with Faith

Attendees of the summer 2022 annual Humanities and Belief workshop said it was "nothing short of transformative." Latter-day Saint graduate students in the humanities are frequently confronted with theories that can, on the surface, appear to undermine belief. This workshop supports these students and helps them find ways through, rather than around, the challenges to their beliefs. BYU faculty focused on showing the students examples of faithful scholars and discussing how to integrate belief and academic research. Attendee Sylvia Cutler, a PhD student of English literature at Johns Hopkins University, said, "It was lovely to reconnect with my community at BYU and allow myself to embrace a religious identity that I often feel I have to ignore in the more secular university setting I am currently part of."


7 Newly Translated Arabic Poetry Set to Music

Assistant Professor Kevin Blankinship (Arabic Language and Literature) helped create a choir concerto based on al-Ma'arri's book of poetry *Self-Imposed Necessity*. Blankinship's earlier work to

put al-Ma'arri on the public's radar led to Seattle-based composer and musician William C. White contacting him about the poet. Blankinship saw that music could be a great way to introduce the world to al-Ma'arri's work, and the two began collaborating in October 2020 to translate al-Ma'arri's work into English. Since the project began, Blankinship has translated dozens of poems from *Self-Imposed Necessity* that he and White evaluated as they determined which poems to include and how to translate them to retain their deeply resonant nature. Blankinship and White included seven poems, incorporated into seven movements, in the final composition.

Recently White flew to London to work with a professional choir to record the composition. Meanwhile, Blankinship intends to keep working until he is able to publish a complete translation of *Self-Imposed Necessity* in a few years, but for now we will soon be able to enjoy a musical rendition of these poems and gain our own understanding of the value of Arabic literature.

8 French Students Commemorate the Unknown American World War II Soldier

This past year four BYU French student interns participated in memorial services honoring American soldiers who gave their lives in service to France. In October 2021, Abigail McBride (Economics '23) represented BYU at a reenactment ceremony for the 100-year anniversary of the dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Chalons-en-Champagne. On Memorial Day this year, Ethan Walch (Computer Science, French Studies '23) and Ben O'Brien (Economics, French Studies '23) laid wreaths at the Oise-Aisne American Cemetery and Memorial, including for Private First Class Stanford Hinckley, the elder brother of Gordon B. Hinckley, 15th President of the Church. And in August, Benjamin Brodie (Neuroscience '23) laid a wreath for Duncan Elijah Robinson, a Latter-day Saint from Utah in the 4th Armored Division who was killed in World War II in the Pont-Scorff battle, August 7, 1944. 

McKay McFadden performing calligraphy. Photo courtesy of McKay McFadden

