Department of Spanish Honors and Awards
Spring 2020
¡Felicidades a todos!
The **Department of Spanish** is pleased to offer **awards and scholarships** each spring to recognize the excellence and dedication of our undergraduate majors in Spanish. We congratulate the following students and recent graduates for their achievements and thank the committed donors who make these awards possible.
The WMU Department of Spanish Presidential Scholar for 2019-2020 and winner of the Robert and Barbara Felkel Cervantes Prize is Emily Jeanna Raak.

These awards recognize the recipient of the highest academic honor at WMU that a department bestows on an undergraduate student.

Thanks to the generosity of our retired colleague, Professor emeritus, Doctor, Maestro Robert Felkel and his lovely wife, Magistra Barbara Felkel, we offer the Cervantes Prize each year to our Presidential Scholar.
Thank you so much for bestowing upon me this great honor! I am so grateful to be chosen for the Robert and Barbara Felkel Cervantes Prize. Each Spanish class I took, my study abroad experience in Burgos, and every member of faculty I had the privilege to interact with throughout my undergraduate career were what made my four years at Western so exceptional.

This coming fall I will be attending Grand Valley State University to pursue a degree in Elementary Education with an endorsement in Spanish. My goal is to become an Elementary Spanish Immersion teacher.
The Suzanne M. Wheatley Award is made each year to honor the memory of Suzanne M. Wheatley, who attended WMU from 1985 to 1988 and passed away before completing her studies. It is given to undergraduate students who embody some of Suzie’s remarkable qualities, such as her love for the Spanish language and Hispanic cultures, as well as her zest for life. We have two Suzanne M. Wheatley Award recipients this year: Logan Bockheim and Martha Tinker.
Here is a picture of me on the beach in Santander, Spain. Studying abroad was the best time of my life. I fell in love with Spain and have never felt more home than I did there.

I will be graduated with a double major in Spanish and Special Education. I plan to get a job in Kalamazoo while working on my masters in Autism. Once I finish, I plan to move to Spain to work in one of the two Autism centers they have there.

Advice for students studying Spanish: Keep speaking in class! The best thing to do while studying in class is to speak the language. I know how it feels to be embarrassed because you mess up a lot or it is harder for you than others. But, I am here to say, it gets better. The more you get comfortable making errors, the better you will be at speaking Spanish. Also, study abroad!! It is a must. Good luck!!
This photo was taken in Antigua, Guatemala, which I visited during my semester abroad in Heredia, Costa Rica Spring of 2019.

Upon my graduation next year, I plan to spend a year in Spain either as an au pair or in a marketing internship position, and then I plan to work in marketing research either domestically or abroad.

I am so thankful for the generosity the Department of Spanish has showed me throughout my time at Western, and the opportunities I have been gifted as well. I have truly loved every Spanish professor I have met and had the pleasure of learning from, but I would like to thank Dr. Benjamín Torres for his unwavering support starting my freshman year, Dr. Pablo Pastrana-Pérez for challenging me in linguistics, and Dr. Natalio Ohanna for inspiring me to consider continuing my education with a MA in Hispanic Studies in the future.
The Lori Beth Pattison Award was established by the Lori Beth Pattison family in memory of their daughter. Lori was a WMU alumna and professor of Spanish who died of cancer in 1999. It was in our department that she received the foundation and encouragement to pursue graduate studies at the University of Kansas, where she graduated in 1994 with a doctoral degree in Spanish literature. Each year, we make this award to students who show extraordinary promise in pursuing graduate work in Spanish once they graduate. We have two recipients this year: Jas McLemore and Ava Schmidt.
I am honored to have been chosen for this award! I am definitely looking forward to continuing my time here at Western in the Spanish graduate program and loved my time as a Spanish undergraduate.

The Spanish Department is special in the sense of the professors truly caring about their students.

I would highly recommend pursuing a Spanish major or minor to anyone who has an interest in it.
Ava is thrilled to receive such a great honor from the Department of Spanish. She plans to graduate with a BA in Spanish and a BFA in Musical Theatre Performance in Spring 2021 and a BA in Dance and an MA in Hispanic Studies in Spring 2022. After school, she hopes to move to New York City to pursue a career in performing as well as earn a translation certification. Further down the line, she is interested in working for the FBI as a contract linguist or teaching voice lessons, dance classes, and Spanish classes! Ava feels so fortunate to be surrounded by such incredible faculty here at Western who push her to be her best and work with her busy schedule. She notices every day that studying Spanish has made her a better performer, a better student, and an overall more well-rounded person.
The Herb B. Jones Award is made in memory of Herb. B. Jones, a professor of Spanish who taught at WMU for 35 years. He was a man who devoted his life to the true assimilation of Hispanic culture. He passed away several years ago, and we remember him each year by awarding this scholarship to an outstanding student.

This year’s recipient is Allegra Kistler.
My photo was taken in 2018 in Pululauha, Ecuador.

Thank you so so much for this incredible honor! I am very grateful for all of the amazing experiences I’ve had through the Spanish department. After my last Spanish class of my college career I definitely shed tears afterwards thinking of all the wonderful people I met and beautiful places I visited. I will be forever appreciative of what I have learned in my Spanish classes, and am a completely different person having studied another language. Thank you so much for providing me with such awesome opportunities and having a department that pushes me to learn completely new, inspiring, and needed things.

After I graduate in June, I will be immediately starting the Accelerated Masters in Social Work Program at WMU, in the hopes to work in community organization and activism in the future.

Out of all of the Spanish courses I’ve taken since January 2017, the most impactful ones have been taught by Antonio Isea, to whom I will forever be appreciative of for his anti-capitalist and anti-racist lenses, as well as his care and respect of his students.
The Carolyn Harris Award was established by the faculty in memory of Dr. Carolyn Harris, who was a professor and undergraduate advisor in the Department of Spanish from 1985 to 2014. Each year we make the award to an undergraduate student who embodies some of Carolyn’s outstanding qualities: generous, kind, service-oriented, pleasant, and passionate about what they do.

This year’s recipient is Sadie Martin.
I am honored and very appreciative for this award. I am grateful for all of the Spanish department faculty. They have been incredibly supportive throughout my Spanish journey!

After graduation, I plan on attending graduate school for Organizational Behavior Management in Psychology. I intend to use the Spanish that I have learned as an undergraduate to connect with more people and cultures in businesses. My advice to new Spanish students is to communicate with your professors as much as possible. The Spanish department faculty are some of the kindest and most supportive people I've met at Western. Lean on them!
The Michael Braun Award was established in memory of Michael Braun, who was an alumnus of our program who returned to become a beloved professor and mentor to students interested in becoming Spanish teachers. Since his untimely death in 2018, the department makes this award in his honor to celebrate his passion for the Spanish language and his dedication to training the next generation of equally passionate Spanish teachers.

We have three recipients this year: Heather Price, Isabella Süßmann, and Sarah Turner.
WMU Department of Spanish
Michael Braun Award recipient:
Heather Cora Price

It's a huge privilege and I'm so grateful to be honored in this way! My career plans will be to teach high school Spanish after graduation, and I have recently begun working towards my endorsement for ESL as well!

I would love to shout out to Michael Millar for being an excellent advisor, mentor and professor all throughout my experience in the Spanish department!
I’m grateful for my time at WMU where I’ve met many amazing people, both students and faculty members. After I graduate, I hope to put all the skills and the knowledge that I have gained over the years to good use whether it be in a job or a graduate program. One of my dreams for the future is the chance to work in conservation of cultural and natural heritage sites because I believe they provide a sense of identity and help us understand our rich and diverse history.
I am honored to have been chosen for this incredible award. I would like to sincerely thank the faculty of the Department of Spanish for your generosity in remembrance of Sr. Michael Braun.

After graduation I plan to attend graduate school to obtain my Master of Social Work and I will continue to work in the human services field. Additionally, I would like to apply for the Peace Corps before or after graduate school and eventually, I would like to open my own non-profit organization.

A word of advice to new Spanish students: Study hard and study abroad. Spanish at the college level can be very challenging, but it is 100% worth it. Learning another language has been so helpful and provided so many additional opportunities. I have been able to help and communicate with so many more individuals because of my Spanish abilities. Furthermore, studying abroad can be scary, but it is such an amazing opportunity, so if you can, take advantage of the programs offered. It will not only drastically increase your Spanish skills, but will give you once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

I would also like to say thank you to all of my amazing Spanish professors thus far, and the entire Spanish department, for deeply caring about their students. Having professors and a department that clearly care about their jobs and the well-being of their students makes all the difference.
The Mathilde Steckelberg Award was established in memory of Mathilde Steckelberg, who taught Latin at WMU from 1927 to 1961. She was chair of what was then the Department of Modern and Classical Languages from 1944 until she retired. Professor Steckelberg established this award to recognize outstanding achievement by students majoring in the languages available at WMU at that time, directing that students would be selected for their performance and potential in the language.

We have two Mathilde Steckelberg Award recipients this year: Nick Huffman and Michael Mikolajczak.
I am incredibly grateful to have been chosen for this award. It is an honor to be recognized in memory of Mathilde Steckelberg. I plan to continue to grow my Spanish speaking abilities after college by volunteering and traveling. I plan on applying to and joining the Peace Corps after graduation. I learned so much from my study abroad experience in Costa Rica, that I am not satisfied with ending my travels there. I want to travel more, experience more, and further improve my Spanish. Learning more languages is not out of the question either.

To everyone currently studying Spanish, studying abroad was one of the most impactful experiences of my life. It changed my mindset about the world and my future, and I encourage everyone to share that experience. I feel that it is so important to experience new cultures, and open yourself up to new ideas. It is a must-have experience of a lifetime.
I am honored to receive such an amazing award. My time learning and practicing Spanish at Western has been an unbelievable experience. It has given me the opportunity to travel the world and experience other cultures firsthand. I am so grateful for my experience and look forward to what the future has in store!
The **Department of Spanish** is pleased to announce our awards for excellence in Spanish. We hope award winners take inspiration from those famous people their awards are named for to continue their engagement with the Spanish language and Hispanic cultures of the world. Announcements are alphabetical by student surname.
María Moliner Award:
Abigail Marie Bolen

María Moliner was a 20th century Spanish librarian and lexicographer. She is known for her dictionary "Diccionario del uso del español," which is a "must" book of reference for all of us who study the Spanish language.

I feel very proud to have been chosen for this award because my passion for the Spanish language and culture goes to my very core. I wish I could spend another four years studying Spanish under the faculty at WMU. It has truly been such a thrilling ride learning about Spanish linguistics, grammar, culture, and history. After graduation, I will be pursuing a career in Spanish interpretation in courtrooms and hospitals to ensure that limited English speaking persons receive the care they need. I would love to spend a year abroad in Spain teaching English and pursuing a master's in Spanish. I would love to give a shoutout to Dr. Isea for his passion and commitment to teaching the history of Hispanics. Under his tutorship, I learned to hear the voices of Hispanics and Chicanos clearly and to understand the Hispanic culture from the ground up. Without Isea, Aztlan for me may as well be Atlantis because I would never know the difference. Pablo Pastrana also deserves a shout for his friendliness and guidance during my time in Burgos, España. His support and guidance helped me to settle in and make Burgos my home and my hosts like true family. Lastly, it is important that I mention the late Michael Braun. Professor Braun was my first connection at WMU and he helped make the Spanish department feel like home. Whenever I had a question, I could count on him to have an answer and a story to boot. He is responsible for my travels to Spain, as I based my decision to study there on his recommendations and encouragement, and knowing this, I spent my time in Spain savoring everything I could because I knew it was what he wanted for his students, the people for which he cared the most.
WMU Department of Spanish
Alfonso X el Sabio Award:
Yesenia Guerrero

Alfonso X el Sabio was a Spanish King in the 13th century. He was called “the Wise” because he established centers of learning all around Spain.

After graduation, I hope to obtain a career in Elementary Education in the Kalamazoo area. Teaching has always been a huge passion of mine. In previous experiences, I have worked with English Learners and would like to continue to help them as I see a lot of myself in those students. Kalamazoo has a large Hispanic community and it is also one of my goals to be able to give back by assisting those families.

My advice for new Spanish students: STUDY ABROAD! Even as a Spanish heritage speaker, I took the opportunity to learn more about a culture different than my own. I learned a lot not only about the language, but also about myself.
Jorge Luis Borges was an Argentine poet, essayist, and short-story writer whose tales of fantasy and dream worlds are classics of 20th century world literature. He truly changed the world of literature with his imagination, creativity and intellect.

I am honored and absolutely take inspiration from this award. Here's a word for future students of Spanish: What I've found through studying Spanish at Western is that Spanish isn't just a language, which is what I thought before. It is a study of humanity. Through the study of literature, culture, linguistics, and study abroad programs, learning the language is secondary. Spanish has given me opportunities to learn about who I am as a human being, and to see that in others, too. This is what comes first. The skills I learn in my classes and in studying abroad translate to every area of life and make me a better person, one I am grateful to be. For future students, I recommend pursuing Spanish for this reason.
Rosalía de Castro was a 19th century Galician poet & fiction writer, whose work shows great sensitivity and concern for humanity.
Rosario Castellanos was a Mexican poet and author and was one of Mexico's more important literary voices in the last century. Throughout her life, she wrote eloquently about issues of cultural and gender oppression, and her work has influenced feminist theory and cultural studies. Her work opened the door of Mexican literature to women.

It took only one Spanish class at WMU (Spanish Conversation with our beloved Miguel Braun) to make me realize that this department is something special. Every single professor that I have interacted with has in some way or another increased my passion for the Spanish language, and I am so grateful that I was able to connect with them during my time here. All the experiences that I have had here are ones that I will carry with me throughout the rest of my life, and I can’t wait to see where my love of Spanish will continue to take me! While I am still figuring out exactly where I want to end up in life, I know that Spanish will always be a part of it. In the future, I hope to eventually live in a Spanish-speaking country (at least for a little while), and hopefully use my knowledge of Spanish to help immigrant communities in the U.S.

I would also like to give a shout-out to Dr. Wirtz and Dr. Pastrana-Pérez for being on my thesis committee, and offering me so much support throughout this process. I couldn’t do it without them. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Bob Felkel, as while he is no longer at WMU, I think we can all agree that he will always be an integral part of the Spanish department here. He has continued to be an amazing mentor and friend to me throughout my time here, and like all of the other professors in the department, I feel lucky to have met him!
WMU Department of Spanish
Antonio de Nebrija Award:
Madison Bienthai Nakayama

Antonio de Nebrija, one of Spain's greatest humanists, published the first grammar of the Spanish language in 1492, now credited as the first published grammar of any Romance language. Nebrija was known for his belief that the power of the Spanish Empire spread through the teaching and learning of the Spanish language, which is one of the reasons he wrote his grammar.
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was an 11th century Mexican poet and essayist. She was a self-taught scholar and poet of the Baroque school. She is considered to be a contributor to the Spanish Golden Age and one of Mexico's intellectual gems.
The Inca Garcilaso de la Vega was a cultural historian in the 16th century. He was born in Peru. His father was a Spanish Captain and his mother an Inca princess. He was therefore a "mestizo," that is to say, a man of two races, two worlds, two visions and two languages.

I am honored to have been chosen for the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega award. The WMU Spanish department has continuously inspired me, and provided me with incredible opportunities that I am forever grateful for.

As for my future plans, I plan to join the accelerated Spanish masters program here at WMU. Upon completion of my masters, I plan to go to Physician Assistant (PA) school to become a bilingual PA. My professional goal is to care for Hispanic patients in a women’s health clinic.

The advice that I would share with other Spanish students at WMU- I would encourage students to reach out to their professors and to make meaningful relationships with them. They are incredible people and want to help you succeed!
WMU Department of Spanish
Joan Coromines Award:
Lindsay Nicole Warriner

Joan Coromines was one of Catalonia's foremost linguistic scholars of the 20th century as well as an outspoken Catalan nationalist. Coromines lived in exile following the Spanish Civil War and even held a professorship at the University of Chicago before returning to Barcelona to pen his most famous works, which are now classics in both Catalan and Spanish philology.

I cannot thank the Department of Spanish enough for honoring me with the Juan Coromines Award! I feel especially grateful to all the wonderful faculty, and in particular, Robert Vann, Michael Millar, and Mercedes Tubino-Blanco. Throughout my time at WMU they have supported me, my learning, and my dreams to study abroad. The Department of Spanish and its students are lucky to have such wonderful professors who truly care about their students.

My advice to new Spanish students is to study abroad...then study abroad again! The picture I provided is of me in one of the beautiful places I traveled to during my stay in Costa Rica! My semester in Heredia was the most enriching experience of my life. It was there talking with the local Ticos that I truly fell in love with the Spanish language.
First prize to Addison Randall for “Mi experiencia en el estudio del español”
Department of Spanish
Concurso de videos:

First prize to Kyle Petronio, Erich Miner, and Sava Velkoff for “Patatas bravas”

“¡delicioso!”
Although this year I will conclude my studies at Western, I will forever be grateful for everything the Spanish department has done for me. I would like to thank every professor that was part of my academic journey because this award symbolizes everything I have learned from every single one of them: Mercedes Tasende, Mariola Pérez de la Cruz, Kristina Wirtz, Robert Felkel, Patricia Montilla, Antonio Isea, Natalio Ohanna, Germán Zárate-Sández and Robert Vann. Thank you for believing in me and always pushing me to do my best.