

Augsburg Now

A PUBLICATION FOR

AUGSBURG COLLEGE ALUMNI & FRIENDS

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WINTER 2006-07 VOL. 69, NO. 2



A president is inaugurated

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Polish-born Magdalena Paleczny-Zapp, associate professor in marketing, brings her experience as an international business consultant to her students in class.

global business

MEET THE INTERNATIONAL FACULTY

Associate professor Magdalena Paleczny-Zapp (management coordinator) was born and raised in Krakow, Poland, and taught in several European institutions before coming to Augsburg.

Associate professor Amin Kader (international business coordinator) is from Egypt. A past president of the Islamic Center of Minnesota, he teaches Islamic Studies in addition to business.

Before coming to the United States in 1970, associate professor and finance coordinator Ashok Kapoor worked at the American Embassy in his home country of India. He has brought this international experience into his Augsburg classroom since 1998.

Master of Business Administration (MBA) director Bob Kramarczuk was born in western Ukraine. At the age of five, his family escaped and hid in the forest for five months keeping ahead of the front during World War II. His

Experience is a powerful teacher. In addition to study abroad programs, Augsburg's business students have opportunities to experience global perspectives in their classrooms every day.

BY BETHANY BIERMAN

family was later shipped to a work camp in Bavaria before immigrating to the U.S.

Associate professor Fekri Meziou, Tunisian by birth, has taught at Augsburg since 1987.

"Having faculty of diverse backgrounds is important to the richness of the academic programming offered in our department," says Meziou. "For instance, I am teaching an international marketing course that is approached from a globally diverse background. We analyze the challenges of marketing products and services in different regions around the world. This course can only be taught by someone who has traveled extensively and has immersed himself/herself during an extended stay in the life of the foreign countries."

"I grew up on a farm outside a small town," says Jamie Schiller '05, who currently serves as MBA program coordinator. "Most of my experience with diversity was through the business department." Reflecting back on her undergraduate experience, Schiller remembers, "[Zapp] helped us understand global differences as well as learn to make culturally sensitive business decisions. ... [Meziou] changed my life and drove me to seek out opportunities to broaden my perspective of marketing and business on a global level. He continuously brought cases to his courses that had global business challenges. ... With the help of the business faculty, I was able to customize a study abroad program in England. ... I have



Associate professor Fekri Meziou brings case studies from his own cultural experience to his international marketing course.



From his years of working at the American Embassy in India, associate professor Ashok Kapoor can teach finance, drawing on extensive knowledge of both cultural contexts.

Trading Places

grown to appreciate international differences in other country's beliefs, norms, and value sets."

"Students leave the place more open-minded than the day they came," Zapp asserts.

John Cerrito, assistant professor and department chair, says, "The course descriptions are broad enough so faculty members can bring in their own flavor and expertise."

"In the current context of globalization," says Kapoor, "my international experience comes in handy in all my classes, but especially in the international finance classes. My work experience overseas provides many examples to my students and helps them keep an open perspective leading to better decisions both professionally and in their personal lives."

Senior Dulce Monterrubio is a perfect example of this. She came to Augsburg from her hometown of Mexico City. She says, "It was Magda's own experience as an international business consultant that made me understand that being an international student here at

Augsburg was just the first step, but that successfully adapting to a second, third, or fourth culture would be what truly would make me the international educator/professional I wanted to become." Monterrubio is using her cultural experiences, which include studying abroad in Spain, in her current role as a program assistant in Augsburg's Center for Global Education.

Along with representing differences in ethnic backgrounds, there is significant religious diversity represented in the department.

"The department really does have an interesting diversity of faith expressions," comments assistant professor Lee Clarke, who also happens to be a former ELCA minister. "For some, it's very clear to students because of culture and nationalities. Ashok [Kapoor] is very upfront talking about his Hindu faith, and Amin [Kader] and others are Islamic. For others, it's not as intentional... Because religion is so close to culture, it gives students a taste of some of the challenges in global business."

Cerrito agrees. "The College goes out of its way to be diverse. In 1983 when I came, I did not represent the faith, culture, or ethnic background the culture [of Augsburg] represents, and I've never been anywhere where I've felt more accepted." (Cerrito is Roman Catholic and of Italian descent.)

Kapoor says, "Both my cultural and religious background allows me to bring a very different perspective to issues of the day that we discuss both among colleagues and with our students."

LAYER IN CORPORATE EXPERIENCE

A different kind of culture—corporate culture—is also something faculty add to the international mix.

Prior to coming to Augsburg in 1995, David Schwain, assistant professor, served on

Consider two college students in 1980—one, a student at the University of Minnesota; the other, studying at the University of Tunis. Both had the desire to see the world through a new culture.

The two are allowed to exchange places through the International Reciprocal Exchange Program.

After her time in Tunisia, the American returns to Minnesota; the Tunisian young man decides to stay in America to pursue his academic objectives. The two meet while serving as co-chairs for a selection committee to choose and orient another student exchange.

Years later, the two cross paths again, this time at Augsburg College, where they both now work. Their names? Regina McGoff, associate director of the Center for Global Education, and Fekri Meziou, associate professor of business.

Meziou says the exchange "was a wonderful opportunity to share experiences and academic ideas with international students from a number of countries around the world... International exchanges enable students to immerse themselves in the cultural, social, political, and economic life of another country. The learning outcomes are tremendous and the personal growth opportunities are immeasurable."

It's a small world, after all.



Assistant professor Lee Clarke combines both his corporate perspectives from software design and programming with his background as a Lutheran minister in Augsburg's MIS classes.



Stu Stoller, professor of accounting, maintains active ties with universities in Poland and the Czech Republic, where he has collaborated to develop curriculum, teach seminars, and establish a small-business incubation center.

a national promotion board that oversaw the “Got Milk” advertising and promotion program. His industry experience amplifies business theory in the classroom.

Professor Stu Stoller owned his own CPA practice before going through what he calls “a mid-life change in careers.”

Prior to joining Augsburg, Assistant Professor Marc Isaacson worked at Innovex Inc. in Maple Plain in various quality/engineering roles, including the launch of Flex Suspension Assemblies into high volume manufacturing. This took him to Asia frequently as he dealt with issues in global engineering, development, and customer service.

Nora Braun joined the department in 1997 with 20 years of information technology industry experience, most recently with Electronic Data Systems and National Car Rental.

Clarke was introduced to Augsburg when Braun, a colleague, informed him of an opening in Management Information Systems (MIS). Clarke had worked for the EDS

Corporation and National Car Rental System, Inc., where he served as a software development manager, senior programmer/analyst, and project leader. “I brought with me a corporate culture, but it was not long before it became obvious that it was very different here.”

All of this gives students a better idea of what to expect in the “real” world. Ana Chilingarishvili, a senior international relations major from the country of Georgia, says, “Professor Zapp shared with us all kinds of experiences she has had in her professional career which enhanced my understanding of the concepts covered in the textbook and showed how they can be applied to real-life situations.”

“It’s paramount that you do what you teach,” says Stoller. “It’s one thing to be an academic and understand the philosophy and the theory, but people become practitioners when they graduate from here, so they need to understand the rules of practice. One of the things that experience does is to give you that practical experience... [What] I think I give to students that they enjoy are my stories of what is out there in the trenches of the world.”

GIVE CREDIT WHERE DUE

Cerrito credits the character of the business department to Amin Kader, who founded it (formerly it was combined with economics) and served as department chair for 16 years. “Faculty are here because of Amin’s leadership and drive. He was very successful at establishing a culture where all members of the department are treated with dignity and respect.”

“When I interviewed here, Amin Kader was the chair at the time,” recalls Stoller, who grew up in a Jewish New York City family. He remembers his family telling him, “You mean you’re teaching in a Lutheran school, and your boss is Egyptian?” They said, “Boy, you’re in trouble.”

“When I got here [in 1990] and saw the amount of diversity in the department, I wondered if we would all work well together,” remembers associate professor Lori Lohman, who is a self-described Midwestern Protestant. “In a short period of time it became apparent to me that this would be the best place I would ever work. My co-workers are exceptional. We support each other. We respect and value our differences.”

“For me, it would be hard to work in a department where only one culture was represented,” says Zapp.

CREATE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

The business faculty have actively crossed borders for their teaching and research—especially in Central and Eastern Europe.

In 1991, following a trade exhibition in Pozan, Poland, Cerrito went to Warsaw and met the vice-mayor of the city of Lublin, who was also a professor at Catholic University. “He invited me to visit the campus and meet with professors. That really started [Augsburg’s] relationship with Catholic University and working with Solidarity, the free trade movement, and privatization issues. I then brought in Amin [Kader] and Stu [Stoller].”

Cerrito and Kader were invited by Catholic University’s dean to develop management degree programs and work with the university’s faculty to assist them in privatizing state industries. Cerrito and Kader were also asked to serve as guest lecturers.

In 1996, Stoller was invited to Catholic University to set up curriculum and to teach a seminar for financial auditing. “My grandfather came from Poland, from Krakow, and so I figured I could visit on the way... I knew nothing about Poland. The only thing I knew were the black and white newsreels from World War II... I thought Poland was black and white.”

Stoller later returned to Catholic University to set up curriculum and teach sem-

inars in Audit, and Mergers and Acquisitions.

"I learned a lot about different perspectives, different point of view. It took me out of my comfort zone and really gave me an education," Stoller recalls. "But I figured, this cannot end here, so I asked my colleagues here [at Augsburg], if they had any connections in central Eastern Europe."

It turned out that business/MIS professor Milo Schield's son was teaching in the Czech Republic. He connected Stoller with the associate director of intercultural studies at Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic.

Stoller's offer to help resulted in his "thumbprint" on the Czech professor's financial project over the Internet. This led to a sabatikal, during which time Stoller created an incubation center for small business in the community.

Stoller then created a course for Augsburg students, "The Czech Republic: Social and Cultural Impact of the Emerging Free Market Economy," which integrated history, culture, and economics. In January 2001, he took 17 students to the Czech Republic for the first time.

Students met with business leaders, workers, and citizens to discuss the impact of the privatization process and the development of

capitalist enterprises in the ex-communist country. The course has evolved since 2001, but Stoller continues to lead student groups to the Czech Republic.

Stoller was later invited to set up a similar program in Prague. Stoller has taken students there in 2003 and 2005 and will return this year.

"Nothing can change you in three weeks as fast as an experiential education," Stoller asserts. "Four years of college don't change you as much as three weeks in Prague."

MAKE WIDER CONNECTIONS

In the mid-'90s, a connection with Russia was established when Cerrito joined with political science professor Norma Noonan to present lectures at and facilitate an exchange of professors with the State Academy of Management in Moscow.

In May 2004, President William Frame and Zapp visited the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, to rekindle an exchange program with Augsburg. Several other business faculty, including Clarke and Kader, have also visited Slovenia. The department has hosted four professors and the country's prime minister,

Dr. Janez Drnovsek.

On that same trip, Frame and Zapp also visited Krakow University of Economics, Zapp's alma mater. A year later, an exchange agreement was signed between Augsburg and Krakow University.

Last summer, through another faculty connection, Stoller and associate professor Kathy Schwalbe taught a course in Karlsruhe, Germany, including four Augsburg students and 14 students from the Berufsakademie.

More recently, Stoller has developed curriculum, discussed business cooperations, and has given lectures in Shanghai, China. An exchange of business programs is being considered as part of ongoing College discussions.

IN SUM

Stoller says his colleagues "tell about their lives, they bring in their food—it's wonderful. They talk about their experiences ... you can call up somebody like my friend Ashok and talk about Indian culture, or Muslim culture, or whatever. It just adds a breath and depth and experience to the department. We all work with each other on a professional basis and rejoice in each other's differences."

"It's outstanding that we have this diversity," says Kramarczuk. "We're all God's children. I've seen people die because of their nationality. When I came into New Orleans in the early '50s, I couldn't understand when I would get on a bus, why an older black woman would have to get up and give me her seat."

In the words of Lohman, "My colleagues have expanded my world. It's been fabulous."

"We bring to the class very different worlds," says Zapp of her colleagues. "We represent different cultures, different countries, different religious beliefs... The benefits are immeasurable." ■

The Department of Business Administration has 24 full-time faculty, more than 35 part-time faculty, teaching over 700 undergraduate and 300 graduate students.



MBA director Bob Kramarczuk, whose family immigrated to the U.S. after fleeing Ukraine, has enjoyed a career as an international consultant and is an academician in the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.