

Script for NFOA Bridge Fac/Staff

Bumper Music fade in

KB: Welcome to this 10-minute episode of the NFOA Bridge mini bodcast. N-F-O-A is the acronym for Not for Ourselves Alone, Washburn's motto. And the virtual bridge is located right here on Teaching Tuesdays, connecting Washburn with the Topeka community and beyond through community-engaged learning also known as CEL.

I'm Karen Barron, Community-Engaged Learning Coordinator for the Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning and host of this series. Today, our featured guest is Professor & Chair of Modern Languages, Miguel Gonzalez-Abellas. Welcome Miguel.

MG: Thank you for having me here today, Karen.

KB: We are pleased you're here. So, Miguel, you were already incorporating CEL into your classes before I became coordinator of CEL for CTEL. So, my first question is, why *do* you incorporate CEL into your curriculum?

MG: There are three main reasons. The first one was out of curiosity and interest in doing that, then I believe it's important to bring back a sense of community to our students and doing that with a community engaged learning project is a very good approach to that I believe, and finally it is also in a more practical sense a good opportunity for some of our majors to see firsthand the impact of, that knowing another language, in these case Spanish, has on the immediate community as a tool to bridge the gap between different communities, so they don't need to necessarily just go abroad to put their skills to the test, I mean they can do that here locally and in the process get to know their community a little bit better.

KB: Okay, well thank you. You know I like your phrase bringing a sense of community to our students and the idea that you know our, our community, we do live in a global community, but our physical community is our local community, so I appreciate your emphasis on that. Would you briefly describe some examples of CEL in your classes here at Washburn?

MG: The main class I use for CEL is my Spanish 315, translation, Spanish translation class. We have done projects in previous years for different organizations in the community from the YWCA, Safe Streets of Topeka, to the Humane Society, and even Visit Topeka. Those are the ones that come to, to mind right now. Basically, what we do is translating materials from English into Spanish and that forces the students actually to go and go and explore their community partner a little bit more and their community a little bit more. I remember right now for instance the Visit Topeka project we did I think it was around four or five years ago, and some of the students were learning about the capitol building or learning about the history of Topeka through translating those little pieces, and, and it was a learning experience for, for a lot of them. So that was, that's the main class and the main project that we do.

Then, I have just submitted, and it will go through the ranks this semester I hope, and hopefully be enough groups, another course that is Spanish 240, Spanish for Heritage Speakers, and that's

a class that has the Spanish-speaking Latino population in mind as a student, and the component of that course is CEL as well, asking the students to just go and do projects that will benefit the community, be that translating again or maybe oral history, recording their, their, their, their community back home, wherever they're coming from, so we'll going to say again, that's still in the works, so I'm not exactly sure how that is going to work, yet but that's the goal.

KB: Well, yeah, both of those projects sound really, very much engaged with community, with community engaged learning. I mean the translation aspect, you know, and the way your students are doing it obviously it, it helps further their Spanish understanding and skills at speaking and understanding and the written word because you are translating, and, and I think it seems like you also translated some web information also with maybe with Go Topeka or something I'm, I'm thinking that was the case, and maybe you're doing that now. I'm not sure when you're talking about translating whether you're talking documents that, you know, flyers or whatever it is for the Humane Society, for example, or if you are translating web content, but, but either way, yeah, you are describing how the students are learning the objectives in your class to further their skills in speaking and writing in Spanish and translating, but also that the students go out and are then aware of these different community agencies and organizations in our local community and, yeah, like you were saying initially, going to the capitol building. I mean a lot of students may not have a robust knowledge of our history and so, so that's all incorporated in that and that's really beneficial to the students and obviously the translations are beneficial to people who, you know, speak other languages besides English, so you know it's easy to see how that dovetails and works together, the whole idea of community-engaged learning and I love your, the idea you're talking about for another class with not only translating but looking at writing and recording oral histories. I think that sounds especially interesting, and, yeah, incorporating not only our, our local place where we are, but remembering, you know, where we have been and, and how that, that always influences, you know, who we are so so these sound really interesting, and I'm wondering if, do the, the students themselves, do you get a sense that they appreciate doing this kind of work like the community engaged learning type of situation?

I think they do, or at least the feedback that I get from the students puts me in that direction. When we did the, the project for Visit Topeka and the students actually were really excited, and they didn't know about the different architectural styles that you can find in the homes in Topeka so they were they were actually commenting on that in the class, and then obviously they had a blast when their pages, some of their pages, because not all of them for particular reasons, the community partner just decided to actually use some of the work, not everything that we did, but anyway, when some of the pages actually went live, and they could just go onto the internet and browse and see what they actually had done, that was actually pretty cool, as they said, so I think they are invested and they really are excited about what they are doing.

Well, that's great. Well, yeah. I, I appreciate what you've done with, you know, linking your students with the community and I, yeah, I like hearing that the students also appreciate that. I think that the practicality of it, of you know, what you learn in the academic classroom is just a powerful thing and part of the beauty of community engaged learning. Well, Miguel, thank you so much for sharing your experience with CEL. I've really, it's been a pleasure talking with you, and I look forward to seeing to what else you do in the future.

For more information on how you can get involved with Community-Engaged Learning at Washburn and to apply to be a CEL scholar, please see the CEL Pillar on the Center for Teaching Excellence webpage, and contact me, Karen Barron, Coordinator of CEL for CTEL.

A special thanks to Tom Morgan for composing our bumper music and the Washburn jazz band for recording it, featuring Craig Treinin on sax.

See you next week on the NFOA bridge.

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