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UNH Named Host of Fulbright Program, Expands Arabic Courses
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DURHAM, N.H. – The University of New Hampshire has expanded its Arabic language program after becoming a host institution with the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program, a competitive program that pairs international educators with U.S. colleges and universities.

This fall, UNH welcomed Samah El-Said from Egypt, who is teaching UNH’s first advanced Arabic language courses.

“Our students have been asking for access to higher-level Arabic courses. At the same time, the college, and indeed the university, has been keenly interested in internationalizing the campus for our students. We’ve addressed both of these interests creatively with the success of this Fulbright application. We are very pleased to welcome Ms. El-Said to our faculty,” said Kenneth Fuld, dean of the UNH College of Liberal Arts.

The Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program enables young educators to refine their teaching skills, increase their English language proficiency, and extend their knowledge of the cultures and customs of the United States while engaging in non-degree studies at accredited post-secondary U.S. educational institutions. Along with their studies, the Fulbright assistants teach language courses, supervise language labs, and lead language table discussions.

The Fulbright FLTA Program is sponsored by the United States Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and administered by the Institute of International Education.

UNH has offered introductory and intermediate Arabic for several years, and decided to expand the program to offer advanced Arabic because of increasing demand for the language.

“Students from varying backgrounds and specialties have been increasingly interested in Arabic for many reasons. Some have heard about it from their enthusiastic friends, and wanted to experience it for themselves. Others, watching the current affairs of the world, have come to appreciate the fact that knowing Arabic and understanding the culture of the Middle East is an asset in terms of their future careers. Regardless of the reasons behind their interest, they realize that in order for them to have a functional level of the language, they would realistically need to study it for many years,” said Ruwa Pokorny, a lecturer in Arabic who oversees the Fulbright FLTA Program and UNH’s Arabic program.

Marco Dorfsman, chair of the UNH Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, said offering advanced Arabic classes is part of the department’s and UNH’s commitment to internationalization.

“We have recently expanded our offerings in Arabic and Chinese and also hope to expand Portuguese next year. We are delighted to have Samah-El Said with us and we are working very
closely with the international affairs dual major and the interdisciplinary major in Middle Eastern Studies to make sure we continue to do excellent work on literature and culture of North Africa and the Middle East,” Dorfsman said.

El-Said said she applied to the Fulbright program because she dreamed of coming to the United States. She loves the English language and American culture. She also was interested in serving as a cultural ambassador and helping dispel Arab stereotypes. She is from Mansoura, by the Delta Region in northern Egypt.

In Egypt, El-Said teaches in the department of English at Mansoura University. She specializes in British drama.

“I love the location of UNH in New England. As a student of English literature, I have studied American literature and I know how this region is so inspiring and pretty. I read about it in the poetry of Robert Frost, and I always remember how my professor used to describe the charm of nature here. I love the weather, too, which is totally different from my country,” El-Said said.

“The students at UNH are awesome; I love them all. I feel that they are interested in learning and knowing more about my culture,” she said.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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