María Eugenia Cairo, MA (2018): I would do it all over again…

The Spanish M.A. program was a life-changing and rewarding experience it changed my perspective on a single language, giving me a love for it, and rewarded me with friends for life, it provided me with a knowledge that goes beyond a theoretical approach and delves into the discussion and in-depth analysis of Latin-American and Spanish literature and culture; and it allowed me to work with professors who not only guided me through this wonderful program but were also invested in my academic as well as personal success.

Along the shores of Lake Michigan, the Lake Shore Campus of Loyola University Chicago is a magical place where learning, for me, was almost like an accidental occurrence in an academic adventure. Overlooking these waters, the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures was my home away from home for two of the best years of my life!

In spite of the many challenges, including the cold days of a Chicago winter and the long but fulfilling nights spent writing essays, I would gladly do it all over again – just to attend those lectures that introduced me to the vast world of Spanish literature and culture. The graduate program in Spanish helped me understand literature and reality more profoundly, more importantly, encouraged me to develop a love for research which, hopefully, will come to fruition in the form of a doctoral degree.

There is no doubt I enjoyed every minute of my M.A. program. But above all, my time at Loyola allowed me to achieve academic goals as well as personal growth. I am more than grateful to the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Nadia Mufarregue and Antonio Gazí, May 2017: The Art of Reasoning

As graduate students we also learned how to apply the analytic skills of the classroom to our own surroundings, always looking for the answers and solutions that would enable us to contribute to society. This, the art of reasoning, is the practical gift of the Loyola program.

While working as a Teaching Assistant, I was provided with a new outlook on the way in which I face the world. Each new challenge in my life is an invitation to put into practice what I have been exercising at Loyola. I am able to look at my circumstances, reflect on them, and develop a more mature perspective. I am always looking for the answers and solutions that would enable us to contribute to society. This, the art of reasoning, is the priceless gift that I received from Loyola. Overall, my time as a graduate student has provided me with a broad range of skills which are applicable to a wide variety of jobs – both within and outside of academia.

Tax Clinic to help translate documents from English into Spanish, an opportunity that introduced me to a new language and culture, changing my perspective on my own language, igniting in me a love for it, and rewarding me with friends for life.

One of the best years of my life.

Allyson Doona, MA (2016): Nothing Has Ever Been So Rewarding

The decision to apply to graduate school was a difficult one for me, not only as a first-generation college student, but also because I took several years off before applying. Although I had lived in Spain after completing my undergraduate degree, I was not sure if graduate school would not really be like that.

The Spanish M.A. program at Loyola is unique because it admits a small cohort of students. One of the sure of the program, both fellow graduate students and faculty will genuinely get to know you as a person, not just as a number on a list. When I entered graduate school, my friends told me horror stories about meetings with their advisors, who would tear apart their work as if it were "checked out" in other ways. Loyola’s faculty members come from top universities in both the United States and abroad, but unlike other programs their focus is on the students’ well-being. We do not ever tell a student that they are not good enough. Nothing has ever been so rewarding as the time that I spent learning at Loyola.

I always want to give back to the community, and Loyola has given me the opportunity to do so through my job search and other professional pursuits. Professors and peers continue to give me advice and support, and I’m grateful for their continued presence in my life.

Tyber Gehauer, MA (2017): Woohoo!

From my first interviews as a prospective student up to when I completed my thesis, I always had a tight-knit support system while earning my Masters in Spanish at Loyola University Chicago. This Loyola support system allowed me to engage rigorously with complex and exciting topics related to literature and language in Spanish in a welcoming environment, and it was encouraged me to go beyond the limits of my comfort zone. Because of this, I was able to explore topics as diverse as: studying films depicting Central American migrants; volunteering at the Loyola Law School Tax Clinic to help translate documents from English into Spanish; and participating in book-reading by authors from Spain and all over Latin America.

After graduating with a Masters in Spanish from Loyola University Chicago, I was confident entering the workforce with a diverse set of skills. I have a solid foundation in literary analysis, I have classroom experience as a teaching assistant and I am well versed in managing my time while working on my thesis and intensive language teaching programs. I am able to work independently, and I am also able to communicate my experience with my past and my future.

Although I was very excited to graduate with an MA in Spanish from Loyola (woohoo!), I had to leave behind a tight-knit network that I developed during my two years studying at Loyola. Thankfully, the concern was unwarranted! Even though I’m not physically in Chicago anymore, I can still count on the Loyola network of professors, classmates and friends to help me in my job search and other professional pursuits. Professors and peers continue to give me advice and support, and I’m grateful for their continued presence in my life.

Graduate Assistant (left to right): Tyber Gehauer, Nadia Mufarregue and Antonio Gazí, May 2017

Allyson Doona, MA (2016): Nothing Has Ever Been So Rewarding

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Graduate Assistant (left to right): Myun Ahn, Allyson Doona and Cristina Colón, May 2016
The first day I stepped onto the campus of Loyola University Chicago was also the first day that I arrived in Chicago; I was nervous and excited about what my time in Loyola and Chicago would entail. This was the first time that I would live away from my family, and it was the first time that I would be both a student and a teaching assistant. I had just completed a first-year course in the Department of Modern Languages and Literature at Loyola University Chicago. My mentors have taken me step-by-step, in every phase of my academic career. It was a daunting challenge to edit my thesis more times than I can count, but I can assure you that it was all worth it, and that I would do it all over again! In this program I was inspired by the true humility of Loyola's nameakes, Saint Ignatius, as I was encouraged to always give the best of myself, while also remaining open to change that which had to be changed.

I had the experience of going to a public university before arriving Loyola University, but once a student of Loyola I soon discovered what the difference is to be cared for. I had been nurtured as a whole person, not only academically, but spiritually, as the members of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Loyola have done for me. It is like no other institution I have been to before.

Currently, I am a happy and enthusiastic Spanish teacher in a local high school, and I am immensely satisfied with my position. I believe this has been due to the visionary role my mentors played on me before I enrolled at Loyola University. I planned to continue in graduate school and earn a doctoral degree. But after close consideration of my circumstances, being a mother of three and wanting to immerse myself in the community through poetry and art, and all the personal responsibilities, I decided to stay in Chicago. Now I get to teach my passion; literature! And I have the liberty to be creative with it. Therefore, things turned out to be just right. I can’t thank enough the team in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures of Loyola University Chicago, especially Dr. Olympia Gonzalez, who helped me walk through darkness and into the light. Her knowledge, passion and humanity have left a mark on my life and my career. I will always be grateful!

Adrián Cuevas, MA (2015): One-of-a-Kind Program

My time at Loyola University Chicago was one of much academic and personal growth. Being part of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and implementing a hands-on perspective, the MA was both fun, the program is also very demanding and there were many long nights and challenging assignments. I got through it all with the help of some of my best friends and academics at Loyola. I have been given the chance for much personal, professional, and academic growth, and I am very grateful to those who gave me the opportunity to pursue my MA in Spanish.

Having been part of the Spanish MA at Loyola Chicago has truly prepared me professionally. Due to the internship, the program’s small size, and individualized mentorship, my academic skills in the subject matter flourished beyond my expectations. I was able to continue learning for my students. More than staff, professors, and advisors, the individuals I met and worked with have become friends, better yet, family. Their unconditional support made the challenges a whole lot easier and allowed me to better focus on my academic development.

Currently, I truly feel that my time at Loyola is what paved the way to where I am today. With a professional and academic skill-set in hand, and with the support of amazing faculty, I am confident that I can now be the best version of myself.

Alex Korte, MA (2015): Prepared to Succeed

I look back on my time at Loyola with great fondness. The Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, just steps from Lake Michigan, is full of kind and intelligent faculty whose backgrounds are as diverse as the subject matter itself. Under the guidance of their graduates, I learned of worlds of reading, writing, theory, and literary analysis. Their support helped me cultivate my skills as a professional academic and student of Hispanic cultures and literatures. The most cherished step was as an El Cid scholar. After being exiled from enemy territories, fights in the name of God and king, I envision a future of peace.

While reading works like El Cid was fun, the program is also very demanding and—in a word—difficult. The course work and expectations of the faculty are on par with the rigor and rewards of a career in professional academia. I kept busy with a full course schedule, while teaching undergraduate courses and working in the Learning Resource Center. This was a time I should never have been afraid of, for it made me more confident in myself and the world I was producing. I was also fortunate to have been awarded a Teaching Assistantship, which allowed me to develop my teaching style and gain experience in the classroom. The overall positive experience was one that truly fulfilled the Jesuit mission of the university and prepared me in an unparalleled way.

Ricardo Rivera-Cabrerena, MA (2014): Go Set the World on Fire

Studying history and literature is the strategy I have chosen to get down to the roots of the diverse cultural, political and socioeconomic realities that I have been experimenting through my multicultural lifestyle in Cuba,, Brownsville, Texas, and the Philippines. In 2012 I decided to study the Spanish at Loyola University Chicago, a program in which learning and research harmoniously coexist with the improvement of several local and international communities. As an El Cid scholar, I have been an instructor of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Literature. During these two intense and extraordinary productive years at Loyola, the University, an encouraging intellectual community, I had the opportunity to take courses covering a wide range of movements, genres, and authors from an interdisciplinary perspective. This approach allowed me to reflect on gender, ethnicity, religion, and identity in a dialogic relation with my background, while also opening new and exciting projects, both academic and personal.
Since 2014 I have been working toward my doctorate in Spanish at the University of California, Davis, with an emphasis in Latin American Literature and Cultural Studies. It may sound pretentious, but I think that I will succeed in achieving this new goal in my career; after all, I was—and will always be—part of the Loyola University of Chicago’s family, where students grow in knowledge, passion, and hard work. I will always remember my last day as a Loyola graduate student and Teaching Assistant. I had already passed my comprehensive exam, and once I had finished teaching my last Spanish lesson to undergrads, I silently said to myself while erasing the board: “Ok muchacha, now go set the world on fire, because no matter how big is the challenge, you are totally prepared to face it.”

Marie Bold, MA (2014): Language is a Powerful Thing

It’s funny how things come full circle. I loved language as a young child, even keeping small binders full of words in different languages I picked up from books and movies. When I had the chance to study a foreign language in middle school, I opted for French. As it turned out, it was at the same time as orchestra practice, so I took Spanish instead. Little did I know how much that “detour” would effect the rest of my life.

After studying Spanish in high school, I studied Spanish and Global Studies in college, and realized that I might want to teach Spanish as a profession. I was profoundly impacted by my professors and their commitment to their students, academic growth, and social justice. After graduation I was able to teach abroad in Málaga, Spain for one year, and then began my MA in Spanish program at Loyola Chicago.

I will always be grateful to Loyola for giving me the chance to dive deep into teaching, giving me a real, holistic experience as an instructor. I am grateful for the examples of my professors, especially Dr. Deni Heyck, who truly invested in me and my personal and professional growth. Her passion for learning, her work in Latin America for social justice, and her example of drawing out students, helping them make discoveries by empowering their voices, have greatly inspired and encouraged me in my own career.

Language is a powerful thing!