

Students showcase work at international festival

BY SEAN VONLEMBKE
STAFF WRITER

It's high time the world discovered what communication students are up to at UNC.

It seems it finally has. On March 18, seniors John David Devirgiliis, Courtney Garcia and Matthew Cunningham arrived in Casablanca, Morocco, to display their work at the weeklong International Video Art Festival.

Two years ago communication studies professor Francesca Talenti became the first American to present her work at the festival. The U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Morocco, invited Talenti to select three students to attend this year's festival.

At the end of fall semester, Talenti, along with professor Ed Rankus and Mark Robinson, communication studies director, sorted through a vast quantity of submissions.

"They were each quite different from each other," Talenti said of the three students' submissions. "Yet they were each all, in their own way, quite sophisticated."

As their work was slotted for viewing in Morocco on March 24, the three had five days after their arrival before the big day.

The festival and the city offered plenty to fill that time.

"It totally shattered my expectations," Cunningham said of the festival. "There were probably over a hundred artists and students presenting their work, and the volume and quality of their work was intimidating to say the least."

Every morning there were workshops with industry professionals, and while helpful, the students said there were even greater opportunities offered by the festival.

"Just meeting people and socializing with them was one of the best experiences there," Devirgiliis said.

After days of exploring Morocco and taking in the festival's sights, the students' turn had arrived.

Devirgiliis showed three short films. Among them was "The Laughter," a black-and-white film originally shot on 16 mm film with Justin Williams and William Earnhardt, which focuses on a father who lied to his son about his profession.

Garcia unveiled "The Way Out," a documentary she began on her free time while interning in Los Angeles last summer. The story centers on Angela and Carmen,

daughters of a crack-dealing pimp who are struggling to make it as musicians in South Central Los Angeles against the constraints of their father and environment.

Cunningham's piece, "Dreamland's Spine: A Love Story" started as a video project for his experimental video class. The story shows how two people in a bad relationship come to destroy each other's life. As an artistic twist, Cunningham used nine actors to portray the two characters.

The three considered their work to be well-received.

Though there were students from Spain and Holland, the three UNC seniors were among only eight Americans to attend the festival.

"I loved being in the minority ... and being around people who are interested in the same thing as me," Garcia said.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

BY KYLE CHORPENING
STAFF WRITER

Students at Appalachian State University likely will continue to avoid \$180 chemistry books and \$42 course packs.

The University Bookstore Committee published a report last month recommending that the school's textbook rental program be continued with a few alterations.

ASU students pay a \$76 fee every semester to rent textbooks from the university and pay for supplementary materials in certain classes. They end up paying an average of \$209 per year for all of their books.

On average, college students spend \$898 on books and supplies every year, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

The ASU textbook rental policy requires that books be used to teach classes in a three-year cycle and allows courses to be taught from one textbook.

The two primary changes suggested by the committee are to establish a two-year cycle and to allow professors to assign two books per class.

"We voted on these changes to

recognize faculty complaints and still address student needs," said Glenn Ellen Starr Stilling, chairwoman of the committee.

The high price of textbooks has prompted new UNC-system President Erskine Bowles to look into textbook rental possibilities for the entire system.

Elizabeth City State and Western Carolina universities are the only other schools to use such a system.

Stilling said that ASU's 68-year-old rental system came under fire in December 2004, causing the administration to create a special committee to study the issue.

"The charge was to maximize faculty flexibility and still minimize student cost," Stilling said.

In a survey conducted by the committee, 47 percent of the faculty polled said that textbook rentals harmed their ability to teach.

Faculty complained that they didn't like texts chosen for their class by the department and that the texts go out of date before the end of the three-year cycle.

"It's hard to know how effective a book is going to be until you teach

it," Stilling said.

The report is under review by the school's provost. ASU administrators say that the recommendations will be regarded highly in deciding the rental program's future.

"The administration wants to listen to those who are affected by this system," said Wilbur Ward, senior associate vice chancellor for academic affairs at ASU.


He said that the administration recognizes that some of the faculty is opposed to the rental system, but that some complaints are overstated.

Ward said he has seen the textbook rental program trigger debate several times. "This issue flares up every four or five years, but it always goes back to renting."

Stilling said that despite the work the committee has done, the system isn't perfect.

"Even in the year's worth of work we put into it, we didn't solve all the problems," she said. "We could have spent another two years on it."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.



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