

# French Studies at Transylvania

## High-Impact Practices: The Cardwell Scholarship

Report prepared by Dr. Simonetta Cochis and Dr. Brian Arganbright

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### French for the 21st Century

The French Program at Transylvania University has been on a steady path of growth and with the Douglas and Marilyn Cardwell French Scholarship Fund, it is well-positioned to continue to thrive while raising the standards of a twenty-first-century liberal arts education. Professors Cochis and Arganbright are greatly indebted to Douglas and Marilyn Cardwell for their vision in creating a scholarship fund that creates unique opportunities for genuine, transformative experiences in a French-speaking culture. The vision of the Cardwell Scholarship Fund also aligns with the profound changes made in the French Program at Transylvania over the past decade. Starting at the beginning levels of language learning, the French program replaced the textbooks written for American college students with a proficiency-based European textbook collection *Saison*, published by *FLE Didier*. This new immersive experience aligns with the European standards of language acquisition outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. This collection provides more rigor while increasing awareness of real-world issues such as environmental degradation, economic inequality, and social injustice.



Cardwell scholarship recipient Kira Bruno in Caen, France

The series also provides unique perspectives and innovative solutions for global engagement. Advanced classes have also shifted to reflect real-world issues and topical cultural content. Instead of a traditional centuries-based approach to teaching literature, our advanced classes (for example Perspectives on Globalization

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and Nature in French Literature and Culture) prepare students as global citizens who understand the usefulness of French in addressing some of the fundamental challenges we face today. The French program at Transy gives students a strong linguistic foundation upon which they also practice self-reflection and engagement in global issues. The Cardwell Scholarship is an essential component that provides a substantial study-abroad experience for these students who understand the value of a true immersive experience. Students take full advantage of the experience as it prepares them for rewarding careers and the active life of a global citizen.

## **The impact of the Cardwell Scholarship**

### **Diaka Savané - Class of 2020**



### **From cultivating family ties in France to a global family in the Peace Corps**

Diaka says that she had a “decent level of French under my belt” before spending the Winter 2018 semester at the Université de Caën, Basse Normandie. Striving to speak as little English as possible, she quickly formed lasting ties with her host parents - whom she calls “mes adorables parents d’accueil.” She also rekindled relationships with biological family members who had emigrated to the suburbs of Paris; notably she was present for the birth of a cousin, and she came to appreciate even more the profound significance of their shared language, French, in building relationships. Her experiences gave her the impetus to envisage a future for herself in the Peace Corps, to work towards social justice and

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better lives for the disadvantaged. Her linguistic abilities in French will serve her well. Without the Cardwell Scholarship, Diaka acknowledges that she would never have been able to spend “the amazing semester I had in France.” Thanks to this generous financial backing that allowed her to perfect her French, Diaka received a noteworthy DALF C1 certification. In 2019 she was one of only two recipients of the prestigious Charles and Susan Shearer Scholarship. After graduation, she has been accepted to the Peace Corps and will live and work in Togo, Africa for the next two years.

### **Kira Bruno - Class of 2020**



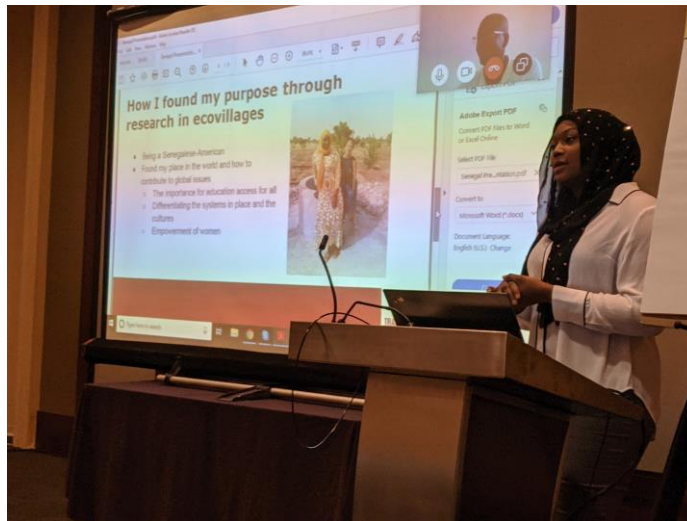
### **After finding her voice she is moving to France...**

Kira came to Transylvania with excellent skills in French, but with “very little confidence” in speaking and in her overall level of French. The Cardwell scholarship changed that for her: having this financial backing helped her to overcome the personal qualms she had about leaving her family and being immersed in the French language and culture that she loved. Her semester at the Université de Caën, Basse Normandie in Winter 2019 changed everything. The transformation was astounding. Kira now speaks colloquially and with confidence, and she is planning to move to France. She says that speaking French “on a daily basis to communicate with others, both inside and outside of the classroom, truly made French a part of me in a way that it hadn’t been before and showed me that I could rely on myself and have greater confidence in my abilities.” Her persona changed. The immersive experience, the kindness

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and the dedication of the faculty, as well as her own studiousness, earned her a prestigious DALF C1 certification. But this is not all: she reports that “it was with great surprise and pleasure that I saw the scores of the oral production portion were my highest, as previously, speaking in French always felt very uncomfortable and made me shy. My time studying abroad helped me find my voice, and I am immeasurably grateful for the experience, confidence, and friends I gained while I was there.” What are Kira’s plans upon graduation? In September she is returning to France, “to help others find their voices,” as a yearlong Teaching Assistant in a French school through the Lexington Sister Cities program. After that she plans to stay on for graduate school and a future career in communication.

### **Aissata Sackho - Class of 2021**



### **Aissata Sackho presenting at the AAC&U Conference on Global Citizenship in San Antonio, October 17, 2019**

Finally, we are pleased that Aissata Sackho received the Cardwell Scholarship for 2019-2020. Aissata has a passion for French and community-based learning. She has a great amount of empathy in her awareness and concern for others and is always looking for opportunities to make a difference. In the summer of 2019 Aissata was awarded a Kenan Student Grant to conduct research on education and women’s rights in Senegal. For this work, she spent time in Dakar, Richard-Toll and the ecovillage of Guédé Chantier. Upon returning, she presented a paper at a national AAC&U conference on the impact this research project had on her personally and professionally. Studying in France encouraged her to pursue her passion for education and women’s rights. Aissata studied at at the Université de Caën, Basse Normandie this past Winter 2020. While she had to return to the United States early because of the

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pandemic, she says that she “really enjoyed my time in France and I cannot wait to tell you about it in French!” The Cardwell Scholarship made this experience possible for her, and knowing how resilient and motivated she is, we expect that Aissata will shake up her country’s attitudes towards women and help pave the way for more equitable rights and social engagement.

### **Lucas Burke – Class of 2022**



### **Globalization and the fate of villages in France and Spain**

Lucas Burke has applied for the Cardwell scholarship, which would make it possible for him to study at L’Université Catholique de Lyon in Fall 2020. Lucas is already bilingual with Spanish and he is an accomplished world traveler. His desire to perfect his French stems both from his love for French language and culture and from his interest in social justice. Lucas is working on a faculty-directed student research project to study the effects of globalization on small village life. The project investigates the way in which cultural attitudes and traditions affect fertility levels, farming techniques, and other cultural factors in rural villages in the northern province of Cantabria, Spain. By studying in France, Lucas hopes to acquire the linguistic abilities to be able to extend his research to a comparative study with a French rural village. Lucas is a prime example of the kind of motivated budding scholar the Cardwell scholarship can support.

### **French Program Highlights**

For several years, the French program at Transy has ranked in the top 5% in the nation by College Factual. Through the Sister Cities Program, our students are consistently awarded coveted internships to work in France for the summer. This year our French students were selected for the French on Campus



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Award, offered by the Cultural Services Section of the French Embassy. Their project for this national competition to promote French on campus is to host a French-Kentucky Cultural and Historical Exhibition in 2020.

Our commitment to teaching remains as strong as ever, as both professors Arganbright and Cochis participated in the Transy Digital technology seminar and both regularly incorporate new technologies, time-tested pedagogical tools, and interdisciplinary approaches in their classrooms. In the past year, we have offered new classes including “Monsters, Humans, and Beasts: Reflections on the Human Condition in French Theater” and “[Local Village Global Vision: Sustainable Communities in Senegal](#).” The course in Senegal has a service-learning component embedded in the class and includes living and working in a rural, Senegalese ecovillage. Although the course was cancelled for May 2020, we hope that such an integrated and innovative course will be offered in the future.

Finally, both professors Cochis and Arganbright devote their scholarship to enhancing the teaching of French. Professor Cochis works on the scholarship of performance, an interdisciplinary practice which integrates traditional philology with theater. Through her performances of the works of a twelfth-century author, Marie de France, Professor Cochis brings to life the “poetics of voice” and connects this to the learning of language, creating a link between oral linguistic performance and the practices of creative and expository writing. Professor Cochis recently performed a one-woman concert drama she co-authored on Aliénor of Aquitaine, she is President of the International Marie de France Society, and she performed *Chievrefoil* at the International Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, Michigan in May 2019. Professor Arganbright continues to publish in the field of second language acquisition and after contributing to popular French textbooks such as *Vis-à-vis* and *Débuts*, he has now published his own textbook *Le Creuset des savoirs* (Seven Cities Publishing, 2017). This textbook is for students at the Intermediate-High level (B2-C1) and has been adopted at several universities across the nation. He recently attended a CIEE workshop in Paris (Best Practices for Study Away), presented a paper on digital French in Fort-de-France, Martinique (annual AATF conference) and presented a paper on innovative study-away practices at the AAC&U conference on Global Citizenship in San Antonio.

## **Moving Forward**

The French Program at Transylvania is poised to take full advantage of the Cardwell Scholarship in its intention to provide a sustained study away experience for exceptional students. We recognize and support the objectives of the Cardwell Scholarship, since they offer students the best opportunities for

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personal and professional growth through cultural and linguistic immersion. Moving forward, we will continue to innovate and adapt our teaching and advising, both within and outside the classroom, so that students are well prepared for a one-year experience at a French-speaking university. We see the Cardwell Scholarship as an enlightened model for promoting the liberal arts mission of the University and are grateful for the vision and the generosity of Douglas and Marilyn Cardwell in leaving a fruitful, lasting gift to their alma mater.