



February 24, 2011

Dear Members of AATSP,

It is my sincere pleasure to nominate Professor David Gies for the AATSP-VA first-annual Distinguished Service Award. Throughout his illustrious career, Prof. Gies has dedicated over thirty years to Spanish teaching and learning in the state of Virginia. In a field where many of his peers overlook the needs of secondary education, Prof. Gies has distinguished himself as a scholar and as an instructor committed to improving Spanish-language education at all levels. I cannot imagine a more deserving recipient for this award.

I first met Prof. Gies during my last semester as an undergraduate student at the University of Virginia in 2000. I had the privilege of taking his advanced conversation course on Spanish film, entitled "Conversation Cinema." I remember many things about that class: first, that Prof. Gies' teaching style was exciting and engaging in a way I had not previously experienced; second, that my speaking skills improved dramatically in a few short months, as did my knowledge of Spanish culture; and, most importantly, that Prof. Gies spent a great deal of time working with the three of us who were Foreign Language Education students. As we prepared to start teaching high school upon leaving UVa, he spent extra time mentoring and interacting with us, helping us with details of vocabulary and pronunciation, and modeling various teaching styles himself in the classroom.

In addition to countless other ways he has shaped my intellectual and professional development since then, that semester Prof. Gies strongly influenced my teaching style. He modeled teaching methods that demanded student preparation outside of class and required student engagement each moment of class time. Never had I prepared so fervently for class discussion! He also focused on providing individual feedback to each student; in fact, he informed me that my pronunciation was, to put it mildly, inadequate. Although it stung at the time, I desperately needed to know what and how to improve. Prof. Gies had the integrity to tell me that, as a person preparing to teach high school Spanish, my speaking skills were not sufficient. He encouraged me to study abroad that summer in Lima, Peru, and he helped make that trip a reality for me. It was, undoubtedly, one of the most defining experiences of my life, personally and professionally, and I am extremely grateful to Prof. Gies for his guidance at that vulnerable time.

I could write pages of commendations for Prof. Gies, detailing the ways in which he influenced me as a scholar, a colleague, and a professor. Similarly, I could elaborate on the opportunities he gave me when I was a graduate student, such as hiring me as the graduate assistant for the *Cine con clase* website, a Spanish movie database made by and for Spanish language instructors. But, first and foremost, he influenced my journey as a secondary education teacher, and I believe that mine is just one of many testimonies to his commitment to excellence in his own career, as well as his commitment to mentoring others in the teaching profession.

Sincerely,

Andrea M. Smith, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Spanish



SHENANDOAH™
UNIVERSITY

January 6, 2014

Dear Selection Committee Members,

It is my sincere pleasure to nominate Professor David Gies for the Excellence in Education Abroad Award. Throughout his illustrious career, Prof. Gies has dedicated over thirty years to teaching Spanish literature and culture and to promoting linguistic and cultural immersion. Prof. Gies has distinguished himself not only as a prolific scholar but also as a champion of international travel and study. I cannot imagine a more deserving recipient for this award.

I first met Prof. Gies during my last semester as an undergraduate at the University of Virginia in 2000, when I had the privilege of taking his advanced conversation course on Spanish film. Knowing I had already participated in the UVa program in Valencia, he encouraged me to study abroad that summer in Lima, Peru, and he helped make that trip a reality for me. It was, undoubtedly, one of the most defining experiences of my life, personally and professionally, and to this day I am grateful to Prof. Gies for his guidance at that vulnerable time. Since that first trip with the UVa Program in Peru, I have returned to Lima many times, as a graduate student, as a scholar, and as a professor leading my own group of students.

During my many years at UVa, Prof. Gies was notorious for urging students to travel and study abroad. Perhaps what most impressed me was his unabashed and comprehensive support for what he considered an indispensable educational experience: he encouraged students of all levels to study abroad (undergraduates, graduates, public school teachers, etc.), and he promoted numerous international opportunities with equal gusto (Hispanic Studies in Valencia, UVa Program in Peru, UVa in Costa Rica, etc.). Additionally, he was one of the first and most vocal advocates for UVa's sponsorship of Semester at Sea and the Institute for Shipboard Education. At a time when many faculty did not approve of SAS, Prof. Gies served as UVa's first academic dean on the Summer 2007 voyage, and he was instrumental in establishing the academic integrity – as well as fostering more widespread support – of this unique study abroad experience. Moreover, he constantly prompted Spanish graduate students to apply to serve as teaching assistants on the ship, knowing that we would benefit as much from the experience as the undergraduates would. In fact, Prof. Gies knew of my great interest in being a faculty member with SAS, and he encouraged me to apply even though I was still junior faculty at my home institution. Due in part to his assistance, I was able to negotiate leave from my university and to participate in this life-changing program.

I could fill pages detailing the ways in which David Gies influenced me as a scholar, a colleague, and a professor. But, first and foremost, he recognized and encouraged my passion for language and culture, and he pushed me to immerse myself in an environment that would challenge me and continue my development as a global citizen. Mine is surely just one of many testimonies to his commitment to excellence in international education. Thank you for considering my nomination.

Sincerely,

Andrea M. Smith, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Spanish