FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fraser, New Chair of Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at ECU

GREENVILLE, N.C. (July 10, 2014) — Dr. Benjamin Fraser, formerly with the Department of Hispanic Studies at the College of Charleston, is East Carolina University’s new chairperson of the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. Fraser assumed his new role on July 1, replacing Dr. John Stevens, who served the department as interim chair since January 2011.

“I feel very fortunate to be able to step into this role,” said Fraser. “FLL boasts a talented faculty who are excelling in all three areas of productivity: teaching, research and service. It is really incredible.”

Fraser said one of his top priorities as he steps into this position is to invest further in the existing strength of the department.

“One of the things I’m most enthusiastic about is the opportunity to be part of a large department with so many different language and culture areas,” said Fraser. “With Classics (including both Latin and Greek), French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian and Spanish, we enjoy a very stimulating intellectual environment; a strong global sense of culture that you just don’t find in departments shaped around individual language and culture groups.”

Fraser’s numerous areas of interest include contemporary Spanish Peninsular and Latin American film, literature and cultural studies; urban studies; disability studies; visual media/culture; continental philosophy; and travel and transportation studies.

“What I love about what I do as a scholar of Hispanic Studies is that my discipline connects with so many others,” said Fraser. “I’d really like to make the already existing university-wide conversation on digital humanities work more prominent and showcase what faculty and students may already be doing.”

With this goal in mind, Fraser is working with Dr. Burrell Montz, chair of the Department of Geography, Planning, and Environment, and Dr. Tom Allen, professor of geography, to supplement the existing GIS lab with some creative suite hardware and software that will allow digital humanities projects by students and faculty members to take off. Some of these projects include issues of landscape and culture, and mapping projects that reflect a synthesis of both research and teaching.

In addition to his current position at ECU, Fraser is the founding/executive editor of the Journal of Urban Cultural Studies, senior editor of the Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies, associate editor of Hispania and co-editor
of the Hispanic Urban Studies book series. He earned his MA and PhD degrees in Hispanic Literature from the University of Arizona and his BA in anthropology and Spanish from the University of Virginia.

When discussing little known facts about himself, Fraser said people are often surprised to learn that he speaks Spanish and also that he studied American Sign Language. And taking his cue from the World Cup, he said, “I’m a big fan even though you have to wait four years for the next one.”

However, one of the most important things Fraser would like people to know is, “I’m passionate about the value that seeing connections across disciplines can bring. Languages are the best point of departure for synthesizing all different kinds of intellectual knowledge and for connecting to the changing trends of our increasingly global world. I would encourage all ECU students to immerse themselves in language study during their time here – no matter what your chosen profession, in the end, language brings rewards that are both material and unquantifiable.”

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