

Enhancing Latin and Greek Classes through a *Convivium*

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ABSTRACT

Inspired by an elementary Spanish class, the author has instituted an annual banquet in her department for students enrolled in elementary and intermediate Latin and Greek classes. The banquet not only provides an opportunity for students to sample food based on the recipes of Apicius, Cato, Athenaeus, and Archestratus, but it also allows for additional language acquisition. Students translate a formal invitation which is issued in Latin or Greek, compose a response to the invitation in Latin or Greek, and compete in contests focusing on translation, original composition, and dramatic recitation. Students also compete together with their classmates against other classes in a classics-inspired scavenger hunt as part of the event. The banquet has promoted the development of learning communities among students taking classical languages, introduced students in language classes to Roman and Greek culture and thus generated interest in classics as a field, allowed for a more interdisciplinary approach to language education, and energized the elementary and intermediate language programs.

KEYWORDS

Roman banquet, Greek banquet, symposium, Latin pedagogy, Greek pedagogy, *convivium*, interdisciplinary language education

A few years ago, I was introducing third declension nouns to my first-semester Latin class when the quiet of our classroom was interrupted by loud music coming from the classroom next to us.¹ When it became difficult for my students

¹ Many people have helped make the event described in this article a success. I would like to thank all of my colleagues at the University of Georgia, especially Elena Bianchelli, Thomas Biggs, T.K. Dix, John Nicholson, Naomi Norman, Peter O'Connell, Charles Platter, and Benjamin Wolkow; Kay Stanton and Jordana Rich; the graduate students in our department who have helped to plan and to cook for the event and who have provided entertainment; and the undergraduates enrolled in Latin and Greek at the University of Georgia who have attended the event over the last several years and participated fully in the contests and activities. I would also like to thank Emily Luken for assistance with research as well as John Nicholson and Benjamin Wolkow for help with proofreading materials for the *convivium*. Finally, I am indebted to my two anonymous readers for their excellent suggestions.

to hear what I was saying, I went next door to ask the instructor to close the door. It turned out that the music was an element in a party of some kind, complete with different types of food and drinks. The class was an elementary Spanish class, and, the instructor explained to me, the party was something they held in class every Thursday, focusing on one region in the Spanish-speaking world each week. The students all made food to share using recipes from the chosen region and sampled beverages popular there. When I peeked into the class, the students were standing around talking to each other in basic Spanish about the food, drinks, and music, and everyone really seemed to be enjoying the experience. I returned to my classroom and explained what was going on in the room next to us, and several of my students joked that we could not easily work *tapas* into our curriculum. After some consideration, I decided that students in Latin and Greek classes should experience culture firsthand like college students in modern language classes, even with the obvious limitations of working with ancient material. With support from my department and help from our graduate students, I organized a banquet for all of the students in elementary Latin and Greek classes.² We served grape juice and food based on ancient recipes, decorated the room with garlands, and provided entertainment. Around sixty-five students attended that first banquet, with several students even showing up in costume. Because it was so successful, we held it again the next year, and even more students attended. At this point, it has become an annual event in our department, with over a hundred students from both elementary and intermediate language classes in attendance. Our *convivium* is a major endeavor, and we are lucky enough to have graduate students to assist with all aspects of it. Still, it would not be difficult for a smaller college department or a high school program to effect a similar event with significantly fewer resources. The results of holding the *convivium* each year have been quite positive. The banquet has exposed students in language classes to the larger subject of classics and thus has helped to generate interest in the field. It has helped to foster real learning communities in our language programs, which has resulted in increased motivation among students. It has created a fitting occasion for introducing cultural material into Latin and Greek classes, and it also has provided opportunities for additional language instruction. Overall, the *convivium* has served as an excellent matrix for a more interdisciplinary approach to learning in our language programs.

² For that first *convivium*, we had a budget of five hundred dollars; the *convivium* now costs about eight hundred dollars each time it is held.

In the course of this article, I first will describe various elements of our *convivium* and how we incorporate learning into the event. Next, I will present formal feedback collected from students about the *convivium*, almost all of which has been favorable. Third, I will discuss how our *convivium* addresses the major goal areas set forth in the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* and the *Standards for Classical Language Learning*. Next, I will consider the general importance of learning communities and how a *convivium* helps to promote their growth among students studying Latin and Greek. Finally, I will offer suggestions for less elaborate versions of such an event which could be used at both the college and high school levels.

THE INVITATION

About a month before the banquet, individual instructors issue a formal invitation to all students enrolled in elementary and intermediate Latin and Greek classes, and this invitation provides the first chance to enhance language learning (Fig. 1). Most of our first-semester Latin classes are taught by graduate teaching assistants, and they work together to compose the invitation for the Latin students. Our elementary Greek program is significantly smaller than our Latin program, and the invitation for students in Greek classes is composed by the faculty members who

Magistri linguae Latinae omni discipulo.

Si vales, bene est. Te ad cenam discipulorum invitamus! Mensem Octobrem celebrabimus. Certamina cum praemiis et cibus Romanus Graecusque erunt. Vinum (non inebrians) erit, et Bacchus ipse adveniet. Erunt quoque ludi et hospitium, musica et chori. Huic invitationi respondere debes. Tuae litterae inspicientur. Duo puncta addita ultimam ad probationem accipies, si contenderis in certaminibus. Unum punctum additum accipies, si veneris ad convivium. Te gerere habitum aptum et contendere pro praemio potest. Inter quintam sextamque horam post meridiem ante diem XIV Kal. Nov. incipiemus, et septa hora post meridiem claudemus.

Vale.

Figure 1. Invitation to the *convivium*.

happen to be teaching those classes. We try to incorporate vocabulary which the students know, but we introduce new vocabulary as well. In the past, some especially artistic graduate teaching assistants have carefully dyed and crumpled paper to age it and then rolled the invitations into scrolls before distributing them in class to set the mood for the event. While these invitations no doubt delighted the students who received them, most of us do not have time to accomplish such artistry and simply pass out invitations straight from the department's copier. Most instructors ask students to translate the invitation as a homework assignment and then later go over the text in class. Because we do not cover dates and times in the regular curriculum, instructors specifically explain how Latin and Greek construct these expressions. The banquet thus begins with an exercise which introduces students to new vocabulary and to grammatical material not covered in our elementary and intermediate textbooks.

Students must compose a formal response to the invitation in Latin or Greek, and their compositions are graded. We establish a word count for the response, and the number of words increases with each level of instruction. (For elementary classes, instructors generally require fifty to seventy-five words, and instructors usually ask for seventy-five to one hundred words at the intermediate level.) To help students compose their responses, instructors direct them to resources such as *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, *Allen and Greenough's New Latin Grammar*, Woodhouse's *English-Greek Dictionary: A Vocabulary of the Attic Language*, and Smyth's *Greek Grammar*, all of which are available in our departmental library. Some students simply use the glossaries in their textbooks, but many students do actually consult the dictionaries and grammars. Most instructors make use of the exercises in composition which are in the elementary textbooks we use in our programs, but for the most part these exercises are only individual sentences. The response to the invitation allows all students to attempt a significantly longer original composition. Most students struggle to come up with the required number of words, but some students create longer, more elaborate responses. In responding to the invitation, students develop their skills in grammar and syntax and also learn about resources which they will need in more advanced classes.

COMPETITIONS IN TRANSLATION AND COMPOSITION

Immediately after the official invitation is distributed, we invite students to participate in several competitions, all of which enhance learning and create antici-

pation for the event. In general, there are individual competitions and one contest in which students compete with their classmates against other classes. Participation in the individual competitions is optional, but everyone contributes to the group contest. Students receive extra credit towards their final exam score for every individual contest they enter, and, for these individual competitions, students only compete against other students taking language classes at the same level. Many students enter at least one competition, and some students participate in multiple contests. To be sure, the extra credit is motivating, but it is also clear that the spirit of competition itself drives many students to enter the contests.

There are two individual competitions which take place during the four weeks leading up to the banquet. The first of these contests focuses on translation. We choose one passage for each language and level. All of the instructors work together to choose the passages, and we try to choose passages from authors not typically covered in early classes. In the past, we have used selections from Pliny the Younger, Propertius, Cicero, and Tacitus for the Latin classes, and, for the Greek classes, we have used passages from Aristophanes, Thucydides, and Lucian. The passages almost always contain grammar which the students have not yet studied, so students have to work to arrive at an accurate translation and indeed earn their extra points. I have often seen students perusing the grammars in the departmental library for this contest, trying to dissect a complicated Latin or Greek sentence. The competition inspires some students to learn new material on their own. Students who enter translations which are obviously copied from professional sources or which do not seem to indicate real effort do not receive extra credit. All of the entries contain mistakes, of course, but the quality of entries is often surprisingly good.

The second individual competition focuses on original composition. Again, instructors work together to choose appropriate English passages for students to render in Latin or Greek, and the exercise is challenging for students at every level. In the past, we have used famous speeches, selections from the Harry Potter series, and newspaper articles. We also have used selections from traditional composition-books such as *Bradley's Arnold Latin Prose Composition*, *Greek Prose Composition* by North and Hilliard, and Sidgwick's *Greek Prose Composition*. Again, there are mistakes in every entry, but there are always several compositions which are quite good. It is clear that students really put effort into preparing their entries. Students competing in both translation and original composition submit their entries a few

days before the banquet, and a panel of graduate students or faculty members meets to choose the winners.

A SCAVENGER HUNT

Last year, we added a new competition which also takes place during the four weeks leading up to the event; each class competes as a team against all of the other elementary and intermediate classes in a classics-inspired scavenger hunt. We are fortunate in that our university has a strong classical heritage, so there are many interesting items to include in this competition. Graduate students organize and judge the hunt in consultation with faculty members; the list features one hundred items, including things to be found around campus as well as questions about Latin and Greek grammar and vocabulary, ancient geography, mottoes, famous quotations, classical literature and history, reference works, works of art and musical pieces which allude to classical material, the influence of Latin and Greek on other disciplines, Greek and Roman contributions to science and engineering, and the reception of classical texts in later periods. Some items on the list are fairly easy to find. For example, we frequently ask students to locate buildings on campus which feature columns of a specific order. Some items on the list are quite difficult to find, however. Such challenging items include rare editions of classical texts in the special collections wing of the library and old paintings of Rome and Greece located on campus. Many items on the list require research in the library. We have asked students to find out how many times Ovid uses a certain word, Hesychius' definition of the Greek word "ekphrasis," and what Pericles says about women in his Funeral Oration. Thus, students have to find a concordance of Ovid's work and learn how to use it, examine a copy of Hesychius' ancient lexicon, and read Book Two of Thucydides' history. We send students to translate Latin inscriptions on buildings and in old graveyards around campus. We even ask them about classical influences found in the university's system of fraternities and sororities. The scavenger hunt serves two purposes. First, it helps to bring about a sense of community in the individual Latin and Greek classes: as they work together to find the items on the list, students become more invested in each other and in their own performance in the class. Second, the scavenger hunt introduces students to the larger field of classics. Most students enroll in elementary and intermediate Latin and Greek classes to satisfy the language requirement for their degree, and their only exposure to classics is through these language classes. The hunt not only shows students how important

the field of classics is to our university, but it also inspires students to explore other areas within the field.

THE MENU

The central element of the *convivium* itself is of course the food and drink, and we strive to give students a culinary experience which is as authentic as possible. For recipes, we use books which offer both direct translations as well as modern interpretations of ancient recipes from authors such as Apicius, Athenaeus, Cato, and Archestratus. For translations of ancient recipes, we use *The Roman Cookery Book: A Critical Translation of The Art of Cooking by Apicius for Use in the Study and in the Kitchen* by Barbara Flower and Elisabeth Rosenbaum, *Apicius: Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome* by Joseph Dommers Vehling, the Loeb editions of Athenaeus and Cato, and *Archestratos of Gela: Greek Culture and Cuisine in the Fourth Century BCE* by S. Douglas Olson and Alexander Sens. For modern interpretations of the ancient recipes, we use *Roman Cookery: Elegant and Easy Recipes from History's First Gourmet* by John Edwards, *The Classical Cookbook* by Andrew Dalby and Sally Grainger, *A Taste of Ancient Rome* by Ilaria Gozzini Giacosa, *Apicius: Roman Recipes for Today* by Sally Grainger, *Roman Cooking: Ancient Recipes for Modern Kitchens* by Mark Grant; and *Meals and Recipes from Ancient Greece* by Eugenia Salza Prina Riccoti. We usually choose about twenty dishes to make from these books. To keep the cost down and also to make sure there is something for everyone to eat, we primarily prepare vegetarian recipes, although we always offer at least one or two meat and fish dishes. We also offer a few desserts such as honey-cakes and stewed fruits as part of the buffet. In addition to the featured ancient dishes, we offer bread, olives, dates, grapes, and cheese. When I first put together the banquet, I really wanted to serve non-alcoholic red wine, but the cost turned out to be prohibitive. So, red grape juice serves as our wine, and the students seem to enjoy it just as much. A few faculty members cook dishes, but the food is prepared for the event primarily by teaching assistants and first-year graduate students who participate as part of a teaching apprenticeship.

As the banquet approaches, we create a formal text of the menu with the names of featured dishes represented in both Latin and Greek (Fig. 2). We print the menu out on cardstock and pass it out in the elementary and intermediate classes. In composing the menu, we try to keep the names of the dishes simple by focusing on main ingredients, using names such as “ova et nuces pineae cum melle” (hard

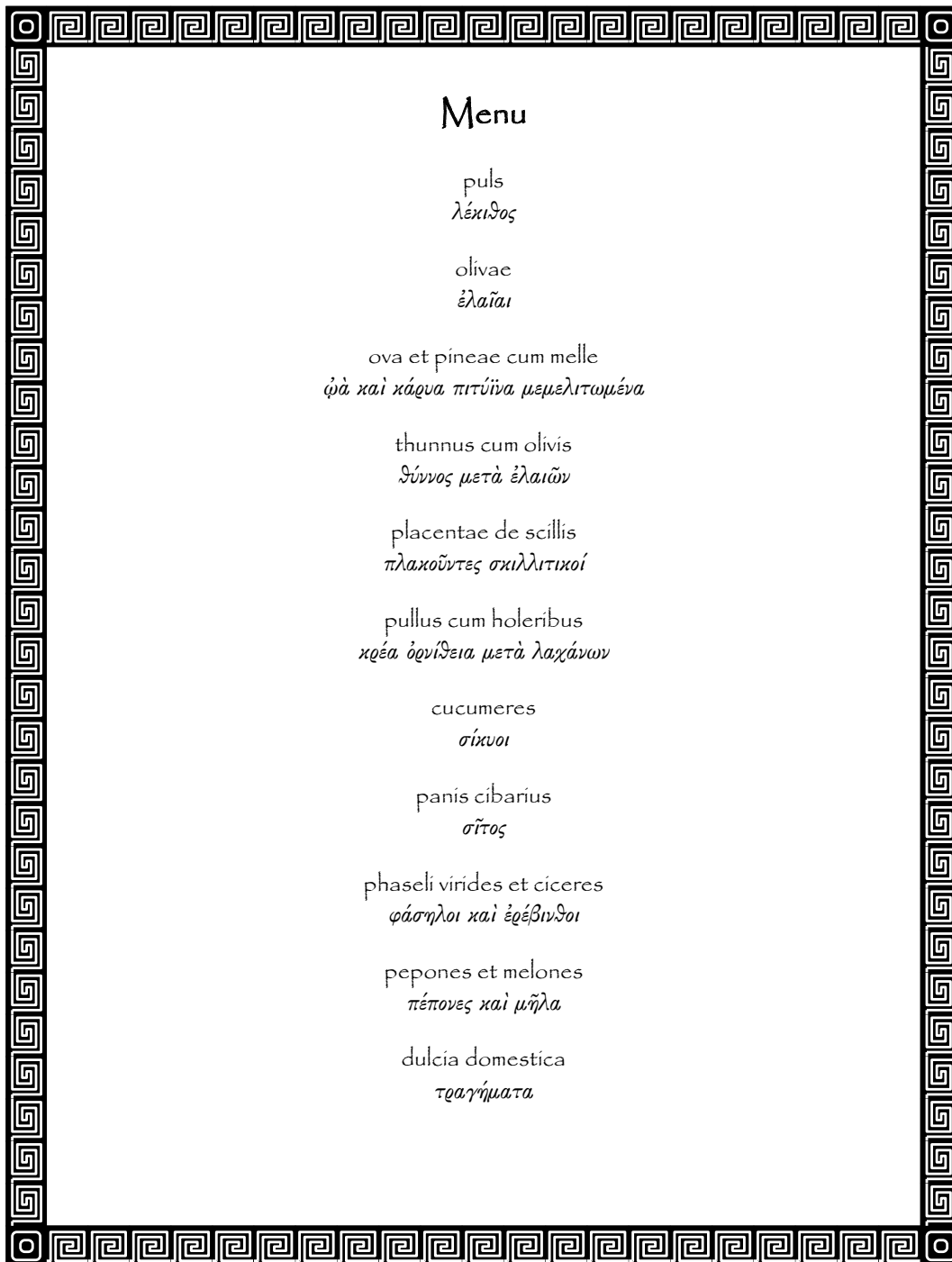


Figure 2. Menu for the *convivium*

boiled eggs prepared with pine nuts and honey), “thunnus cum olivis” (tuna cooked with olives), and “lekithos” (simple porridge). Students in Latin classes are asked to translate the menu in Latin, and students in Greek classes translate the menu in Greek. Thus, students deal with new vocabulary while they learn about the kinds of foods which Romans and Greeks ate. We include both Latin and Greek on the menu to expose students to both languages. Because far fewer students enroll in elementary Greek at our university, the menu provides a useful opportunity to engender interest in Greek among students in Latin classes.

Some instructors also have their students translate ancient recipes before the banquet. For Latin texts, we use *The Roman Cookery Book: A Critical Translation of The Art of Cooking by Apicius for Use in the Study and in the Kitchen* by Barbara Flower and Elisabeth Rosenbaum and the Loeb edition of Cato’s *On Agriculture*. For Greek texts, we use *Archestratos of Gela: Greek Culture and Cuisine in the Fourth Century BCE* by S. Douglas Olson and Alexander Sens and the Loeb volumes of Athenaeus’ *The Deipnosophists*. Instructors often focus on exotic recipes which include elements such as sow’s udder and wormwood, which usually leads to lively class discussions and some trepidation about the upcoming feast. Like the menu, the recipes contain vocabulary (and often grammar) not included in the students’ textbooks, so, again, the exercise helps students further develop their Latin and Greek skills.

RESEARCH PROJECTS FOCUSING ON THE *CONVIVIVM*

Instructors also assign projects which focus on classical culture as part of the build-up to the *convivium*. In the elementary Latin classes, for example, teachers often ask students to research and deliver reports on Roman cultural topics which relate to food and the experience of dining. Topics include houses and apartments, clothing, private and public entertainment, occasions for banquets, food and drink consumed by Romans of different social strata, gender issues and sexuality, medicine and medicinal recipes, slavery, and the distribution of grain. Students are directed to general sources available in our departmental library such as the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, *The Handbook of Life in Ancient Rome* by Lesley Adkins and Roy A. Adkins, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* by Jérôme Carcopino, and Jo-Ann Shelton’s *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*, but many research their topics much more deeply. Some instructors require students to find and present at least one passage from a primary source which contains information

about their topic. Many instructors show slides of paintings and vases which depict banquets and symposia, and many show pictures of wall paintings which adorned dining rooms. Studying the menu and recipes in class and preparing research projects about Roman and Greek culture not only create excitement for the upcoming banquet but also add fresh activities to the daily routine of drills, translation, and parsing in elementary and intermediate language classes.³

LANGUAGE LEARNING AT THE *CONVIVIVM*

We usually hold the event itself in a large room on campus, and we work to create a festive atmosphere. Our budget for decorations is limited, but we try to recreate the ancient images students have studied in class. We cover the tables with purple plastic tablecloths and drape artificial garlands on the buffet at the front of the room (Fig. 3). We also provide inexpensive plastic or paper wreaths for students to wear. When possible, we have arranged long benches suitable for reclining in



Figure 3. Serving tables set for the *convivium*

³ For general information about and images of Roman and Greek food, dining, and banquets, see Curtis; Davidson; Donahue; Dunbabin; Hudson; Lissarrague; Murray; Wilkins, Harvey and Dobson; and Wilkins and Nadeau. For a general source about Greek life, see Adkins and Adkins.

the center of the event. We award prizes for the most authentic dress, so many undergraduates wear costumes (Fig. 4). Occasionally, we are lucky enough to have students in the department who play musical instruments and who are willing to perform, but most of the time we provide appropriate music from a satellite broadcast. So, with a little effort, there is a classical ambience.



Figure 4. Costumed guests at the *convivium*

We bring language learning into the actual banquet in several ways. First, a herald opens the banquet with a short speech welcoming students in both Latin and Greek (Fig. 5) before welcoming them in English. Some of our instructors use oral Latin and Greek in their teaching, but most of them only use a few phrases at the beginning of class. The herald uses vocabulary which the students have already learned in their classes, and he or she tries to deliver the speech slowly, pausing after each sentence so students can process the language. The opening speech allows students to appreciate Latin and Greek as living languages rather than only as ancient text, and it further serves to introduce students who are only involved with one language to the other language. Moreover, the formal Latin and Greek welcome helps to make language acquisition an important focus of the event.



Figure 5. The herald gives the welcoming address in Latin and Greek

Second, we feature Latin and Greek on the buffet itself. We create a label for every dish which includes the Latin or Greek words for the foods in the dish as well as English translations. As they make their way along the buffet, students read the labels as they fill their plates (Fig. 6). Seeing the vocabulary words for food in context seems to help students remember what the words mean much better than just seeing a vocabulary entry in a textbook (cf. Spinelli and Siskin). Students frequently say the words aloud as they serve themselves, and, as they sit down with friends to eat, we often hear students using the Latin or Greek terms to talk about the dishes.

Third, we put posters around the room which display Latin and Greek passages which focus on food, wine, entertainment, and various dining experiences. We feature works such as Catullus 13, Horace's Ode 37, Propertius 1.3, Ovid's description of the simple feast of Baucis and Philemon in Book Eight of the *Metamorphoses*, Juvenal's fourth satire, Petronius's *Cena Trimalchionis*, Homer's descriptions of the Phaiakians' banquet in Book Eight of the *Odyssey*, Plato's *Symposium*, Lucian's *On Dance*, and Athenaeus' *The Deipnosophists*. We also display the original texts of a few ancient recipes. So that all students can appreciate every passage,



Figure 6. Guests read the labels at the banquet table

we provide English translations of the selections. These posters not only expand students' knowledge of ancient literature, but they inspire students to test their language skills as they walk around the room.

Finally, we put "conversation menus" on each table (Fig. 7). These cards feature Greek and Latin words and phrases which can be combined to create interesting dialogues. Graduate students compose the menus, listing nouns, verbs, and adjectives along with a few conversational terms and suggestions for short dialogues. Again, we try to include a few vocabulary words which students have already learned, but we introduce new vocabulary on the menus. We strive to make the potential conversations fun by including new words which might lead to dynamic conversations such as "ululare,"

"sudare," "misgein," and "laptein," Students are encouraged to talk to others at their tables in Latin or Greek using simple sentences, and they seem to enjoy putting unlikely words together to construct dialogues.⁴ Many students are reluctant to speak in class, but the relaxed and festive setting of the banquet seems to motivate them to try speaking the languages (Fig. 8).

COMPETITIONS AND PERFORMANCES AT THE EVENT

After everyone has had a chance to sample the ancient recipes, we turn to the competitions. First, the winners of the individual competitions in translation and composition are announced. Students who win receive a framed certificate and a golden laurel crown. We then invite students who are wearing costumes to the front

⁴ For suggestions of possible Latin conversations and vocabulary, see Traupman. For possible Greek dialogues, see Saffire and Freis.

LATIN CONVERSATION MENU					
Salve!	Greetings! (singular)				
Salvete!	Greetings! (plural)				
O amice!	My friend (masculine) o friend				
O amica!	My friend (feminine) o friend				
Mihi nomen est...	My name is . . .				
Quod nomen tibi est?	What is your name?				
Mihi placet + nominative sing.	I enjoy...[nominative]				
cena	the dinner				
vinum	the wine				
Te amabo	Please				
Tibi gratias ago	Thank you (singular)				
Vobis gratias ago	Thank you (plural)				
Eheu!	Ah me! (surprise, pain, fright, pity, anger, grief, etc.)				
Ecce!	Look!				
Quid est hoc?	What is this?				
Hoc est...	This (thing) is...				
pulchrum	beautiful	dulce	sweet		
malum	bad	acerbum	bitter		
parvum	small	unctum	greasy		
ferum	wild	salsum	salty		
optimum	very good	iucundum	pleasant		
nugae, nugarum f.	silliness	bacchatio, bacchationis f.	Bacchic revelry		
cuppedo, cuppedinis f.	delicacy	corona, ae f.	crown, garland		
ignarus, a, um	inexperienced in	lingua, ae f.	tongue		
mutus, a, um	speechless	chorus, i m.	dance		
musica, musicorum n.	music	limosus, a, um	slimy		
ululare	to howl	coronare	to crown	saltare	to dance
sudare	to sweat	ruminare	to chew	cenare	to dine
edo, edere	to eat	praebeo, praebere	to offer	cantare	to sing/play
devorare	to gulp down	purgare	to cleanse	colo, colere	to cultivate/till
spuo, spuere	to spit out	bibo, bibere	to drink	salire	to leap up

Figure 7. The conversation menu for the *convivium*



Figure 8. Guests conversing in Latin

of the room for a costume contest. In the past, a panel of judges would decide on winners for this contest as everyone was eating and socializing, and we would simply award prizes to the winners right after announcing the winners for the competitions in translation and composition. Now, we treat the contest as a dramatic event, and students really seem to enjoy the parade of ancient figures. Each student who enters this contest announces to the room which mythological or historical figure he or she is representing and then walks down our runway, which we create simply by leaving an aisle in the middle of the room when we set up tables and chairs. Some students really put on a show for the audience, and there usually is much applause, whistling, and shouting. At our most recent events, students have created elaborate outfits complete with props for this contest. We have had Roman centurions, stately orators, philosophers, as well as gods and goddesses. At a recent *convivium*, one

student came dressed as the goddess Eris with a sparkling golden apple, and another arrived as Athena wearing a gown embellished with elaborate woven pieces. While we include the costume contest mostly for fun, students do learn something about historical and mythological figures. I overheard many students ask the student dressed as Eris about her character, for example. The woman in costume related the story of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, thus inspiring several conversations about the Trojan War.

The costume contest paves the way for the last individual competition. For this contest, students perform dramatically in Latin or Greek. They may enter this contest individually or in teams. When we first held the banquet, we chose one passage in each language for recitation and we allowed students to read the text. We found that students often did not practice their performances and just read the Latin or Greek without emotion or emphasis, which was rather boring for the audience and at times a bit difficult to endure. Now, we allow students to choose their own passages, and we encourage them to memorize their recitations by awarding extra points for it. Students who enter this competition practice in front of their classmates and receive feedback before the banquet. Students support their classmates and cheer enthusiastically when they stand up to perform. Thus, the recitations at the banquet are quite good (Fig. 9). Students have chosen passages from



Figure 9. A guest offers a recitation at the banquet

Homer, Vergil, Cicero, Horace, the New Testament, Ovid, Propertius, and Catullus. One student offered a particularly memorable performance when, dressed as a Roman centurion, he climbed on a table and exhorted everyone with a Latin translation of a speech from the film *Braveheart*. Groups have performed scenes from Aristophanes and Plautus. One year, a group even composed an original short play in Latin and performed it for everyone. This competition has become quite spirited, and students really seem to enjoy the performances. Winners are chosen by a panel of judges appointed for the purpose, and, again, these students receive golden laurel crowns and, after the event, framed certificates.

We usually also offer a few special performances for entertainment. All performers are volunteers, and undergraduates, graduate students, and even staff members in the department have participated. Most acts draw directly from ancient texts. For several years, a graduate student who was famous in our department for



Figure 10. Another student offers a recitation

his beautiful pronunciation of Latin and Greek amazed everyone with elegant dramatic recitations of Horace, Vergil, Seneca, Homer, Sappho, and Sophocles (Fig. 10). When I was teaching a class on Greek theater at the same time as the banquet, students in that class staged the final scene from Euripides' *Alcestis*. One particularly motivated student recently constructed a lyre and sang Greek lyric poetry as she played (Fig. 11). Students seem especially to enjoy seeing their own instructors perform. At our first banquet, for example, a graduate student who was teaching a section of first-semester elementary Latin recited Horace in the style of William Shatner, which was quite entertaining for everyone but thrilled his students most of all. When instructors perform, their students applaud loudly for their



Figure 11. A guests sings and plays the lyre

acts, and the sense of community in those individual classes is further strengthened. Like the herald's opening speeches, the performances of ancient material allow students to experience Latin and Greek rhetoric, poetry, and drama aurally and visually rather than only as text on a page. Some acts draw from adapted material. At our most recent banquet, for example, a graduate student sang the invocation from Stephen Sondheim's adaptation of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, and a string quartet in which a member of our staff plays performed a short selection from *Orfeo ed Eurydice* by Christoph Willibald Gluck. Such performances of classics-inspired material help cultivate an awareness among the students of how classical culture and literature remain influential in our society.

After the special entertainment, we announce which class has won the scavenger hunt. During the weeks leading up to the banquet, classes work hard to find and answer everything on the list for the hunt, and, as discussed earlier, the hunt helps turn individual classes into close communities. Thus, students are anxious to hear the announcement. We build up to this final announcement by explaining the answers to several of the more difficult items on the list. This build-up allows us

to point out interesting holdings in the university's libraries and museums as well as classical allusions around town. It also allows us to fortify what students have learned themselves about classical resources and texts through active participation in the hunt. We issue the announcement itself with trumpet fanfare and drumrolls, and the winning class is treated to a pizza party later in the semester.

FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

After the *convivium* held in March 2015, I asked students to complete a simple questionnaire about the experience. Participation in this study was optional, and questionnaires were completed anonymously by students in seven different Latin and Greek classes. There were no incentives for participation. Many students chose not to complete a questionnaire, and many turned in surveys which were incomplete. Still, I managed to gather some meaningful feedback.

First, students were asked to describe their general reaction to the *convivium* and the activities which are associated with it. Responses were overwhelmingly positive: all of the twenty-seven students who answered this question wrote favorably about their experience. Responses included the following:

- I enjoyed sampling the dishes and also enjoyed watching the performances, even though I was too scared to do one myself. I learned a lot, especially about classical culture.
- It was very fun. The best part was sampling the dishes. (The bread was amazing!) I wish there had been more performances, but the ones I saw were interesting.
- I enjoyed meeting students from other sections. The performances were very entertaining and informative.
- The food was lovely[,] and it was interesting to try the food we had been learning about in class. The performances were very well done.
- The Roman and Greek-inspired food was positively delightful. The performances were entertaining, and the recitation contest was rath-

er impressive. It provided a good atmosphere for people with an interest in the subject to discuss their experiences with it.

- It was a lot of fun. In Latin, we do not spend much time learning the culture, and this allowed us to do that.

Most students reported that they had fun and that they enjoyed tasting the food. It was striking to me that so many students (twenty-three) reported as part of their general reaction to the *convivium* that they enjoyed hearing the Latin and Greek performances and recitations at the event. Also notably, about twenty-five percent of the responses to this question mentioned learning as part of the overall experience of the *convivium*.

Next, students were asked specifically about their reactions to the recitations and performances. Of the twenty-six students who answered this question, twenty-four said that the experience of hearing Latin and Greek at the banquet contributed to their appreciation of the languages. Responses included:

- It was impressive to see someone speak in Latin that well [and] made me appreciate the language more.
- It allowed a glimpse of what Latin and Greek cultures were like.
- It was impressive and displayed the musicality of the language.
- I liked being able to hear the correct pronunciation, but with feeling.
- They are beautiful languages. It was nice to hear in different contexts.
- As students of ancient languages tend to read the language, hearing the languages was refreshing, and [it] seemed to bring the languages to life.
- It did contribute to my appreciation for the languages. It was interesting to hear the more natural rise and fall of the languages outside a classroom setting.

The survey asked students what they would like to be included at the next annual banquet, and, although many students who completed the questionnaire did not answer this question at all, most of the students who did respond indicated that they would like additional recitations and performances.

Students were asked about what they learned through the *convivium*. Examples of responses follow:

- Overall, I learned about the culture and got a better handle on the language due to the contests.
- I learned how to better translate and compose through the [response to the] invitation.
- I learned some neat social skills [from trying the conversational Latin].
- I learned new Latin vocabulary and a great deal about ancient cultures.
- I learned more about Greek and Roman culture than I would have otherwise. It has been a great way to see the context the language I am studying would be used in.
- I stretched my understanding of the language via the translation contest and response [to the invitation].

I expected that students would report that they had learned more about classical culture, but it was especially interesting to me that several students focused on language skills in their responses, noting the acquisition of new vocabulary and improvement in translation and composition.

Finally, when asked about the exercise of composing a formal response to the invitation, thirty-seven out of the forty-six students who answered the question said that it helped to improve their language skills. Students commented that the exercise was difficult, frustrating, and time-consuming but that it was worth the effort. Students specifically reported that they learned new vocabulary, developed a better understanding of grammatical constructions, and reviewed forms of nouns and verbs. Of course, the competition in original composition also helps students de-

velop their language skills, but it is probably the most challenging of all the contests. Thus, only a few students from each class tend to enter that competition. Because students themselves have recognized the benefits of longer composition, in the future we may add another exercise in composition in which students write an essay in Latin or Greek about their experience at the event.

STANDARDS FOR LEARNING LANGUAGES AND THE CONVIVIVUM

Our annual *convivium* provides opportunities to engage with most if not all the Standards presented in the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* and the *Standards for Classical Language Learning*, but in particular it has helped us incorporate several of the more challenging Standards into our language programs. For example, the *convivium* has helped us more fully implement the Standards under the goal area of Communications, especially Standard 1.2 of the *Standards for Classical Language Learning* (8), in which students speak, hear, and write the languages. A few of our instructors use some conversational Latin and Greek in their classes, but in general the use of oral and aural material in our program is limited. Susan Thornton Rasmussen has recently explored reasons for including oral activity in Latin class, and Paula Saffire has argued for the benefits of speaking ancient Greek.⁵ Oral use of any language helps develop grammar skills and knowledge about vocabulary (Richards and Rodgers 36-38; Lightbown and Spada 165), and it certainly contributes to students' enjoyment of and appreciation for the languages, as attested by our own students' comments about the performances and recitations at the banquet. The banquet also has afforded a chance for students to write more extensively in Latin and Greek, both in composing a formal response to the invitation and by entering the competition in original composition.

The *convivium* has provided context for addressing both Standards under the goal area of Culture, which in the *World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning* call for students to "investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices" and "products" of a culture and its "perspectives" (72-80). In general, most instructors in our programs introduce culture into their classes by showing slides of ancient art and architecture as supplements to Latin and Greek passages. The banquet allows instructors to incorporate significantly more material about Greco-Roman culture into their classes. Students not only research related

⁵ For additional information about the importance of oral and aural activity, see Coffee, Gruber-Miller, and Wills, for example.

topics about Greek and Roman products and perspectives in the weeks leading up to the event, but they experience Greek and Roman food, dress, and conversation at the banquet itself. The event also enables instructors to more easily integrate cultural material into lessons about language.

Regarding the goal area of Connections, since establishing the *convivium* we have been better able to address Standard 3.1 in elementary and intermediate classes, which in the *World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning* calls for “learners [to] build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines while using the language to develop critical thinking and to solve problems creatively” (85-86). The activities and performances associated with the *convivium* help students develop an understanding of how classical languages inform other disciplines and also help students expand their knowledge through exposure to Latin and Greek texts, recipes, and cultural material which they would not otherwise encounter. The scavenger hunt in particular motivates students to discover how classical languages influence other fields of study, and performances of musical pieces and scenes from plays which are adapted from or inspired by classical texts show students how influential the field of classics has been in the arts.

Under Comparisons, Standard 4.1 in the *World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning* calls for students to “use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own” (95-97), and Standard 4.2 calls for students to compare and contrast their own culture with Greek and Roman culture (98-100). Of course, instructors in our program do make comparisons with English and other languages, and short discussions about Greek and Roman culture occur regularly in class. Still, elements of the banquet such as the herald’s opening speech, which is delivered in Latin, Greek, and then English, significantly enhance the basic comparative material offered in individual classes. Learning about and sampling the various foods at the event in particular invites students to notice similarities and differences in ancient tastes, and students not only learn about what flavors and textures the Romans and Greeks liked but also that culinary taste itself is culturally constructed.

Perhaps the most difficult of the Standards to work into Latin and Greek programs are those under the area of Communities, in which “learners use the language both within and beyond the classroom to interact and collaborate in their community and the globalized world” (Standard 5.1) (105) and “learners set goals and reflect on their progress in using languages for enjoyment, enrichment, and advancement”

(Standard 5.2) (109). Sally M. Magnan and her colleagues have shown that, although in general language instructors focus least of all on the area goal of Communities (cf. Phillips and Abbott 6), students studying foreign languages at the college level value these Standards more than all the others (Magnan et al. 176). Thus, it seems that the Standards under the goal of Communities should be an essential part of language instruction at the college level, even if they are challenging to incorporate. The *convivium* serves both as a reason in class and an occasion outside of class for students interested in classical languages and culture to interact with each other. Both in class during the weeks leading up to the banquet and at the event itself, students experience texts, images, recitations, and performances as part of a group. At the *convivium*, they respond together to the immediacy of the oral and written Latin and Greek, and the festive atmosphere provides context for simple but meaningful conversation in the languages. The *convivium* has made a larger community of classicists available to students studying Latin and Greek. Thus, it has served to better provide what college students themselves want and expect from studying a foreign language.

THE CONVIVIAM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Multiple definitions exist for what learning communities are, but this basic definition, offered in *Learning Communities: Creating Connections Among Students, Faculty, and Disciplines*, seems appropriate:

A learning community is any one of a variety of curricular structures that link together several existing courses—or actually restructure the curricular material entirely—so that students have opportunities for deeper understanding and integration of the material they are learning, and more interaction with one another and their teachers as fellow participants in the learning enterprise. . . . In learning communities, students and faculty members experience courses and disciplines not as arbitrary or isolated offerings but rather as a complementary and connected whole. These interwoven, reinforcing curricular arrangements make it possible, then, for faculty and students

to work with each other in less distant, routinized ways and to discover a new kind of enriched intellectual and social ground (Gabelnick et al. 19).

Students who participate in learning communities value in them, among other things, the friendships they make, the sense of interacting with other students and members of the faculty, collaborative learning, the realization of their own intellectual ability, becoming aware of the importance of primary texts, and the diversity of perspectives which is available (Gabelnick et al. 67-72). Learning communities can exist as formal institutions or as informal groups, but they have been shown to promote students' engagement, to fortify students' interest in their own education, and to contribute generally to positive learning outcomes (Zhao and Kuh 124-127; Love).⁶

The *convivium* has made available to students in the early stages of learning Latin and Greek a larger community with shared interest in classics, and it also has resulted in the growth of smaller learning communities within our department. As they participate in the contests which lead up to the banquet, students interact more with other students in their individual classes. Activities such as the scavenger hunt motivate students to work together outside of class; students find items in the library or on the internet in groups and explore their university together. When students practice for the recitation contest in front of their classmates, for example, the whole class focuses on the students' success in that competition. Because they have made connections with other students in their classes, students have more enjoyment of their time spent in Latin or Greek class, and they become more invested in their own academic performance. At the banquet itself, students get to know students in other sections who are studying the same languages. They talk about their classes and get advice from students in more advanced classes about interesting courses to take in the future. Of course, the *convivium* does not transform the experience of every student taking Latin and Greek. Still, through participation in it students have formed bonds with other students in the department, and these relationships have inspired and augmented learning. The learning communities which have developed as part of the *convivium* even have motivated some students to continue taking Latin and Greek after their language requirement has been satisfied.

⁶ For additional information about learning communities, see also Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt; Laufgraben and Shapiro; Shapiro and Levine; and Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, and Gabelnick.

SMALLER POSSIBILITIES

Our *convivium* has become a major production, but it also would work on a much smaller scale at either the college or high school level.⁷ When I last taught our intensive Latin course, for example, I put together a banquet during one class period in the middle of the term, when the students were starting to feel the effects of constant memorization and hard work. Ten students, both undergraduate and graduate, were enrolled in that class, and we had much more limited resources available to us. For that much smaller banquet, I issued an invitation in Latin a few days before the event, and students responded with an original composition. We translated several of Apicius' recipes as a class, and, after we examined modern adaptations of ancient recipes, the students each chose one recipe to try. On the appointed day, I decorated the front table with purple cloth and artificial garlands, and, to set the mood, I projected a dining scene from a Roman painting onto the screen at the front of the classroom. Everyone presented his or her dish to the class together with a label prepared in Latin which described it. On the white board at the front of the room, we wrote the complete vocabulary entries for the Latin featured on the buffet table. With these new words, students attempted to use some conversational Latin about the food as they ate. I projected the Latin texts and translations of a few passages from Latin literature which included material about food and dining, and we discussed them together. A few students recited Latin passages they had chosen for extra credit, and we all voted to choose a winner for the best recitation. Thus, students enjoyed a break from the demanding daily routine of an intensive class but still learned new material.

In a college-level Latin or Greek class which moves at a less accelerated pace or in a high school class, it would be possible to incorporate a *convivium* into the course by focusing on one element of it every week or two, with the banquet itself serving as a finale to a semester-long project. At the beginning of the term, an instructor might distribute a simple invitation for students to translate which features vocabulary and grammar the students already know or are in the process of learning. After the instructor shows students a few examples of ancient letters, he or she might teach students appropriate new vocabulary and help them compose short responses to the invitation as an in-class activity. Students could investigate various aspects of food production, cuisine, and dining and then present their findings to the rest of

⁷ For a comparable discussion of using French cuisine to enhance language learning in French classes at various levels, see Abrate.

the class, perhaps teaching their fellow students five or ten new vocabulary words as part of their presentations. Everyone in the class could prepare dishes and short recitations for the actual *convivium*, which would take place during the final few weeks of the term. A *convivium* also could form the basis for an entire course or unit for students studying Latin or Greek at a more advanced level, with the banquet itself again serving as the culminating event. Over the course of a term, students could translate selections from texts which focus on food and dining, and, as they are working their way through these passages, they could collect ancient images of food and dining and research related cultural topics to share with their classmates. Of course, smaller college departments which do not have resources such as graduate students and high school programs could hold a department-wide or program-wide banquet similar to our *convivium* as a potluck dinner, with members of the faculty and students all contributing food, performances, and materials to display about ancient cooking and dining.

CONCLUSION

Our annual *convivium* has been an excellent way to incorporate active, first-hand learning into elementary and intermediate Latin and Greek classes. Students learn additional vocabulary and new grammatical constructions in context as they learn more about classical culture and the field of classics. The event allows for the multifaceted approach to foreign language education which is encouraged by the Standards: students experience the mechanics of Latin and Greek as part of a larger cultural tapestry, learning through the interwoven threads which contribute to successful language acquisition. In addition to enhancing Latin and Greek classes, the *convivium* has infused new energy into our language programs. Recently, I taught our course on Vergil's *Aeneid*, which serves as a gateway course to the Latin major, and most of the students who were enrolled in the class had participated at least once in the annual banquet. During the first week of the term, students started asking me for details about the next *convivium*. By the fourth week of class, the students themselves started organizing a class performance of a scene from the *Aeneid* for the event. I asked what students felt they had learned by participating in previous banquets, and students reported that they had learned more about Roman and Greek culture and literature. A few students said that they had become much more inter-

ested in ancient Greek after hearing students' recitations in that language. Students also said that they had learned a significant amount of Latin by participating in the competitions and that they had learned new vocabulary at the event itself. Other instructors in the department have reported that students in their elementary and intermediate classes now regularly ask about the banquet and express excitement about sampling the food and competing in the various contests.⁸ In the end, the *convivium* has allowed our department to provide a richer education for students learning Latin and Greek.

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⁸ In the future, we hope to measure the effect of our *convivium* on enrollments and retention, although to this point such a study has not been carried out.

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