

# the Bell Tower

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## Catching Up with Dean Rick Gamache

The big silver coffee pot was percolating and a bag of chocolate candies sat invitingly on the long table in the office of Associate Dean Rick Gamache one recent Monday morning. The office walls and tables were covered with gifts from all over the world: a hand-carved bell tower from Honduras, a bright, beaded hanging from Colombia, an elaborately gilded name plate from Indonesia. Students started to drift in for coffee and Gamache greeted them all by name, asking about their weekends. What did they like best in Boston, he prompted, or did they prefer Montreal, which they had visited a few weeks before? The exchanges were quick, but they are important, Gamache had explained earlier. "We try to stay in touch with students every day," he says.



*Gamache speaking at an event last year*

Over the last 33 years, Gamache has been a critical part of the SIS experience for the thousands of international students who have come through Saint Michael's programs. He is a mentor and advisor whose first priority has always been to make sure that students have what they need, in his words, "to be comfortable and independent members of the community."

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Jean Hache of the Dominican Republic first came to Saint Michael's in 1972 to improve his English. He graduated in 1977 and has maintained a close relationship with Gamache and the College, even sending his eldest daughter to Saint Michael's. He vividly remembers Gamache picking him up in a green convertible at the airport and driving him and his fellow students on field trips. "Rick was more than a teacher to us," Hache says. He was "a friend, an older brother, someone who you could see for advice. His house was always open, and so was his office."

In some ways, Gamache's own experience could not be more different than that of the many international SIS students with whom he has worked. When he became a student at Saint Michael's in the late 1960s, he had only to travel a few minutes up the hill from where he grew up in Winooski. Gamache originally intended to become a high school English teacher, but his first summer job working for SIS in 1971 turned into a fulfilling life's work. "It's really been a gift," he says.

As Associate Dean, Gamache's work includes both academic and personal advising and managing the business of SIS, from planning to programming to financials. The behind-the-scenes administrative responsibilities are a crucial contribution, but a friendly smile and understanding ear are Gamache's trademark. From the beginning, he seemed to have an immediate grasp of the challenges facing students who had traveled thousands of miles to come to his little corner of Vermont to study.

"I think his greatest strength is his absolute support for and concern for the students here and their welfare. He comes to work everyday with their welfare foremost on his mind," says Brenda Rousselle, assistant to the Dean of Operations, who has worked side-by-side with Gamache almost from the start. "Culture shock can be tough," says Gamache. "There is no magic answer. It's a process. I try to understand how they're feeling, tell them it's OK, offer encouragement, and celebrate with them when they've made the transition."

During his years of service, Gamache has had the opportunity to represent Saint Michael's by traveling to more than 40 different countries and, through long-lasting friendships with alumni like Hache and others, he has been able to truly experience the culture of each country, from eating home-cooked meals to "meeting grandmothers and hugging the dog." These experiences have given him more perspective on what young international students face when they arrive in Vermont. "You really do see your own environment differently through the eyes of someone from a different culture," he explains.

As he travels, Gamache spreads the good word about the College. "Rick Gamache is an exemplar of the caring Saint Michael's community," says Jan Sheeran, Provost and Vice-President of Academic Affairs. "Having worked with him in many capacities, I have been impressed and gratified by his dedication to the College, his caring concern for the students in his charge, his respect for his colleagues and his admirable work ethic. He is an out-

standing ambassador of Saint Michael's College to the international world in which he works."

On business trips to Venezuela, Gamache usually visits with Eduardo Larrazabal '75, who recalled how Gamache eased his initial arrival to Vermont. "It was very difficult," he says, "being far from home and we did not speak any English. Rick was the first person we met when we arrived at the College. He was very friendly and tried by all means to make us feel welcome. He began to offer coffee at his office and he told the students that the coffee was magic and that it would help us to learn the language faster. He made us feel like a family, trying to take care of all the details that would make us feel good." Since Larrazabal and his brother attended Saint Michael's, three other siblings have followed, then two of his daughters, and he has also referred many others over the years. "The coffee, I understand, is still having its power," Larrazabal says. ●



*Gamache in 1981*

# Carolyn Duffy Steps Down as ELP Director

Professor Carolyn Duffy, an SIS faculty member who has been with the College for more than 25 years is stepping down from her 20-year position as Director of English Language Programs (ELP) to return to classroom teaching full-time. Sheena Blodgett, Associate Director of ELP for the past 10 years, will serve as Interim Director of ELP.

“At this point in my career, I’m very much looking forward to being more involved in hands-on curriculum development,” said Duffy. “It’s important that there are opportunities for other faculty members to develop administrative expertise,” she continued. “Of course,” she added, “the job is so much more than administrative.”



*Carolyn Duffy former ELP director*

Over the years, Duffy has participated not only in the evolution of Saint Michael’s SIS programs, but also seen changes within the whole field of English language programs. “In 1985, we were one of maybe 50 university-based intensive English programs,” said Duffy, “now we are one of about 200.” In order to continue building Saint Michael’s reputation and success, Duffy, as director of ELP, was responsible for helping develop a strategy that would keep SIS at the forefront of the increasingly competitive field. “First of all, we have maintained an excellent language proficiency program, then we have gradually developed more specialized programs,” Duffy explained. The College’s unwavering commitment to its inter-national program has also been critical, she pointed out.

“As things have become more specialized,” Duffy said, “we found we had students coming to us with more professional needs,

so with the help of the faculty, we’ve developed programs for people who are in business or in law, for example. Because we’ve been in business for 50 years, we have an excellent reputation, so people call us and say, ‘Can you develop a program?’” Duffy explained how the faculty team created a pilot program during the summer of 2003 for 28 nurses from the Philippines.

Basic language competency and medical terminology were critical, of course, but Duffy emphasized that “it’s not just the technical words that the nurses need, but how to ask patients how they’re feeling.”

This kind of emphasis on the human elements in the classroom and beyond is something that has always helped Saint Michael’s stand apart, and an

edge that Duffy and the SIS team are constantly working on improving. “It is really exciting to look at what we do in the classroom and provide meaningful things to talk about so that the content is culturally rich,” Duffy said, explaining how field trips to historical and cultural destinations and real-life shadowing in a hospital or law office for professionally-oriented students can be connected to classroom learning. “If students are saying something meaningful, that heightens their desire to learn to do it and say it. It’s not just about textbooks,” Duffy said. “We have a very experienced faculty who are constantly looking for new and interesting things to do in the classroom and my job has been to facilitate that. It’s been very rewarding.” ●



# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration

of the School of International Studies

July 16, 2004



## A Grand Celebration

Michael Maine, director of international marketing and enrollment for SIS, shares this report of the SIS's 50th anniversary events in mid-July:

"Welcome to the 50th anniversary celebration of the School of International Studies!" Professor Bonnie Tangalos announced July 16 to the crowd gathered in the McCarthy Arts Center. "The School of International Studies over these past 50 years has offered international and U.S. American students superior programs in English language study, graduate teacher education, undergraduate courses in language and linguistics and meaningful opportunities for cross-cultural learning. We are very proud of these accomplishments and of our students, faculty and alumni."

These words were just the beginning of a celebration that also included a barbecue dinner and cruise on Lake Champlain.



Bonnie Tangalos, kicking off the celebration



Ken Miyamura, a summer student from KTC, addressing the assembly

During the celebration, President Marc A. vanderHeyden also echoed appreciation for all of the guests in attendance and recognized the contributions made by the faculty, staff, and students of the School of International Studies to Saint Michael's College over the past 50 years.

Representatives from international partner schools also shared reflections on their experiences working with Saint Michael's College. "Saint Michael's is our optimal anchorage college," said Mamoru Mukai of Kanazawa Technical College (KTC) about the longtime partnership with SIS. "There are so many people in SIS who have dedicated themselves to the SMC-KTC Summer Program that deserve my recognition and appreciation."

Ken Miyamura, a current summer-study student from KTC, used the occasion to deliver his first-ever speech in English. "I am only 17, so I can't imagine what it's like to be 50 years old," Miyamura said, then congratulated everyone at SIS for reaching this milestone.

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from left: Fusko Noda, Joan Salvador, Andrew Shaw, and Allison Bill

Lily Mitrou-Papadaki, Nikos Charlaftis and Maria Patilokostopoula from Hellenic-American Union (HAU) in Greece, Ramon Schindler of Gama Bell Teacher Training College in Poland, Megumi Tsuburaya of International Christian University in Japan, Clara Galvis of Gimnasio Vermont in Colombia, and Toshiyushi Nishikawa of Surugadai University in Japan also shared praise of the partnerships they have shared with Saint Michael's SIS over the years.



Dancing aboard the Lake Champlain cruise

After the opening ceremony, guests moved into Alliot Hall for dinner, then enjoyed a cruise on Lake Champlain. On the cruise, party-goers danced, mingled, and relaxed as the ship made a leisurely tour of the waters between Vermont and New York State. "I think it's great!" said Maria Davou, a MATESL student from HAU. "It's a wonderful opportunity to see how people from all over the world met through SIS programs. I like the sense of community here."



Professor Robert Fox with Joan Salvador



Professor Susan Jenkins, Professor Mahmoud Arani, and Professor Reza Ramazani

Although some visitors were making repeat visits to Saint Michael's, others were here for the first time. Toshiyushi Nishikawa, Chair of the International Exchange Committee, Surugadai University, said that his first visit to Saint Michael's was making a very favorable impression. "Our students are having a great learning experience," Nishikawa said. "Their comments were very positive. We feel very confident that we made a right choice to send our students to Saint Michael's."



Special guests of the 50th anniversary celebration

Before the cruise was over, all guests gathered to cut the 50th anniversary cake and sing "Happy Birthday" to SIS. As faculty and staff, students and SIS partners headed for the exits, an enthusiastic party-goer called out, "Here's to another 50 years!" ●

# Japanese National Parliament member Edano visits Saint Michael's

Saint Michael's College was recently honored by a visit from Yukio Edano, a prominent member of Japan's Democratic Party and an influential representative in the Japanese national parliament who is widely considered a possible future party leader of his party. Edano came as a guest of the U.S. State Department and was hosted by the Vermont Council on World Affairs, which is directed by Bonnie Tangalos of SIS. His visit to Saint Michael's was part of his effort to learn about America at a local level in order to develop deeper background for his work in international policy. Michael Maine, SIS director of marketing and enrollment, took



*Yukio Edano, with members of the Japan America Society of Vermont, visited campus recently.*

Edano on a tour of the campus. "It's great that Mr. Edano directed some of his interest towards education in New England when he could have gone anywhere in the country," Maine said. "I hope that seeing our campus helped broaden his perspective on the U.S." ●

## Alumni Corner / SIS Staff Faculty news

**Rikichi Izumiya '03**, has returned to Tokyo, Japan to work with the MBA program for Kanazawa Institute of Technology.

*We welcome greetings and news from alumni. Please send them to: [sis@smcvt.edu](mailto:sis@smcvt.edu)*

**Pass it on!** Do you know someone who could benefit from learning at Saint Michael's? Send us the person's name, address, e-mail address, and, if possible, what type of program might be right for him or her. Please contact...

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## Come Celebrate with Us!

The School of International Studies will join the  
**Saint Michael's College centennial celebration**



**October 17 - 23, 2004**

with an international luncheon on October 22  
commemorating our 50 years with Saint Michael's College.

Centennial events include a variety of  
lectures, ceremonies and other festivities.

If you would like to attend any of these functions,  
please see "Centennial Celebration" at: [www.smcvt.edu](http://www.smcvt.edu) or  
contact the School of International Studies at:  
[sis@smcvt.edu](mailto:sis@smcvt.edu) or 802.654.2300



# Reconnect with Saint Michael's

In the last 50 years, over 15,000 students have experienced Saint Michael's College through the School of International Studies. In an effort to build stronger alumni relations, the SIS office encourages you to register online with our new International Alumni Network Program. The registration form can be found within the alumni section of the SIS web page:



[www.smcvt.edu/sis](http://www.smcvt.edu/sis)



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*~Written by Melissa Pasanen*



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