

Bringing International Awareness to PVCC

Lillian Downey, staff writer

Kristine Swanson, known as Kris to her students, is the assistant professor of French at PVCC. She has brought humor and kindness to the linguistic education of her students since she began teaching at PVCC in 1984. In her classes you will find students singing and playing games in French. Not only can students expect to learn about the French language, they will gain a grasp of French culture. Swanson's other role as the coordinator of international education brings a vital awareness of international issues to the campus.

Swanson was first introduced to French when she was 8 years old. As a self-described language person, Swanson says she fell in love with learning languages from that point onward. She said, "It was a game, it was so fun. I've always loved words ... and it was so much fun that I just kept doing it."

But being bilingual was not just fun. According to Swanson it has also opened the world to her in unique ways. She has forged international friendships and relationships and

gained a deeper understanding of the world. She believes that learning another language, "Expands you as a person."

Swanson's belief in the power of international awareness is evident in her role as the coordinator of international education. The main component of this job is the facilitation of international awareness on the PVCC campus. Sometimes it means bringing international speakers (or speakers on international topics) to the campus. Swanson helps faculty plan international trips and works on outreach to students.

Above all else, PVCC wants to get its students out in the world. Swanson said, "We want students to go."

Swanson became filled with emotion when asked about the experience of bringing students out of the country into places that they have never even considered before.

She said, "Oh it's so wonderful. I've been with students who have basically not traveled. One who had never been out of Virginia. So to see their eyes open, like, oh my gosh I'm in Paris, you know? I'm standing at the Eiffel Tower. It's so satisfying to see...this is why we do it."



Kris Swanson in Monet's garden. Photo courtesy of Kris Swanson