

Greek Studies Bloom in Ann Arbor

Modern Greek Studies Program at University of Michigan a Success

By Evan C. Lambrou
Special to The National Herald

NEW YORK – In any given semester, fully one in ten students at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor are taking at least one Greek-related class, according to Vassilis Lambropoulos, C.P. Cavafy Professor of Modern Greek at the University.

Michigan has some 30,000 students, Dr. Lambropoulos said, so that means roughly 3,000 of its students are taking courses in Greek history, philosophy, art or literature – ancient, Byzantine or modern – at any given time during the regular academic year.

“Of our 30,000 undergraduates, in any given semester, roughly one in ten takes a Greek class of some kind – Ancient, Byzantine or Modern. That’s how popular Greek is here. That’s a stunning number,” he told the National Herald.

Michigan’s Modern Greek Studies Program falls under the auspices of two of the University’s departments, Classics and Comparative Literature, but even within the framework of the larger departments, the Program still enjoys considerable leeway in terms of formulating a curriculum and teaching courses. Dr. Lambropoulos and his colleagues think ought to be taught.

“We can chart our own course, and basically do whatever we like. But we are accountable, not only to our department and to our administration, but to our students. American students vote with their feet. If I offer a class that I happen to like, but is only of peripheral or marginal interest, then I can end up with an empty class. On the other hand, if I manage to engage the interests of 18-22-year-olds in Greek culture in a way that is relevant to them, then my classes are full,” he said.

Michigan’s MGS Program has three core faculty members – two fulltime professors and one fulltime lecturer – and six affiliated faculty members who teach courses related to contemporary Hellenism, he said.

“Our program benefits from the fact that we are housed in a large Classics department – one of the top three in the country, in fact – so our students have access to Ancient Greek and many other related courses, so we don’t need to worry about covering anything before 1750,” he said.

The Program offers more than 12 courses per year, he added, and students can both major and minor in Modern Greek Studies.

“Currently, there are 14 majors.

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Education Minister Announces Creation of Three New Schools

Greece Will Adopt Initiatives to Create Two Pilot Schools and One Kindergarten in U.S.

By Stavros Marmarinos and Demetris Tsakas
Special to The National Herald

NEW YORK – Greece’s Minister of Education and Religious Affairs Evripides Stylianides announced a series of initiatives his Ministry would adopt to create two new Greek pilot schools and one Kindergarten here in the United States, aid in the reopening of St. Basil’s Teacher’s Academy in Garrison, N.Y., and support college and graduate training courses for teachers working in Greek American schools during an exclusive interview with The National Herald. Mr. Stylianides also pledged to offer greater support to the Greek American parochial schools of the Archdiocesan school district, in addition to charter schools. He also cited the utilization of academicians and educational professionals in the Greek American Community as a top goal.

The Greek Education Minister was accompanied on his visit to TNH last Thursday by Education Ministry Secretary General Ambassador Demetris Platis – who previously served as Greek Consul General in New York – Special Secretary for Educational Planning, Education of Greek Children of the Diaspora, Intercultural Education and Decentralization Angelos Syrigos, Greek Consul General in New York Aghi Balta, and Consulate Education Coordinator George Vlikidis. During his visit, Mr. Stylianides met with TNH Publisher/Editor-in-Chief Antonis H. Diamataris and discussed issues related to Greek education and the Greek American Community in general.

Mr. Stylianides spoke with satisfaction about the success of his U.S. visit and noted that he came prepared with the spot solutions to the educational challenges facing the Greek American Community. “When we first started our visit, I did not know that a Greek Minister of Education had never before visited the U.S., and that is why I began by apologizing on behalf of the Greek state. This was not a PR visit. We are dealing with substantial issues and trying to arrive at solu-

tions for them,” he said.

The Greek Education Minister spoke about the Greek Government’s strategy to strengthen Greek education for Greeks living abroad, and said that there were 2,600 Greek schools operating worldwide, in one form or another. He noted that each year Greece dispatches 2,400 teachers to service these schools, and that 112 of these educators teach at Greek American parochial schools and charter schools in the U.S. “We support all forms of education,” Mr. Stylianides said, noting his determination to aid schools operating under the Archdiocesan school district, as well as independent charter schools.

The Minister stated that it was among his Ministry’s priorities to establish two public Greek pilot schools along with a Kindergarten, so that students can begin learning the Greek language at a very young age. He also commented on the training received by Greek educators working abroad, and pledged that they will have to attend special seminars before being dispatched to Greek American parochial schools.

Mr. Stylianides said that during his visit to Washington, D.C. he met with U.S. Assistant Secretary of

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Archbishop Demetrios of America alongside Greece’s Minister of Education and Religious Affairs Evripides Stylianides during the latter’s visit to the United States on Friday, April 11, 2008.

The Steady Resurgence of John Rangos

By Evan C. Lambrou
Special to The National Herald

NEW YORK – The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine entered into a formal arrangement with the University of Patras, the third largest university in Greece, to cooperate on research, as well as student and faculty exchanges, late last week.

The two schools officially commenced their new collaboration last Friday, April 11, when representatives from Patras went to Johns Hopkins to sign a memorandum of cooperation long champi-

oned by leading Greek American businessman and philanthropist John G. Rangos Sr., a member of the Johns Hopkins Medicine Board of Advisors and a longtime benefactor of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

The occasion coincided with the inauguration and ribbon-cutting of the John G. Rangos Sr. Building, the first building at the Johns Hopkins Science & Technology Park to officially open its doors after a ceremony honoring Mr. Rangos, who has donated millions to Johns Hopkins over the years.

Maryland Governor Martin O’-

Malley and Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon praised the development, a 278,000-square-foot research center which will provide state-of-the-art facilities for advanced research companies. The Rangos building is the first of five new buildings planned for the first phase of the project, and is adjacent to the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions’ campus.

Myron L. Weisfeldt, William Osler Professor of Medicine and Director of the Department of Medicine at Johns Hopkins, told the Na-

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Patriarch Aims to Open New Halki School

By Theodore Kalmoukos
Special to The National Herald

BOSTON – Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has requested help from the government of Greece to establish a Theological School in Greece to replace the Patriarchal Theological School of Halki which continues to remain closed by Turkey since 1971.

The request was made during the official visit of the Prime Minis-



From Samos to Connecticut Representative

By Theodore Kalmoukos
Special to The National Herald

BOSTON – When little Demetris Giannacos arrived from his island Samos with his family in Boston in 1964, he could never imagine that one day not only he would become a professor of an American university in the field of Finance but also a Deputy Speaker in Connecticut House of Representatives. “In the beginning when we first arrived here I was worried because I had left all my friends in Samos and I didn’t know anyone here” he told the National Herald. However he managed very soon to make new friendships. He went to school in which he excelled in while afterwards, with scholarships he received from Boston University, he completed three master degrees and a doctorate.

Today he is a tenured professor of Economics and International Economic Relations at the University of Hartford in Connecticut and an elected State Representative of Connecticut with the Democratic Party since 1995. A few weeks ago, he was promoted to Deputy Speaker in the Connecticut House of Representatives making history since it is the first time that a Greek-born individual is being appointed for such an office in Connecticut. At the same time

Modern Greek Studies Program at University of Michigan a Thriving Success

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Two thirds of them are of Greek heritage, and one third is non-Greek. This semester, we have 380 students for all the classes we teach. That number is spread out over six courses," said Dr. Lambropoulos, who is teaching a course on Greek American culture this semester. Last semester, he taught "Greece in Film" and "Ideas of Rebellion in Modern Tragedy," a graduate-level course comparing and contrasting Nicos Kazantzakis with various contemporary Greek, as well as some non-Greek, playwrights.

The core requirements for a degree in Modern Greek Studies include three years (six courses) of Modern Greek language; one course on Greek American culture; a course on travel literature in Greece; a course on Greece in film; and a course on the city of Athens.

For their enrichment, MGS majors are also free to take various related courses which the Classics Department and MGS Program recommend or help them choose, he said (e.g., courses on Balkan history with an emphasis on Greece, or a course in Mediterranean anthropology, again with an emphasis on Greece).

Dr. Lambropoulos himself teaches three courses, two in the fall and one in the spring. "I would teach two and two, if not for administrative responsibilities," he said, noting that he is in charge of the Program's outreach efforts.

"We operate simultaneously as a small academic unit, but also as a cultural center. We organize lectures, talks, conferences, concerts, exhibits — you name it. Many of the events are open to the public; events that target both the town and the gown," he said, citing a recent lecture on the Greek Jewish experience by noted surgeon from the University of Illinois in Chicago, Mimis Cohen, which was attended by more than 100 people.

WHY GREEK STUDIES?

Why major in Modern Greek Studies, and what can somebody do with an MGS degree?

"It's a curriculum which can prepare one for a diverse array of fields he or she may wish to enter afterwards. What does somebody do

in their pockets, collecting \$5 here and \$10 there. It is now fully endowed, which means it will exist in perpetuity," Dr. Lambropoulos said.

The University of Michigan then solicited Dr. Lambropoulos to fill the chair, reaching across the border to Columbus from Ann Arbor, yet another instance reflecting the traditional rivalry between the Wolverines and the Buckeyes.

Dr. Lambropoulos is married to Artemis Leontis, a third-generation Greek American who is also his colleague in Greek Studies at Michigan. Dr. Leontis earned her Ph.D at Ohio State and is now coordinator of the MGS Program at Michigan. Dr. Lambropoulos and his wife have a 20-year-old daughter, Daphne, who is currently studying Biology and Anthropology at Michigan. The Lambropoulos family attends Saint Nicholas Church in Ann Arbor.

Dr. Lambropoulos said it was important to him to pursue an academic career in the U.S. because he thought the American educational system has more to offer, and is more flexible, than European ones.

"Most American professors who came from Greece, nearly all of them, came to this country for graduate studies, and then after completing their dissertations, chose the American academic system over the Greek one. Their exposure to it was through their graduate experiences here. I'm the rare exception of someone who simply looked at the American educational system and intellectual scene from afar, and realized that it was more exciting and inspiring than the Greek and European systems," he said.

"So I decided that I wanted a career in this country because I believe the American university is a very interesting place to work, and I also think that there have been many interesting developments, as well as innovative and provocative exchanges of conversations and ideas, in the field of Humanities over the last few decades here. We are constantly debating something new and different, so you have a sense of openness, challenge and change," he added.

Asked whether he misses Greece at all, Dr. Lambropoulos said he goes back often enough, and is sufficiently immersed in the life of the Greek American community, as well as in his own professional responsibilities, that he does not miss it.

"I go back every summer. I have maintained close contacts with colleagues, artists, writers and many others in Greece's intellectual, academic and cultural circles. In a sense, I never left the Athenian cultural and intellectual scene that I knew when I was younger. So basically, I don't miss Greece because I am fortunate to have a very Greek life in this country. I have a Greek wife. We have a daughter. I teach Greek. I am surrounded by many successful Greeks in the area. And I have 50 Greek colleagues on campus in all departments, many of us immigrants," he said.

Dr. Lambropoulos said he also works with Greek Studies chairholders at other institutions across the country, as well as with colleagues in other departments and other modern languages at Ann Arbor.

The MGS Program's focus on Modern Greek can be viewed as a narrow one, however, and does not include Byzantine Studies, which covers a major gap in the continuum of Hellenism between the Classical and Modern periods.

Many people associate Hellenism with Classical times, and fail to understand that Hellenism did not end with the Golden Age of Pericles, so one can argue that the lack of proper insight on Byzantine history is part of the reason why U.S. foreign policy on Turkey and the Balkans is so problematic.

That being the case, shouldn't be more Byzantine Studies chairs also be established, Dr. Lambropoulos was asked, and can Modern Greek Studies programs morph into joint programs in which both are taught?

"The problem is there," he said, and efforts have been made to reach out to the Byzantine Studies community.

"They are brilliant scholars. They have mastered many languages and cultures — Byzantium was a multicultural society — and they know their area inside-out. But they are often caught up in their own sphere of expertise, so we need to try and bridge the gap," he said.

"We certainly need a greater degree of collaboration. Last fall, we reached out to our Byzantine Studies colleagues and organized a two-day symposium on iconoclasm in the Byzantine Empire and today," he added.

Asked whether he thought the creation of more Greek Studies chairs would ultimately help make a difference in persuading policymakers to look at things from another perspective and change their approach, Dr. Lambropoulos said, "The creation of more positions will only help the cause."

One of the problems with establishing more Greek Studies chairs, however, is that sometimes the wrong professors get chosen to fill them.

"That's a risk we have to take," Dr. Lambropoulos said.

But when Michigan first solicited him, it was at least in part because the Detroit-area community had some knowledge of him, and were corresponding with the University's

immigrants were viewed as 'Greeks abroad.' I'm an expatriate Greek, but my wife in an American citizen, so she is not a 'Greek abroad.' She was born in the United States. Now, everybody is using the word 'Diaspora.' That's a major philosophical change. Greeks in Greece now accept that they happen to be 10 million Greeks in Greece who are also part of the global Greek Diaspora. So that's an interesting change on their part," he said.

"Now you even have all these programs on Greek television about Greeks in the Diaspora. Up until only ten years ago, the only image they had of the Greek outside Greece was the Greek emigrant. Now, it's sinking in that somebody can be perfectly Greek, and not be an emigrant," he added.

Can somebody be Greek without knowing the Greek language, Dr. Lambropoulos was asked?

"Being Greek is for whoever really wants to be Greek. Those of us who are in constant contact with the younger generations witness the most fascinating things. We see John Smith, the kid who has never been to Greece — who can't even say 'geia sou' — come to class and say, 'I'm one eighth Greek.' Consider Jeffrey Eugenides, who won the Pulitzer Prize for 'Middlesex.' He does not speak the language. But I want to say he is as Greek as I am. He is one eighth Greek, and he won the Pulitzer with his second novel, which is the saga of a Greek family from Smyrna to Detroit. And that, to him, was a process of self-discovery — through his art — of what ultimately would become his main identity. I'm fascinated by all these young people who are part Irish or part Indian or what have you, and yet choose to identify with their Greek heritage," he said.

There are other Greek American scholars who argue that the most effective way for people to preserve Hellenism in America is for people — Greeks and non-Greeks alike — to embrace the Greek Orthodox faith and religion.

"That's true, but we also have people who come to things Greek because of the great literature, music, poetry, art and so on. And several proponents of Hellenism today, who almost couldn't care less about Greece 10-20 years ago, have experienced transformations, sometimes even because of their children's interests, and they just love Greece today. As we have undergone these conceptual and philosophical changes together, the right technological improvements also came into the picture, and we now have a wonderful convergence of the Greek American and Hellenic minds," Dr. Lambropoulos said.

"We communicate more often, and we understand one another better. It's partly because of the Internet, but there are also other factors — like the growing confidence of the Greek American community, which can now embrace its Greekness with real pride, rather than feel embarrassed about it. As we move into the third and fourth generations, Greekness is increasingly being viewed as an asset," Dr. Lambropoulos said.

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Professor Vassilis Lambropoulos, C.P. Cavafy Professor of Modern Greek at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, with his wife, Professor Artemis Leontis, center, and their daughter Daphne.

administration about him, and others, as appropriate candidates for the Cavafy professorship.

"The community gave the administration many names. One very important thing that the Greek American community in Ann Arbor did was, as soon as they started the campaign — if not before — they approached Modern Greek scholars around the country and said, 'Look, we are business people. We don't know where to start. We don't know the way a university operates. But you are academics. Tell us how it's done. Tell us who is out there.' And in their letterhead, they listed (eminent Greek American scholars) like Van Coufoudakis and John Iatrides as advisors," Dr. Lambropoulos said, and University took all those things into consideration.

GREECE AND GREEK AMERICAN EXCHANGE

Asked whether the academic system and institutions of higher learning in Greece are of any assistance to Greek Studies programs state-side, Dr. Lambropoulos said there is some measure of "reciprocity" and loose exchange on an "ad hoc basis," but that there are no active exchange programs between Greek and American universities because the state-run system in Greece is almost diametrically opposed to the U.S. system, which permits all colleges and universities "a much greater degree of autonomy."

"Institutionally, Greek universi-

ties do not have slots for American students. It can not be done under the present circumstances. And the reason is strictly practical. You have two extremely different systems. In Greece, you have state-run universities. So whatever they do, they have to report to the Ministry of Education, and it's a centralized system. That's the usual European motto. Then you have the other extreme — our case — which is completely decentralized. Whether state or private, every campus has complete autonomy in America. So the two systems operate very differently. Mechanically, the two systems speak two different institutional languages," he said.

But in the last 30 years, Dr. Lambropoulos added, he has observed "tremendous improvements" in relations between Greeks on both sides of the Atlantic.

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Professor Vassilis Lambropoulos, C.P. Cavafy Professor of Modern Greek at the University of Michigan, says Modern Greek Studies are alive and well in Ann Arbor.

with an English major? These majors are all part of a liberal arts curriculum. They don't train you for a specific job. They offer a broad, humanistic training of the mind for any kind of job that you may want to do now or later in life," he said.

"People who major in Computer Science don't necessarily work in that field. They might work for a bank or pursue another path entirely. By and large, American universities have abolished the idea that four years of college prepare you for something specific. They prepare you to be an American or global citizen of the 21st Century. And the way the economy is going, what a college graduate ends up doing is so unpredictable that, if you know how to read, write and think critically, that's more than enough preparation," he added.

What is it that people really need to know about Modern Greece in order to feel invited to study the literature and history of Modern Greece, he was asked?

Greece is the crossroads of many civilizations, East and West, and is the crucible for where people experimented with major modern ideas, Dr. Lambropoulos explained, ideas like nation-building.

"One thing we always say — and it is worth repeating — is that Greece is at the crossroads of so many civilizations, languages, faiths and cultures. If you go to downtown Athens today, you will see a Chinatown there. From antiquity until the present day, Greece through the centuries has been a test case for new things — some good, some bad," he said.

"We emphasize that Greece was the first European nation-state to emerge in history. Beyond what we say about the Greek Revolution and our fight for freedom in 1821, Greece is an incredible nation-building experiment. There are nation-building efforts in Iraq today, but there was an earlier, fascinating

sounded foreign or backwards, and find it is now an object of serious academic study. And it all begins to make perfect sense. They look at what once seemed strange, and realize there is an actual context to it," he added.

Dr. Lambropoulos was born and raised in central Athens, in Metakourgio near Omonia Square, in 1953. His parents still live there. He pursued his undergraduate studies at the University of Athens, where he studied Byzantine and Modern Greek Literature, and then received his doctorate from University of Thessaloniki in Modern Greek Literature.

Dr. Lambropoulos then spent two years at University of Birmingham in England for a post-doctoral fellowship (1979-81), and elected to pursue an academic career in the United States. He first came to U.S. in 1981 and took a position, a Modern Greek professorship, at Ohio State University. He spent 18 years at Ohio State, and went to Ann Arbor after the University of Michigan established the Cavafy chair in 1998.

The Cavafy chair, named after the famous modern Alexandrian Greek poet who was deeply interested in Hellenism in the Diaspora, was the result of efforts made by the Greek American community and Philhellenes in the Detroit area. It was spearheaded by a group called the Foundation for Modern Greek Studies, a tax-exempt organization established to facilitate fundraising efforts for creating the chair.

COMMUNITY-WIDE EFFORT
The Cavafy professorship, which started in 1998 with the first of three \$250,000 annual installments, is a unique project because the money for the chair did not come from a single major donor. It was a community-wide, grassroots initiative.

"Greek Americans and their friends in this area put their hands