

Christine Grosse Transcript

Transcript

00:00:15 Speaker 1

Hi, my name is Savannah and I'm here today with my classmates Nickie and Jared and we're going to be interviewing Doctor Christine Grosse as part of UMW's modern foreign Languages alumni interview.

00:00:26 Speaker 1

Nickie why don't you go ahead and take it away with the first question?

00:00:30 Speaker 2

One of the.

00:00:30 Speaker 2

Things we're interested in, so we know you have done a lot of work with languages and linguistics. Do you remember kind of like the first thing that brought you to that field of study?

00:00:45 Speaker 3

Yes, yes, for sure. My parents were musicians. That's how they made their living. And my mom had had a French boyfriend.

00:00:55 Speaker 3

During the war.

00:00:57 Speaker 3

Before she met, my dad was in the Navy, and so she spoke beautiful French. And I heard that.

00:01:04 Speaker 3

You know, growing up and you know what a wonderful thing it was to speak a language. We lived in a neighborhood in Princeton where there were many Italians, and we backed up to Mr. Stefanelli's house. And my mom went to the high school to learn Italian. She was an older gentleman just to speak with him.

00:01:25 Speaker 3

Because music, as you know, there's lots of Italian phrases, so it's excellent at that.

00:01:32 Speaker 3

So I took that and then went on to grad school. I love Portuguese.

00:01:38 Speaker 3

But I always.

00:01:38 Speaker 3

Had an interest in in kind of Arab heritage and culture, just I don't know why. I just was curious about it and so I minored in Arabic at grad school, and I went to a.

00:01:52 Speaker 3

Our scholarship Tunisia program summer and Tunis, and it was so much fun to learn Arabic.

00:02:00 Speaker 3

Here, but then we moved to Miami and I'll tell you, it was hard to get a job with a PhD not knowing anybody. So I work like as an adjunct of Spanish or Portuguese. And then I got hired to teach ESL, and I loved it. It was the most fun.

00:02:20 Speaker 3

Thing I think I'd never do.

00:02:22 Speaker 3

I love the lowest levels. You look, you help people, you help people. First of all, to communicate. But you laugh the whole time they're teaching. I was a really heavy load. I had so much fun and next thing I know, I'm being interviewed for the College of Education by this woman who was very influential.

00:02:42 Speaker 3

Cuban woman and she asked me.

00:02:45 Speaker 3

Would you ever criticize the Dade County public schools?

00:02:49 Speaker 3

And I go. Why? No, I wouldn't criticize them, basically. OK, you got the job, you.

00:02:55 Speaker 3

Know what they did?

00:02:56 Speaker 3

They didn't want anyone to. I can understand that. You know, you're there to educate your teachers and why you're going to criticize the public school system, hiring them out, you know, wouldn't do it anyway.

00:03:09 Speaker 3

Anyway, so they put me in charge of bilingual Ed TESOL and modern language Ed. Can you imagine? I set out to find out later in life what is the most important language to study? What is it, really? And I got the answer from this really great woman. I'm still friends with her. She was.

00:03:28 Speaker 3

She worked for the US Department of Ed for about 40 years. Susanna Easton she was head of the Cybers. She was Austrian.

00:03:37 Speaker 3

Her family fled Austria to get get out of Hitler's grasp. So Susanna, knew International Ed and I go. OK Susanna, what language should I, you know, encourage people to study? And she goes any of them.

00:03:52 Speaker 3

And I go what?

00:03:53 Speaker 3

That's a cop out. That's not a.

00:03:54 Speaker 3

Real answer, but it was true.

00:03:57 Speaker 3

Any language and she said all of them.

00:04:00 Speaker 3

They're all helpful.

00:04:01 Speaker 3

And then might we move to Thunderbird, a Business School, after 20 years in Miami at that wonderful job. I really liked it. My husband got a job in Spain for a year. We moved to Madrid with.

00:04:14 Speaker 3

Kids, when we came back, it's never the same. He was at University of Miami international business.

00:04:20 Speaker 3

And so he was looking for a new job, and we found one in Arizona at Thunderbird.

00:04:26 Speaker 3

And I had been writing about language for business. So a lot of the people there who taught language for business, they they had heard of me and I had cited some of them in my works and they said we'd love for you to teach here. And they hired him as head of the the Business School.

00:04:46 Speaker 3

It you never know where your life will take you. So I I got to work with business people. And at first I thought ohh no, you know, and then.

00:04:55 Speaker 3

I I spoke to a student of mine. I go he goes. Why are you discouraged? I say they don't see the beauty.

00:05:01 Speaker 3

In life and.

00:05:02 Speaker 3

Boy, was I wrong, he says. Yes, I do. I see how beautiful the gardens are. I mean, it was so, you know, you make mistakes along the way, but if you speak them, people can give you input and then.

00:05:15 Speaker 3

And I thought, well, where's the creativity in business, which is awful, you know, coming from, I just thought that.

00:05:23 Speaker 3

And then entrepreneurs are the creators of new things. New business. There's lots of creativity marketing, but and once I saw that, I started.

00:05:35 Speaker 1

That's. That's great. Yeah. So you use language in really direct way throughout your career path, but in our class we also talked about how learning language gives you soft skills and other marketable qualities that you can put on your resume and.

00:05:48 Speaker 1

Use in interviews.

00:05:50 Speaker 1

What would you say like is the best thing that you've taken away from your experience as a language learning?

00:05:54 Speaker 1

Student and how have those things factored towards your life and career?

00:06:01 Speaker 3

I'd say the most important thing is language can save your life.

00:06:05 Speaker 3

We moved. We've had an incredibly amazing my I say we, my husband and I.

00:06:11 Speaker 3

And he got a job in South Africa in Johannesburg, thought. OK, speaking, the language could save my life. You connect with people and I think those connections are the best part of learning other languages. But I sat next to on the plane because the bank always sent me business class, which blew my mind.

00:06:31 Speaker 3

I sat next to this guy.

00:06:33 Speaker 3

And he started telling me.

00:06:34 Speaker 3

He grew up in Soweto.

00:06:36 Speaker 3

His name was Indaba Inceli and I I spoke my little Zulu to him and he goes. You speak Zulu and he he starts telling about his life. He was a billionaire. He was a successful guy from Soweto and he told me how he used to play marbles on the street. And he goes, I liked a lot of different marbles.

00:06:57 Speaker 3

Then later on, like you know, hours into the flight, he gets out this magazine. He's on the cover.

00:07:02 Speaker 3

of it and I go. My God, it's like Pamoza or something. This this big conglomerate I go. You really do like marbles. You have all those companies we had the he. So he was his first banker. Worked at my husband's bank. So we arranged for them to get together and it was.

00:07:23 Speaker 3

Really incredible. So I guess it's the connections. I always think it really could save your life. I think being a teacher, you make connections with your students.

00:07:34 Speaker 4

To kind of close this out. What? What?

00:07:36 Speaker 4

Advice do you have for?

00:07:39 Speaker 4

Aspiring language educators, people in jobs working with language. You know people, people like me, Savannah and Nickie, who are moving into these careers in the future and have a passion for it. But we're just now getting into it as we complete our degrees.

00:07:58 Speaker 3

Well, I think my best advice would be don't be afraid. Take advantage of those opportunities because they don't come along every day. And sometimes I think they're meant to come along and you're either meant to turn them down or meant to take them and go on a whole new wild adventure. But I I just would always say.

00:08:18 Speaker 3

You know, be careful with your eyes open, but do not be afraid to of change. So many of my colleagues just are so scared to do anything different. Like I I didn't.

00:08:30 Speaker 3

I had some great English courses with Ramon Singh. I had one with him, you know, but I was not an ESL person and I could have said, well, I don't have a masters in TESOL. I don't have this. I don't have that. It's like, no, I can do it.

00:08:46 Speaker 3

And I remember this guy who worked for Kennedy. He was my husband's advisor in Chapel Hill.

00:08:52 Speaker 3

Jack Berman, he said. Because I was offered a course in intercultural management to teach in Finland, where I ended up teaching part time for like 15 years. It was so fun and I go God, intercultural management, you know, I'm not. I don't have a management. I don't know if I can do it, Jack said. Of course you can do it. You know, you've written in this area.

00:09:12 Speaker 3

And it's like, well, why not? So ask your don't ask yourselves if you can do it. Just say, why not? Of course I can. If you want to. And the other thing is follow your heart. Do what you like.

00:09:24 Speaker 3

Don't waste any time with people you don't like or things you don't like. Surround yourself with.

00:09:31 Speaker 3

People you find interesting, like if you get leadership position, make sure you hire and work with people that you I, I would say respect and admire and like it, it really helps.