

A woman with glasses and a scarf stands on an ice rink, wearing a dark winter jacket and pants. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows the rink's ceiling with lights and a blurred figure of another person in the distance.

THE SECRET LIFE OF ADJUNCTS

As a college student, you more than likely learned from adjuncts—the highly specialized faculty who teach one or two classes per semester. The university couldn't function without them. But did you ever stop to wonder what they were doing when they weren't at Bellarmine? We decided to find out. The results might surprise you.

By Emily Gahafer '17
Photos by Jessica Ebelhar

SARAH NEAL

When Sarah Neal isn't teaching Spanish as an adjunct in the Global Languages and Cultures Department, you're likely to find her on ice—as a figure-skating instructor at Louisville Skating Academy at Iceland Sports Complex. Her passion for skating was sparked as a young girl, leading her to compete regionally in Columbus and Indianapolis, Ind.

As a graduate student at Arizona State University, she had the opportunity to go to Spain to collect data for her thesis. "I used the skating environment as the arena to do kind of a taxonomy of the verbs used in teaching," she said. "So then I went to Spain to gather data and one of the rinks there said, 'Why don't you just come back and work with us?' So I did."

For the following year and a half, Neal directed a club skating team and a municipal skating team in Madrid. The opportunity to combine her two passions was a dream job.

"I don't think I had realized that is exactly what I wanted, so that was really exciting to be able to take advantage of that opportunity," she said. "It was a great experience. I met lots of great people and I got to not only live and work within the culture that I love, but also see skating from that perspective, which is different in every culture."

She has since traveled to various countries throughout Europe. She has also explored Mexico, Japan, Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Peru, the Bahamas and Aruba, among other places. "A lot of the places throughout Europe were for skating, but I think most everything else was just because I love to travel," she said. "Skating, Spanish and traveling are my three biggest passions."

While she has had the opportunity to travel all over the world, she still says Spain is her favorite destination. "Every country that you visit has a different character, different feel



Sarah Neal, right, speaks with her skating student Krista Weyhing at Iceland in Louisville.

and I am a firm believer that your memory of that country and your impression have a lot to do with your experience there. I've always just felt a natural affinity to Spain and the people there," Neal said. "I've always felt like it was a second home ... There's so much history there you can just walk around the streets and you can feel it. It's living, breathing history."

While Spanish and skating instruction seem vastly different from the outside looking in, Neal said they are actually very similar. "I think learning a language is very much like learning a skill. Just because you think you've mastered or moved to the next level doesn't mean you can quit practicing the basics, and just because you're learning the basics doesn't mean you can't throw yourself into the arena," she said. "If you're practicing a drill for basketball, are you never going to play a game? Just because you play a game, does that mean you quit practicing your drills?"

Since coming back to the U.S., Neal has still had the opportunity to exercise her Spanish skills on the ice, with several international and bilingual students who preferred to practice in Spanish and one English speaker she taught to speak Spanish during their skating instruction.

"One of the skaters that I taught just finished a tour with Disney on Ice. I think he's one of two Spaniards in Disney on Ice right now. It's fun to watch their development internationally," she said. "It's really rewarding and you get to meet people from all different walks of life. Skating attracts a certain type of person and most of the people in skating lead really interesting lives." ■

