

Distinguished Alumni Award: Dr. Sandra J. Koepke Savignon, class of 1957

Sandra Savignon is a professor in the Department of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Pennsylvania State University. She was past president of the American Association for Applied Linguistics and the founder and long-time director of the multidisciplinary doctoral program in Second Language Acquisition and Teacher Education at the University of Illinois.

Savignon attended the University of Illinois graduating summa cum laude with a B.A. in French and Education. She went on to earn her M.A. in French literature at Illinois in 1962.

Early in her professional career, Savignon was an instructor at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and a teaching assistant at U of I. Her world travel began in the summer of 1968, when she served as Co-Director of the Classrooms Abroad Study Program in Vichy, France. Over the next several years she earned her Ph.D. in Education at U of I, where she was appointed Assistant Professor of French. She later became a Professor of French and English as an International Language serving on the U of I faculty through the mid-1990s.

Savignon has published numerous books and has received accolades for her outstanding research in the field of foreign language teaching. A number of years ago while reflecting on her profession, she vividly recalled the words of Chaucer that were inscribed high on the wall at Capen Auditorium. Those words read, "And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche." In a 1983 publication, she dedicated it to her students for giving meaning to those words she had first learned as a girl attending Metcalf and U-High.