

MATESOL STUDENT TAKES CHARGE

By Kristin Rock MATESOL Candidate 07

Rebecca Owens, a current MATESOL student, played an integral role in the ESL Symposium that took place in September 2006 in Salinas, California. During the summer, Rebecca met with the planning group once a month. At first, she spent a lot of time listening as the other members of the group planned for the symposium, but later she began contributing when she had the opportunity. Her main job was to coordinate the volunteers at the symposium. She organized the volunteer work schedule and then on the day of the conference, it was Rebecca's responsibility to be sure that everything ran smoothly and that everyone understood their duties. In addition, Rebecca, along with Mackenzie Stewart and Therese Tishakov, underwent

an advertising campaign at the Monterey Institute to draw both presenters and attendees to the conference. Rebecca would like to give a special thanks to Mackenzie and Therese for all of their help.

Rebecca commented that she thought the symposium "...was a wonderful event that successfully gathered together ESL professionals in the region to jointly strive for professional development." She also received a number of remarks from participants saying that the keynote speaker, Luis Valdez, truly roused and motivated them with his words. Before the symposium, Rebecca had only organized small events of 10-30 attendees. However, with her participation in the ESL Symposium, she learned a great deal about the numerous factors

involved in organizing a conference for 200 people. She came to understand the importance of having positive dynamics in a group as the event came together successfully due to a small group of professionals who worked well together. Rebecca noted that "the members of the group came from various educational institutions and everyone contributed in their own way by drawing on the connections they had with other professionals and their schools' resources." Finally, after all of the hard work involved in organizing the ESL Symposium, Rebecca remains motivated to do something similar in the future because she greatly values the benefits of conferences for teachers and teachers-in-training. Rebecca stated that conferences "...give us the opportunity to come together in mass to talk about the work we love, to meet people and make connections, and to learn more so that we can develop ourselves professionally."



ESL Symposium participants, pictured from left to right
Shahid Abrar, Rebecca Owens, Nataliya Borkovska,
Therese Tishakov, Amy Garcia, and Tatiana Lyutaya