Flagship Expands in 2008

To achieve The Language Flagship’s goal of implementing a new paradigm for advanced language learning, the program supports opportunities for additional institutions to join the Flagship effort. Every year, The Language Flagship solicits proposals under the Promoting the Diffusion of Innovation grant program to encourage the development of new partnerships. Under this grant program, existing Flagship Centers partner with other institutions of higher education to expand the scope and scale of the Flagship program.

As a result of these expansion efforts, five new Flagship Partner programs were added through the Diffusion of Innovation program in 2008. The grant awardees are

- **Indiana University**, for a Chinese program partnering with the University of Oregon;
- **Portland State University**, for a Russian program partnering with the University of Oregon;
- **University of Michigan**, for an Arabic program partnering with the University of Texas, Austin;
- **University of Oklahoma**, for an Arabic program partnering with the University of Oregon; and
- **University of Rhode Island**, for a Chinese program partnering with the University of Oregon.

These institutions were motivated to partner with Flagship Centers for various reasons, including the desire to take their programs to a higher level, offer unique opportunities to their students, and collaborate with a select group of premier language scholars and educators. “It’s an exhilarating opportunity to be on the frontier of language pedagogy and to be part of a network of outstanding colleagues from the education, government, and business sectors,” says Jennifer Liu, director of the Chinese Flagship Partner Program at Indiana University.

Universities also were drawn to The Language Flagship’s unique integration of language instruction with professional content. “The program will be a magnet for students with intermediate–high proficiency to a superior level while pursuing a major in any discipline,” explains Sandra Freels, director of the Russian Flagship Partner Program at Portland State. “We foresee the program becoming a model for integrating other languages into general education requirements,” she adds.

John Grandin, director of the International Engineering Program at the University of Rhode Island (home of a new Chinese Flagship Partner Program), agrees. “Our students will have many opportunities to study Chinese in conjunction with their other academic and professional interests, which would not have been available to them otherwise,” he says.

According to Raji Rammuny, director of the University of Michigan Arabic Flagship Partner Program, The Language Flagship’s focus on the importance of cultural learning above and beyond

Chu Receives Leadership Award

The Flagship directors presented David S. C. Chu, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness at the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), with the inaugural Language Flagship Leadership Award on June 8, 2008. The ceremony took place during The Language Flagship’s Annual Meeting held at the Wye River Conference Center in Queenstown, Maryland.

According to Dan Davidson, president of the American Councils for International Education, directors of The Language Flagship honored Chu for his significant contributions to the national language agenda with this new annual award.

“Dr. Chu’s leadership in strengthening U.S. national capacity in world languages and his contribution to the development of The Language Flagship program represent the most significant public investment in the study of world languages in American higher education since the time of the Sputnik,” said Davidson while presenting the award.

Chu was sworn in as undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness on June 1, 2001. A presidential appointee confirmed by the U.S. Senate, he is the senior policy advisor to the secretary of defense on recruitment, career development, pay, and benefits for 1.4 million active-duty military personnel, 1.3 million National Guard and Reserve personnel, and 680,000 civilian DOD employees. Chu also oversees the state of military readiness.

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The State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, houses more than 3,000,000 works of art collected over more than two centuries.
Flagship Expands ... (from page 1)

The linguistic component will greatly benefit students. “Strengthening the cultural component of the Arabic curriculum through media-based courses and cultural activities—including language exchange with native Arabic speakers, guest lectures on the Arab world, Arabic films, and field trips to important cultural sites—really sets Flagship apart from other language programs,” he says.

In addition to the five new institutional partner programs, three Collaborative Innovation grants were funded under the Promoting the Diffusion of Innovation grant program. These grants focus on supporting the development, curricular enhancements, and other learning tools that directly benefit Flagship Centers and the larger instructional collaboration on a smaller scale. This year’s awardees are

- University of Texas, Austin, and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages: Arabic Oral Proficiency Testing Consensus Initiative;
- University of Texas, Austin; New York University (NYU); and Columbia University: Language for Health: The Practice of Medicine in Hindi and Urdu; and
- Michigan State University: The Development of Content-Based Arabic Teaching Materials for Heritage Students and Advanced Language Learners.

One of the three 2008 Collaborative Innovation projects involves the NYU Health Sciences Department. “Language education is facing new professional, economic, and intellectual challenges,” explains Gabriela Nik Ilieva, clinical associate professor in the NYU Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies. “Our students need to respond to new demands where foreign language proficiency as well as target culture competency are musts for efficient professional realization and successful advancement in any field.” Nik Ilieva is partnering with The Language Flagship on a special project to provide resources and opportunities to develop communication skills in Hindi and Urdu used in the context of healthcare and medicine.

The Language Flagship also held two grant competitions for Domestic Flagship Centers: one for African languages and one for Central Asian Turkic languages. In September 2008, The Language Flagship awarded a grant to Howard University in Washington, D.C., to establish a new African Languages Flagship Center. Howard received the grant in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin, Madison (UW–Madison).

In January 2009, The Language Flagship expects to announce the first Domestic Flagship Center for Central Asian Turkic languages. Until now, Central Asian Turkic languages have been offered only at select overseas locations.

Both of these Flagship Centers represent a well-needed expansion of language offerings to new regions and promise to affect their respective fields nationwide. “For African languages to be a part of The Language Flagship program will without a doubt transform the field of African language learning and teaching,” says Antonia Schleicher, professor of African languages at UW–Madison. The program “will provide opportunities for undergraduate students of Swahili and Yoruba to reach a Superior level of proficiency within 4 to 5 years. This has never happened in the history of African language pedagogy in the United States.”

As Flagship innovations expand and diffuse, more universities recognize that they should change the way they teach foreign languages. Jerry Lampe, senior academic advisor at the American Councils for International Education, says, “The Language Flagship is our best hope for increasing the number of people with professional language skills, for changing the ways in which Americans view languages as a discipline, and for creating a new paradigm for the ways in which languages are taught in the American educational system.”

Interested in Joining The Language Flagship?

Proposals for the 2009 Promoting the Diffusion of Innovation grant program are due on December 19, 2008. For more information about the program, visit The Language Flagship’s website (www.thelanguageflagship.org).
Leadership Award ... (from page 1)

During his tenure at DOD, Chu has kept language proficiency on the government’s agenda and brought the need for increased cultural awareness and understanding to the national forefront. As the senior defense official who oversees the National Security Education Program (NSEP), Chu supports The Language Flagship, one of the largest NSEP initiatives. “Dr. Chu has been an instrumental figure in securing both support and funding for language education,” says NSEP Director Robert Slater.

In his current role, Chu has spurred a cultural shift in the military with his ambitious goals of increased language skills. The Defense Language Transformation Roadmap, introduced in 2005, is DOD’s blueprint for creating, teaching, and tracking a linguistically diverse military. Created with significant input from Chu, this plan views language competency as another part of modern soldiering, not something reserved for only a few select individuals.

“Our partnership with The Language Flagship is so important because we recognize that we will not succeed unless we have broader support within our country as a whole,” explains Chu. “The well-educated citizen needs to have some degree of competence in a language other than English and a better understanding of other cultures,” he adds.

Chu helped organize the National Language Conference, held at the University of Maryland, College Park, in June 2004. The event brought together leaders from federal agencies, academia, and business to address the need for greater foreign language capabilities in the U.S. workforce.

“Our vision is a world in which the United States is a stronger global leader through proficiency in foreign languages and understanding of the cultures of the world,” Chu told conference attendees. “These abilities are strengths of our public and private sector and pillars of our educational system. The government, academic, and private sectors continue to mutually benefit from these national capabilities.”

“Dr. Chu’s vision and commitment to this vision have had an enormous impact on all of us,” said Slater at Chu’s award ceremony. “Through his leadership, we have seen language and cultural expertise become a theme throughout the department.”

Op-Ed:
Flagship Programs Help Students Flourish in Their Careers
Kristie Di Lascio, Chinese linguist

In an increasingly global marketplace, possessing a “working knowledge” of a foreign language simply is not enough. Flagship programs provide language learners with the tools they need to acquire and solidify cultural and linguistic knowledge along with field-specific lexicons, and the training. I received as a Flagship Fellow provided me with numerous professional opportunities and an exciting career track.

I applied to the Brigham Young University (BYU) Chinese Flagship Program after completing a master’s degree in linguistics. Several academic advisors questioned this decision because my advanced degree already made me a competitive candidate for several lucrative jobs. However, when offered a 2-year Flagship Fellowship, I accepted without hesitation. I believed that participation in the Flagship program would advance my language and culture skills while preparing me for a career path that combined my interests in Chinese culture and language analysis.

Even though I had studied Mandarin Chinese for 6 years at that point (beginning as a Peace Corps volunteer) and could speak, read, and write at an intermediate level, my professional skills in the language were limited. The Flagship program’s emphasis on professional proficiency was ideal for me: I took target-language classes in Chinese literature, media, and economics, and tutors tested my content knowledge and ability to use vocabulary encountered in research. The academic growth I experienced during that first year in the Flagship program prepared me for a future career better than any other professional training could.

The Flagship overseas program appreciably enhanced my Chinese language skills. At the end of the semester at Nanjing University, I worked with two classmates on a presentation about Chinese international trade policies (in Mandarin). After the term, I interned at China Cascade, a Shanghai-based company that creates interactive online guides in Chinese. Working alongside native colleagues and investors in a professional environment, my language skills developed considerably. I now use those skills daily as a Chinese-language linguist working for a U.S. government contractor.

The Language Flagship’s programs rise to the challenge of today’s global society by creating a cadre of well-informed, polished professionals with superior language expertise, and I’m proud to be one of them.

Utah Hosts Language Summit

Following on the success of three state Language Summits held in 2007 (see Discourse, Fall 2007, p. 3), the state of Utah hosted its own effort, fashioned on the model set forth by The Language Flagship. On Sept. 16, 2008, the Governor’s World Language Summit brought to Salt Lake City a cross section of educators, government officials, businesspeople, and other stakeholders interested in advancing language issues in the state. Governor Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., kicked off the event by outlining the importance of international education and language acquisition to Utah and its citizens. During the rest of the day, working groups made up of business and industry representatives discussed their companies’ language needs for successful domestic and global operations. Insights garnered from the broad base of summit attendees will set the foundation for a state plan for language education. These results also will significantly inform discussion at the January 2009 International Education Summit sponsored by the Utah State Office of Education. The Language Flagship proudly co-organized the Governor’s World Language Summit in Utah with the Chinese Flagship Center at Brigham Young University and the Utah State Office of Education.
New Nonprofit Group Expands Support for Language Learning

The Language Flagship Group, a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, aims to advance a national movement toward the more effective learning of foreign languages in the United States. It supports the efforts of The Language Flagship by building a broad base of independent funding and activities across the educational and business communities. This group is intended to bring together member universities, K–12 educational institutions, businesses, and other leaders of change to effect the biggest shift in language and international education to date. The organization’s agenda of program development, implementation, research, and diffusion operates at local, state, and national levels.

The Language Flagship Group is organized in three distinct components:

- The Language Flagship Partnership Group is a membership-based organization that comprises educational institutions and affiliated organizations committed to changing the landscape of language and international education in the United States.
- The Language Flagship Policy and Studies Group conducts and disseminates research and advances knowledge designed to improve language learning at all stages of education.
- The Language Flagship Business Alliance Group draws on the strength of the business sector to create a U.S. workforce prepared to address the global challenges of the 21st century.

“The Language Flagship Group aims to provide an unbiased, independent venue where objective experts from both the demand and supply sides of the equation can discuss and collaborate on how best to address our international education, foreign language, and cultural challenges,” says founding board member Ambassador Michael Lemmon. “Active participation from the local, state, as well as national levels will be critical to the success of such an effort.”

Flagship Mission

The Language Flagship leads the nation in designing, supporting, and implementing a new paradigm for advanced language education. Through an innovative partnership among the federal government, education, and business, The Language Flagship seeks to graduate students who will take their place among the next generation of global professionals, commanding a superior level of proficiency in one of many languages critical to U.S. competitiveness and security.

What Do We Do?

Flagship Centers offer students intensive language instruction to enhance their academic degrees, graduating students with superior-level language proficiency. Programs are available at undergraduate and post–bachelor’s degree levels and include periods of rigorous language and cultural immersion at Overseas Flagship Centers. The Language Flagship also funds a select number of pilot K–12 programs designed to provide an articulated path of language instruction for students from elementary school through college.

Flagship graduates leverage their superior language and cultural skills in various careers, offering an intercultural perspective to employers in the federal and state governments, global businesses, and nongovernmental organizations.

A new brand for a new language paradigm

The Language Flagship is a partnership among government, education, and business. Our logo comprises a blue diamond for government, the creator and seminal funder of this program; a gold diamond for business, a key beneficiary and supporter of this effort; and a green diamond for education. Education is at the center of this collaborative effort, responding to advanced language demands in both government and business. Two converging white lines thrust across all three partners, leading the nation to a new paradigm for advanced language education.

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