



THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

Creating Global Professionals

Discourse

NEWSLETTER OF THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

FALL 2011

Advancing Foreign Language Proficiency and Intercultural Savvy in the Global Knowledge Economy

Michael M. Crow

The increasing interconnectedness and integration of societies and economies worldwide makes all of us more and more interdependent. The nations of the world are confronted with an extraordinary array of challenges, from endemic regional conflicts to international terrorism to worldwide health crises to the depletion of natural resources. In the midst of this new default condition of disequilibrium, the United States today finds itself one nation among many competing in a global knowledge economy that, until recently, seemed to offer only boundless promise. Within this larger sociopolitical matrix, institutions, organizations, and private-sector enterprises — many construed multinationally — operate within a web of dynamic systems on so many scales that few among us even glimpse their shifting interrelationships. And while the diffusion of information and ideas has become instantaneous, opportunities for misunderstanding and conflict proliferate exponentially as by-products of knowledge are increasingly disseminated worldwide in milliseconds.

Against this backdrop of massively accelerating complexity, the National Security Education Program was established in 1991 to serve the needs of U.S. national security and economic competitiveness through a series of initiatives that represent strategic partnerships among the federal government, business and industry, and academia. Among its signature initiatives is The Language Flagship, which, through participating colleges and universities in the United States and overseas, offers rigorous advanced training in languages and cultures critical to the international arena. The attainment of superior-level proficiency in critical languages including Arabic, Chinese, Hindi and Urdu, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, and Turkish is coupled with training in cultural competency. Overseas immersion programs feature formal



Students and staff gather at the ASU Chinese Language Flagship Center.

coursework as well as individualized tutorials and internships with nongovernmental organizations, government agencies, or the private sector.

The Arizona State University (ASU) Chinese Language Flagship Program, for example, is one of 26 Flagship centers and programs nationwide transforming language education to address global needs. In 2010, six ASU undergraduates represented the first cohort to spend a year in China under the auspices of this program. Now, in 2011, the ASU Chinese Flagship has more than 40 students. To date, The Language Flagship has sent more than 400 students abroad for intensive language programs, with more than 200 students traveling to China. ASU Chinese Language Flagship students enroll in a semester of coursework at the prestigious Nanjing University, then spend a second term to undertake internships in their respective fields. Just as international students studying at American institutions compete in classes comprised primarily of native speakers of English, our students at Nanjing are enrolled in regular undergraduate and graduate courses with Chinese students. Prior to their departure, our students devote themselves to intensive, transdisciplinary coursework at ASU taught in Chinese. Most are double majors combining the baccalaureate Flagship track

Continued on page 2 ➤

Continuing to Grow K–12 Investments

At the recent 20th anniversary celebration of the National Security Education Program, Dr. Clifford Stanley, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, reaffirmed the commitment of the Department of Defense (DoD) to the idea that foreign language learning is of central importance to America's future and, notably, must begin with younger learners. The DoD has long supported foreign language learning, but the DoD leadership has increasingly called attention to the importance of linguistic and cultural training for citizens of all ages over the past year.

In line with this commitment, The Language Flagship is undertaking several new initiatives to enhance K–12 foreign language education this year. In September, Brigham Young University (BYU); the Utah State Office of Education (USOE); and a national consortium of state education agencies, local education agencies, and Flagship Centers were awarded a new Flagship grant to develop a national model for K–12 Chinese language learning. The work of this consortium complements the ongoing dissemination of curriculum models developed by Flagship K–12 programs in the public school districts of Portland, Oregon (Chinese), and Dearborn, Michigan (Arabic).

The consortium will develop programs, enhance curriculum, and improve instruction with state,



Portland Public School students practice their Chinese reading skills.

Continued on page 3 ➤

Advancing ... (from page 1)

in Chinese with another field, ranging from history to sustainability to finance. One student interested in architecture, for example, interned at an architecture firm in Shanghai with the dual objective of attaining proficiency in Chinese and initiating the potential for a multinational career.

As a university president, I recognize that foreign language proficiency is sometimes a particular challenge for many American students who, through the influence of some peculiar strain of insularity that still undeniably informs our national culture, often are satisfied to meet minimum foreign language requirements. While such complacency may be a lagging indicator of the isolationism of a bygone era, our inclination to regard English as a viable lingua franca



ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Madeline Spring, director of and professor of Chinese in the ASU Chinese Language Flagship program, works with a Flagship student.

encourages us to assume that for the most part we need have no concern with the languages and cultures of Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. Equally culpable may be the tedium of traditional approaches to foreign language instruction: for students capable of rapidly mastering and integrating a broad array of complex and interrelated disciplines, wearing headphones in a language lab for a few hours each week during freshman and sophomore years may no longer prove sufficiently challenging. At ASU, we have long since moved beyond this outdated model and now seek to apply what we have learned from our experience with the Flagship model to languages other than Chinese.

Sufficient focus on languages and cultures is sometimes overshadowed by the imperative for institutions to advance education in the STEM fields — that is, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics — as well as expectations for the development of curricula



CAITLIN KLEIN

ASU finance and Chinese major Caitlin Klein experiences Chinese culture during her overseas study at Qingdao University in China.

tailored in response to the demands of the workforce. But the potential for educated citizens to contribute to the economic competitiveness of our nation as well as the resolution of the intractable problems that beset humanity will not depend exclusively on scientific, technological, and quantitative literacy. Even though such knowledge is absolutely critical, our capacity to respond to the complex challenges associated with maintaining and improving the quality of life across this diverse and crowded planet remains diminished unless we educate individuals capable of appreciating cultural nuance and communicating insights across borders.

In an era when learning has become the single most critical adaptive function for individuals in societies around the world, we must discard outworn assumptions about what is sufficient in our traditional pedagogies. In a world rife with dynamics and stresses and conflicts unimaginable only a few short decades ago, I would argue that we generally underperform when it comes to developing our capacities to value other cultures or even to understand one another meaningfully. The Language Flagship offers both a new paradigm in language education and new possibilities for intercultural communication and understanding.

For colleges and universities seeking to advance broader social and economic outcomes while maximizing the potential for success in their students, I see few better investments than the implementation of a Flagship program in any of the languages critical to our national security and economic competitiveness.



Michael M. Crow became president of Arizona State University (ASU) in 2002. Under Crow's leadership, ASU has established more than a dozen new transdisciplinary schools, including the Chinese Language Flagship.

Word from Flagship

Sam Eisen
Director
The Language Flagship



As a graduate student living in Moscow in 1990–91, I witnessed firsthand the dissolution of the Soviet system. My fluency in Russian language opened the door to endless conversations with Russians who shared their analyses of the daily changes.

The Language Flagship creates opportunities for undergraduate students from all disciplines (not only language and literature) to gain advanced proficiency in a critical language and participate in a capstone year overseas, gaining deep knowledge of a culture and society that will serve the nation well. As the pace of global change accelerates, training young leaders with this depth and perspective is fundamental.

This fall, The Language Flagship expands its scope to more critical regions and a broader student base. Recognizing the importance of Turkey and Brazil on the world stage, The Language Flagship has awarded grants to launch a Turkish Flagship program at Indiana University, Bloomington, and a Portuguese Flagship program at the University of Georgia, Athens.

Also this fall, Pilot Flagship/Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs were launched at Arizona State University (ASU), Georgia Institute of Technology, and North Georgia State College and University to extend Flagship-style education to ROTC students. Students in the pilot program will fulfill ROTC and major requirements while gaining high-level proficiency in Chinese language and completing a capstone year in China. The Language Flagship will work closely with university partners and the ROTC commands to ensure that this program succeeds in producing officers who have a deep understanding of China and a broad international perspective.

The success of these ambitious initiatives depends on the support of campus partners that integrate a new paradigm of language and cultural education. For example, under the leadership of University President Michael Crow, ASU has operated the Chinese Language Flagship since 2007 and implemented a Pilot Chinese Flagship/ROTC program in fall 2011.

Continuing to Grow ... (from page 1)

local, and school partners nationwide. It aims to offer three K–12 pathways to Chinese learning: elementary immersion, early secondary, and late secondary. Each pathway will include traditional in-class instruction, summertime and overseas study, and benchmark proficiency goals and assessments at specific intervals — all tailored to enable students to reach Advanced-level language proficiency on the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scale by high school graduation.

In another effort supporting K–12 language education, The Language Flagship sponsored the K–12 Critical Language Census, the first comprehensive survey of critical language instruction at public and private high schools in the United States. Conducted by the American Councils for International Education in 2010, the survey produced a database of U.S. high schools teaching critical Flagship languages: Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Russian, Swahili, and several Central Eurasian Turkic languages. Profile data were collected from more than 28,000 high schools nationwide (91.8% of all U.S. high schools).

The surprising result of the K–12 Critical Language Census was that critical language instruction at the high school level is available in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Nationwide, 3,698 high school programs teach critical languages, employ 3,679 full- and part-time teachers, and enroll approximately 221,000 students annually. As a whole, the K–12 Critical Language Census provides Flagship Centers with a key resource to target national recruiting efforts. For Flagship investments in K–12 education, the census identifies state, local, and school partners that might potentially adopt the developing Flagship K–12 instructional models.

By implementing individual K–12 programs and planning for the national dissemination of K–12 language curricula, The Language Flagship is developing a national model of a well-articulated, replicable pathway to professional proficiency by college graduation.



Portland Public School students present to their classmates in Chinese.

Op-ed: Flagship Phase 2

Michael Nugent
Director, National Security Education Program

Five years ago, when the National Security Education Program shifted the focus of The Language Flagship from graduate to undergraduate students, many language professionals said that undergraduates would never reach a language proficiency of American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Superior or Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Level 3. In addition, many doubted that undergraduate students of all majors could systematically reach professional proficiency in four modalities (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) in difficult, less commonly taught languages. Similarly skeptical, many of the early Flagship programs planned for high levels of attrition, expecting that only a select few students would achieve professional language proficiency.

It turns out that such assumptions were based on more traditional approaches to language teaching. We now know that it is possible for whole groups of undergraduate students to achieve high levels of language proficiency across all four modalities. Instead of attrition, we see persistence. The reason is that the Flagship program design fits all the criteria of effective undergraduate education: high levels of student engagement, close student–faculty relationships, project-based learning, and structured learning communities. The Language Flagship has proven that if you set high expectations and create opportunities for students to meet those expectations, students respond positively. Time and again, students tell us that they are attracted to Flagship programs because they promise real outcomes in return for dedication and hard work.

After 5 years of experience with undergraduate Flagship programs, we have “proof of concept.” The Language Flagship now has a process for certifying successful Flagship undergraduates who have completed all of the undergraduate requirements, which include overseas study and attainment of the equivalent of at least Level 3 on the ILR scale. Like Flagship graduate fellows, Flagship-certified undergraduates are attractive to employers in the public and private sectors, even in a tight job market. Now that this goal has been proven attainable, Flagship programs must continue to grow and expand to meet the needs of an increasingly globalized world.



CABLE RISON

National Security Education Program Celebrates 20 Years



Boren (left) and Stanley (right) pose with Boren Scholar Meghan Iverson, 2011 Howard Baker Jr. Award winner, at the 2011 Boren Symposium held in conjunction with the NSEP 20th anniversary celebration.

KAVIYAH SARDARI

On September 8, 2011, Senator David L. Boren, president of the University of Oklahoma and author of the David L. Boren National Security Education Act of 1991, and Dr. Clifford Stanley, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, addressed Boren Fellows and Scholars, members of the National Security Education Board, and esteemed colleagues in international education at a gathering in Washington, D.C., celebrating 20 years of the National Security Education Program (NSEP). Both speakers highlighted the importance of language skills and cultural understanding to developing international partnerships and improving U.S. national security. They also praised NSEP for its commitment to providing linguistic and cultural training to American students through critical initiatives such as The Language Flagship.

In 20 years, NSEP has grown from one initiative (Boren Scholarships and Fellowships) to eight critical initiatives with the support and backing of institutes of higher education, champions in the field of foreign language education, and the U.S. Congress. Over the past decade, The Language Flagship has grown from a small post-baccalaureate program into a robust undergraduate and graduate program with 26 Flagship centers and programs in nine critical languages. Next year, The Language Flagship will showcase accomplishments and innovations with a series of meetings and presentations entitled Results 2012. NSEP is unique in its support of critical languages, emphasis on long-term academic overseas study, and rigorous proficiency standards; NSEP students are high achievers, well positioned to be at the forefront of the global workforce. Learn more about NSEP at www.nsep.gov.

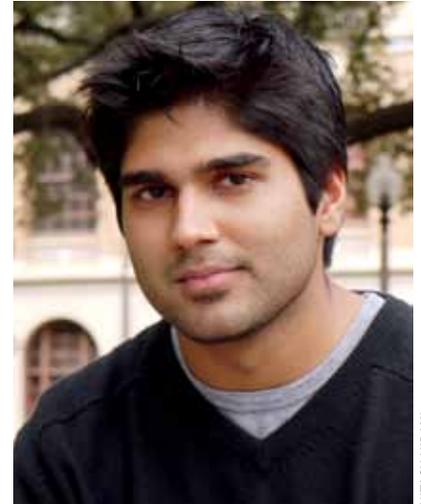
Undergraduate Chooses the Challenge of Flagship

For Nitash Hirani, a senior at the University of Texas, Austin (UT–Austin), learning about the Hindi Urdu Flagship was “the deciding factor” in selecting his first-choice college. With a double major in finance and Asian cultures and languages, Hirani wishes to pursue a career that will encompass both interests. “UT–Austin’s [top-rated] business education and the Hindi Urdu Flagship Program would give me a niche for business development and management in South Asian countries,” says Hirani.

Founded in 2000 as a post-baccalaureate program, The Language Flagship began to shift its focus to undergraduates in 2006. Now, Flagship’s 26 domestic Flagship Centers attract extremely qualified U.S. high school graduates on the basis of Flagship graduates’

reputation for achieving professional-level linguistic and cultural proficiency in a critical foreign language. “I was drawn to this program because it provides me with an edge while connecting me with my roots,” explains Hirani.

“This is truly a superior program,” Hirani says. “Beginning with almost no experience in the two languages, I [began to] learn to read and write both within one semester.” Continuing to rise to the challenge, Hirani looks forward to the long-term benefits of his rigorous study. “The Hindi Urdu Flagship teaches not only Hindi and Urdu,” he explains, “but also the skills to pick up languages at an accelerated rate.”



Hindi Urdu Flagship student Nitash Hirani

NITASH HIRANI

Flagship Centers

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>Arabic
Michigan State University
University of Maryland, College Park
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
University of Oklahoma
University of Texas, Austin
Alexandria University, Egypt*</p> | <p>Persian
University of Maryland, College Park
Tajik State National University, Tajikistan*</p> |
| <p>Chinese
Arizona State University**
Brigham Young University
Hunter College
Indiana University, Bloomington
San Francisco State University
University of Mississippi
University of Oregon
University of Rhode Island
Western Kentucky University
Nanjing University, China*</p> | <p>Portuguese
University of Georgia, Athens
São Paulo State University, Brazil*</p> |
| <p>Hindi Urdu
University of Texas, Austin
Jaipur Hindi Center, India*
Lucknow Urdu Center, India*</p> | <p>Russian
Bryn Mawr College
Portland State University
University of California, Los Angeles
University of Wisconsin, Madison
Saint Petersburg State University, Russia*</p> |
| <p>Korean
University of Hawai’i, Mānoa
Korea University, South Korea*</p> | <p>Swahili
Indiana University, Bloomington
State University of Zanzibar, Tanzania*</p> |
| <p>Pilot Flagship/ROTC Centers
Arizona State University
Georgia Institute of Technology
North Georgia State College and University</p> | <p>Turkish
Indiana University, Bloomington</p> |

The 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.



THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

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*Overseas Flagship Center
**Flagship Center that also offers a Pilot ROTC program