The Broader Impact of The Language Flagship

Since its inception in 2002, The Language Flagship set its sights high: to transform language learning in the United States. It has pursued this goal over the past 10 years by spreading the Flagship principles and curriculum at its grantee campuses and leading the movement toward a nationwide network of higher-education institutions committed to advanced-level language learning. Other language programs on Flagship campuses already have implemented Flagship methods without direct support from The Language Flagship.

Inspired by the energy and success of two resident Flagship programs, several language programs at the University of Texas at Austin (UT–Austin) have adopted core Flagship principles. “As of 2007, UT–Austin has two Language Flagship Centers: one for Arabic, and the other for Hindi and Urdu,” says Esther Raizen, associate dean for research in the College of Liberal Arts. “The Arabic Flagship Program is fully integrated with the regular Arabic program at UT–Austin and as such has helped shape the Arabic program in all its facets, from curriculum development to assessment to instructional strategies and teacher training. The Language Flagship has likewise affected the other programs in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies (Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish), charting new paths in the development of instructional materials and pedagogy training of graduate students as well as in the training of undergraduate students.”

The Flagship influence at UT–Austin also is evident in the Texas Language Center, where Thomas Garza and colleagues promote and organize intensive courses of instruction, on campus and overseas, to mirror the saturated instruction of the Flagship programs. The College of Liberal Arts at UT–Austin now offers intensive language courses in Arabic, French, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Persian, Russian and Turkish that allow students to attain a higher level of proficiency in 1 year than they would in 2 years in the normal language track. “With fewer financial resources available to support the educational missions of language departments, we have instituted a rethinking of past intensive methods of instruction for our language programs in order to create innovative models of instruction to revitalize traditional foreign language study,” says Garza. “We have seen great initial results, including an unprecedented level of retention in our programs as well as high levels of language proficiency in shorter time frames. While considerably more longitudinal studies are required, the initial results have been very encouraging, not only for the health of the language program itself but for the goal of attending to increased proficiency gains in our domestic and abroad programs as well.”

Students of Japanese at the University of Oregon (UO) enjoy Flagship-style approaches in the form of advanced content and proficiency testing. Articulated language classes, content-rich curriculum, and a year of direct enrollment at Meiji University in Tokyo are other elements of the Japanese Global Scholars program borrowed directly from the UO Chinese Flagship Program.

Inspired by the success of the Chinese Flagship and Japanese Global Scholars program, three other UO language programs have decided to adopt Flagship principles: French, German, and

Rhode Island Launches Language Roadmap

In December 2011, representatives from Rhode Island’s business, education, and government sectors gathered to assess and define the present and future need for language and cultural skills in the state’s workforce at the Rhode Island Language Summit. Sponsored by The Language Flagship in partnership with the University of Rhode Island (URI) Chinese Language Flagship Partner Program, the URI International Engineering Program, and the URI College of Arts and Sciences, the summit yielded state-level recommendations and a Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence.

To generate public awareness about the initiative, the Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence was launched at the Rhode Island State House on June 8, 2012. At this event, URI College of Arts and Sciences Dean Winifred Brownell welcomed attendees, introduced the Language Roadmap process and purpose, and highlighted the importance of community involvement. Senator Jack Reed (D-Rhode Island) commented on the increasing need for language skills and cultural understanding to help ensure long-term national security, prosperity, and peace.

A primary aim of the Rhode Island Language Roadmap is to enhance the language and cultural
The Broader Impact ... (from page 1)

Also at PSU, Vice Provost for International Affairs Patricia Wetzel (professor of Japanese) and WLL Department Chair Jennifer Perlmutter (associate professor of French) are enthusiastic about developing new language-across-the-curriculum courses to better meet the needs of advanced speakers of world languages, including heritage speakers. “The Language Flagship model has provided a methodology for moving language instruction outside of the traditional language class and integrating it into the fabric of the university,” says Perlmutter. “It is a transformative change.”

The Flagship model integrates intensive communicative practice with a focus on language in context. Essential elements include guided interventions through articulated sequences, content-based learning, regular proficiency testing, and mandatory high-level overseas immersion. The Flagship vision is that all campuses and language programs can enable students to achieve advanced-level proficiency and that all students can achieve professional-level proficiency with a critical overseas program element to their education. At events like the upcoming Increasing Language Proficiency at the Postsecondary Level Using Flagship Principles workshop (see ACTFL Preconvention Workshop, page 3), the directors of domestic Flagship programs will share their experiences in an effort to continue to spread the word about the Flagship approach to language learning. The campus programs highlighted here find that the adoption of Flagship strategies for language teaching allows them to effectively replicate Flagship outcomes with limited investment. The hope and intent is that other institutions will follow their lead and achieve similar successes.

Spanish. In fall 2012, UO launches the Global Scholars language programs, the heart of which is a 450-resident Global Scholars Hall for students of Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Spanish. These language programs have recognized the success of The Language Flagship and are incorporating the essential principles—content-rich curriculum, language sequences, overseas direct enrollment, proficiency testing, and immersion-style living—that can enable students to reach professional-level proficiency by graduation. UO has created an environment that promotes the dynamic exchange of language and culture between programs; within the multilingual, culturally immersive residence hall; and among the entire university community. “The new Global Scholars programs are a very exciting development here at UO, and response has been excellent,” says Carl Falsgraf, principal investigator of the UO Center for Applied Second Language Studies.

The Portland State University (PSU) World Languages and Literatures (WLL) Department has implemented a Russian Flagship program and is working on similar programs in Japanese and other languages. The Flagship elements that have attracted the most interest from these language programs are content-based instruction and language-across-the-curriculum courses aligned with the university’s general education program. After a 2012 workshop aimed at sharing Flagship principles (cohosted by PSU’s WLL Department and the Middle Eastern Studies Center), workshop participant Anousha Sedighi, associate professor of Persian, said, “The Flagship presentation was extremely useful for ideas about how to incorporate content-based materials into our courses. I expect to be able to apply many of these concepts in my own classes as the Persian program develops.”

The state of Utah is developing an articulated K–12 Chinese dual-language immersion program and leading a coalition of states and local education agencies in spreading the model nationwide. The energy of this initiative is captured well in the editorial by Ruta Couet of the South Carolina Department of Education. With Flagship sponsorship, the Utah K–12 Flagship Consortium provides a support network as well as curriculum and training resources to improve language programs in any region of the country.

In fall 2012, The Language Flagship is concentrating on outreach and dissemination at the postsecondary level with the Results 2012 meeting (sponsored by Hunter College in New York City) and a workshop on Flagship-style methods (in partnership with the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages in Philadelphia). To prove the validity of the Flagship model, we must show that intensive language learning is possible for students of any major, on any campus in the country. Examples in this issue highlight merely the start of this movement to implement a new paradigm for advanced language education nationwide.

Word from Flagship

Sam Eisen
Director
The Language Flagship
Op-ed:
Flagship K–12 National Dual-Language Immersion Model
Ruta Couet
Education Associate for World Languages, South Carolina Department of Education

Sponsored by The Language Flagship and headed by Brigham Young University (BYU) and the Utah State Office of Education, the Utah K–12 Flagship Consortium is navigating uncharted territory in creating a ground-breaking Chinese dual-language immersion framework. Five state departments of education—Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and South Carolina—have partnered with the consortium to develop a national model of a well-articulated, replicable K–16 pathway that aims to prepare a generation of plurilingual professionals for the realities of the 21st century. The Language Flagship’s vision assembles an unusual cast of characters: university professors, state and local education agency personnel, and school administrators and teachers. Can these consortium partners develop a seamless K–16 experience that culminates in the achievement of professional-level language proficiency with undergraduate Flagship programs? They are taking a leap of faith, believing that it not only can be done but also must be done.

As South Carolina’s representative to the consortium, I can attest to the need for better world language programs in our schools. South Carolina will need a plurilingual citizenry to compete globally. The state job market depends heavily on foreign investment and U.S. subsidiaries of foreign companies, and the state is home to Fort Jackson (the largest army training center in the United States), the Charleston Naval Complex, and Shaw Air Force Base. The most cost-effective way to achieve a plurilingual citizenry is to make dual-language immersion programs a bona fide option in schools. To a small state with few world language coordinators and a limited infrastructure for curriculum and professional development, the task might appear overwhelming. However, the road to proficiency looks decidedly less daunting with access to the Flagship program model, curriculum, and training as well as a network of determined, committed educators across the country.

What does the focused vision of the Utah K–12 Flagship Consortium mean for the students of South Carolina and other partner states? They can expect to benefit from the numerous well-documented gains in literacy, math, problem solving, and divergent thinking that are associated with language learning as well as the national successes of the Flagship model.

Rhode Island ... (from page 1)
capabilities of its students, making them more competitive in the global economy. The URI International Engineering Program currently allows students to study both engineering and a foreign language and to apply their technical expertise while improving their language skills in internships overseas. This approach enriches the high-level engineering training of students who will be working in a global business environment after graduation. The Rhode Island Language Roadmap envisions all of Rhode Island’s students having this type of opportunity and every high school graduate in the state being proficient in English and at least one foreign language by 2030.

The success of a state Language Roadmap strongly depends on community support and enthusiasm. If media coverage is any indication, then Rhode Island is taking great strides toward a successful language education plan. Coverage in The Providence Journal calls for local businesses to contribute to funds that would enable schools to start language education programs, and Providence Business News interviewed local bilingual business and education leaders in support of the initiative.

The Rhode Island initiative is the fifth state Language Roadmap sponsored by The Language Flagship. The Language Flagship is committed to supporting these and other state-level initiatives to develop the multilingual workforce necessary for American economic competitiveness and national security.

The Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence seeks the statewide collaboration of leaders in education, business, and government. For more information or to get involved, please contact Erin Papa at (401) 874-5566 or ri.language roadmap@gmail.com.

ACTFL Preconvention Workshop:
Increasing Postsecondary Language Proficiency
On Nov. 15, 2012, in partnership with American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the directors of six Flagship programs will conduct a workshop entitled Increasing Language Proficiency at the Postsecondary Level Using Flagship Principles. They will highlight practices that can be used on any campus to create Flagship-style language learning relevant to all disciplines and content areas and will explain how their undergraduate programs were redesigned to enable students to achieve the ACTFL Superior level of proficiency by graduation. Participants will discuss how to implement the essential Flagship components on their own campuses. Topics of special interest will include integrated proficiency assessments, content-based instruction, effective elements of intensive summer programs, and high-level overseas immersion experiences. In-depth discussion will address how to overcome the challenges of overseas study, including directed language instruction, direct enrollment, and internships. Presenters will include Diana Murphy of the University of Wisconsin, Mahmoud Al-Batal of the University of Texas at Austin, Sandra Freels of Portland State University, Carl Falsgraf of the University of Oregon, Dana Bourgerie of Brigham Young University, and Maria Lekic and Dan Davidson of the American Councils for International Education. To participate in this workshop, register through the ACTFL website (http://www.actfl.org; discounts are available through Oct. 24, 2012) or on site. For more information, call (508) 743-8561 or email ACTFL@xpressreg.net.
Grateful Grad Gives Back

A 2010 University of Oregon graduate with bachelor’s degrees in Asian studies and business administration, Christina Li is working as the K–12 Chinese Flagship coordinator of Mandarin Chinese Immersion programs in the Portland (Oregon) Public Schools (PPS) system. The broad goal of PPS immersion is to demonstrate that Chinese immersion in elementary school with continued study in middle and high school can produce large numbers of graduates who will have advanced-level Chinese language skills as they begin college. Motivated by her time abroad on The Language Flagship Capstone program in Nanjing, China, Li uses her skills to give back to the movement that helped her achieve her own language goals. “To be able to help others achieve their goals through my work with this program is inspirational,” says Li. Coleading the PPS middle school summer program in Yunnan, China, Li shares her Flagship experience and encourages students to continue studies in a Flagship undergraduate program. This fall, four 2012 PPS graduates are enrolled in the University of Oregon Flagship Program.

Student enrollment in the PPS Mandarin Chinese Immersion program grew nearly 25% from fall 2010 to 991 students in fall 2011. The program adds two schools in fall 2012, bringing the total to three elementary, three middle, and three high schools. What’s more, the program goals reach far beyond Oregon. “People come from all over the United States to visit us as we are the nation’s first K–12 Chinese Flagship Program,” says Li. “We share with educators and other programs our curriculum, challenges, and lessons learned.”

Chinese Flagship graduate Christina Li

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 graduates 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 professional-level language proficiency. Programs 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.

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An initiative of the National Security Education Program

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