



International Cooperation Makes Arabic Flagship Capstone Possible

ROTC Flagship Students Qualify for Capstone Year



Arabic Flagship Capstone students and instructors visit Oualidia, a Moroccan coastal village.

Arabic Flagship students completing their capstone year witness international cooperation first hand, daily, as part of their overseas experience. In July 2013, the Arabic Flagship Overseas Center managed by American Councils for International Education was relocated from Alexandria, Egypt, to the Arab-American Language Institute in Morocco (AALIM) because of safety concerns related to political insecurity. Located in Meknes, one of the ancient Moroccan capitals, AALIM already had ties to The Language Flagship as the site of the Summer Arabic Overseas Flagship Program.

Despite the center's relocation to another country, the Arabic Flagship Overseas Capstone did not lose its ties to Egypt. The program remains under the academic direction of Alexandria University Professor Mohamed Abdelsalam Elswawi, and each semester, three or four instructors from Alexandria teach alongside Moroccan colleagues at AALIM. This arrangement is made possible through Elswawi's coordination with AALIM Academic Director Driss Cherkaoui and has reaped great benefits for the program.

Elswawi is proud of the "great cooperation between professors from different cultures" that

has contributed to program development. Even though both Morocco and Egypt are North African countries with a Muslim majority, their cultures vary significantly—for example, in clothing, food, holiday traditions, and celebrations. Exposure to both cultures helps students understand that the Arabic-speaking world is not a monolith. "Egyptians and Moroccans are not identical in their traditions or politics, so the combination exposes the students to a wider range of experience," says Cherkaoui. For students of language, the differences are most evident in the dialects of Arabic spoken by each nationality. Students at AALIM learn both the Moroccan dialect (Darija) and the Egyptian dialect (more widely used in Arabic media) alongside Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Darija allows students to navigate daily life in Morocco, whereas the Egyptian dialect (which they practice with Egyptian language partners via Skype) allows them to interact with their Egyptian faculty and resident director.

Although challenging, learning two dialects simultaneously immerses students in the reality of the Arab world. "You need to master MSA. But to function well in a given country, you need to have more than a passing familiarity with the local

In 2011, The Language Flagship launched a pilot Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) initiative to address the strategic linguistic and cultural needs of future U.S. military officers. The original grants were awarded to only three institutions: Arizona State University (ASU), Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech), and University of North Georgia (UNG). However, support from the Air Force and Army ROTCs and the National Security Education Program (NSEP) has enabled ROTC involvement across the Flagship programs. Since 2012, qualified ROTC students have received ROTC scholarships to study Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, Russian, Swahili, and Turkish in at least nine domestic Flagship programs and NSEP support to participate in intensive summer language and Flagship Overseas Capstone programs. While overseas, ROTC Flagship students maintain student status and do not perform any work for the U.S. government.

Flagship participation is especially complex for an ROTC cadet, mainly in terms of time management. According to Christopher Jespersen, director of the ROTC Flagship Program at UNG, "With all the demands of the ROTC program already fixed, students have to figure out, on top of their military duties, how to handle the challenge of a demanding academic program—one that involves a huge time commitment



An ROTC Flagship cadet practices writing Chinese characters during the Summer Language Institute at UNG.

AALIM

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH GEORGIA

International Cooperation ... (from page 1)



Arabic Flagship Overseas Capstone students visit the Roman ruins of Volubilis, an archeological site about 1 hour from Meknes. The partly excavated city once demarcated the southern fringe of the Roman Empire and now is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site.

dialect," says Cherkaoui. "Circumstances have expanded [the students'] skills in ways that may not have come about otherwise."

Sonia Shiri, academic director of the Arabic Flagship Program at the University of Arizona, agrees. What started as a tricky situation because of the sudden program relocation "turned into an asset" because, despite the linguistic challenges, Arabic Flagship students garner a distinct advantage by being able to study two dialects of Arabic along with MSA. Results indicate that students have embraced the challenge, too; among the Arabic Flagship undergraduates who completed their capstone in 2014, 18 of 18 achieved Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Level 3 in speaking proficiency, and 11 of 18 attained ILR 3 in reading and listening.

This international collaboration also has benefitted Moroccan and Egyptian instructors. When the program was first relocated, Moroccan faculty at AALIM taught only Darija, and more experienced faculty from Alexandria continued as primary instructors for MSA and the Egyptian dialect. However, over the past 2 years, several Moroccan instructors have been assisting Egyptian colleagues in class, and a few also have traveled to the United States for a semester of training in Flagship methods. Ali Abdeddine, an Arabic instructor at AALIM, spent fall 2014 at the University of Oklahoma Arabic Flagship Program. He since has become one of the first Moroccan staff to teach MSA to Flagship Overseas Capstone students at AALIM. "The cooperation between the teachers is beneficial to the students and possibly produces better results," says Abdeddine, "because the students want to understand Arabic culture in general through the Arabic language."

For the Egyptians, living in Morocco and working with Moroccan colleagues is an enriching

experience. Radwa El Barouni, an Arabic instructor from Alexandria, says that this opportunity for cultural and professional exchange was made possible only by the relocation of the Arabic Flagship Overseas Center to Morocco. "Both sides are learning from each other different things," she says, and for the Egyptians, that means stepping out of their comfort zones and being exposed to a different culture and dialect.

This learning process is aided by mutual efforts to integrate all faculty members, Moroccan and Egyptian, and cultivate a sense of community. For example, regular meetings are scheduled for all Flagship instructors to facilitate what Elsawi calls an "exchange of experiences between teachers." Professional development workshops provide additional opportunities for instructors to work together. Shiri, who recently visited and led a workshop at the Arabic Overseas Flagship Center, says, "There's a sense of community among all of the different people who were present at the school ... everybody was at the same table." But this collaboration doesn't end in the classroom. AALIM organizes weekly staff cultural events, like traditional Friday couscous dinners, and the Egyptian faculty reciprocates by organizing restaurant outings throughout the year.

In the end, despite all the hurdles, everyone seems to agree: The international cooperation that has developed in the Arabic Flagship Overseas Capstone program is the best possible result to emerge from an initially challenging situation. "We're fortunate to have very committed people involved," says Armine Saryan, senior program manager at American Councils. "It's just a very good synergy." Students are not only exposed to dual cultures and dialects but also inspired by their intercultural, international team of instructors—a team of Moroccans and Egyptians who, Cherkaoui says, "are doing their very best to make the students' experience an enriching and fulfilling one."



Egyptian and Moroccan faculty and staff gather at the Arabic Flagship Capstone closing ceremony in spring 2014. Back row (left to right): Bassim Lahyan, Amr Mady, Ahmed AbdelSalam, Mohamed AbdelSalam, Essam Moustapha, Kareema Guaddi, and Radwa Barouni. Front row: Faiza Sadek-Stolz and Robert Stolz.

Word from Flagship

Sam Eisen
Director
The Language Flagship



INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

In a world where study abroad and overseas immersion programs in strategic languages have become more challenging to conduct and manage, necessity is driving innovation and development in unexpected ways.

The relocation of the Arabic Flagship Overseas Capstone program from Alexandria University in Egypt to the Arab-American Language Institute in Morocco (AALIM) is a prime example. By maintaining ties and good relationships with colleagues from Alexandria University, the AALIM program benefits from the experience of the Egyptian faculty who developed the Flagship curriculum plus the energy of the Moroccan faculty, who are developing innovative advanced courses in the Moroccan dialect for Arabic Flagship students. In this multicultural instructional environment, Arabic Flagship students succeed in achieving professional proficiency in Modern Standard Arabic as well as the Egyptian and Moroccan dialects.

Similarly, the Russian Flagship Center in Almaty, Kazakhstan, draws on the expertise and curricular developments of the Russian Flagship faculty at Saint Petersburg State University, Russia, by adapting successful Flagship materials for use at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University.

Finding a suitable immersion environment for the Persian Flagship Capstone has been challenging. This year, the University of Maryland, College Park, initiated a domestic simulated immersion program to meet this need. The four Persian Flagship Capstone students live together in a suite. They spend their days in class and at internships. Recently, the National Security Education Program team observed the students working on an activity with a prominent emigrant children's author and animator to create their own animated version of a traditional Persian fairy tale. In the evenings, a native Persian speaker joins the students for structured conversation practice as well as one-on-one attention. In addition, the suite is wired to receive multiple live feeds of Persian-language television programming, giving the students access to a mix of news, movies, soap operas, and sports to watch in their limited free time.

Our hope is that solutions such as these, which are born of necessity, will lead to greater innovation and cross-cultural collaboration for linguistic and cultural immersion programs.

ROTC Flagship Students ... (from page 1)

to reach certain proficiency goals." Alice Xu, program coordinator at ASU, agrees. "Students are definitely challenged in balancing all their responsibilities for both programs," says Xu.

Despite such complications, seven ROTC Flagship students at Georgia Tech, Portland State University, UNG, and the University of Wisconsin, Madison (UW–Madison), successfully completed the domestic portions of their study during the 2014–15 academic year and qualified for Flagship Overseas Capstone programs. One of these seven students was drawn to the UW–Madison Russian Flagship Program by the opportunity to "spend a year abroad in an intensive language and cultural atmosphere." Asked how he was able to fulfill his dual responsibilities, the student said, "The key to balancing ROTC and Flagship requirements is to plan ahead and work at the beginning of the semester to make sure your class schedule, ROTC schedule, and Flagship schedule work efficiently and effectively together."

Another qualifying ROTC student from the UW–Madison Russian Flagship Program considers the task of balancing responsibilities to be a lesson in professional development. "Both the ROTC and [the] Russian Flagship Program function to create professionals," she says, "and being able to manage a schedule is part of being a professional." A qualifying ROTC student enrolled in the Chinese Flagship Program at UNG agrees that effective time management is essential but has a slightly different view. He believes that the level of difficulty faced in achieving this balance "depends on how committed you are and whether you enjoy what you are doing." The student, who hopes to become a China foreign area officer, says that The Language Flagship offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that "any ROTC student with an interest in language should pursue."

The Language Flagship encourages all domestic Flagship programs to collaborate with ROTC detachments on their campuses to make these kinds of opportunities available to qualified ROTC students.



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH GEORGIA

Chi-Hsuan Catterson is an instructor of Chinese at UNG and founder of UNG's Summer Language Institute.

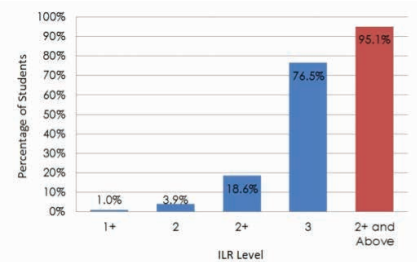
Op-ed: The Proof Is in the Pudding

Michael Nugent
Director, Defense Language and National Security Education Office

According to an old English proverb, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. During the past decade, Flagship directors and staff have worked tirelessly to realize an ambitious goal: to establish proficiency-based language learning for students of all majors at more than 25 institutions of higher education in the United States and 10 partner centers overseas. Collectively, they have revamped first- and second-year language courses to meet higher standards in reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills while creating new advanced-level language curricula that incorporate professional and disciplinary content. They have established, with international partners, new summer intensive language programs (domestic and overseas) and articulated year-long overseas programs that incorporate meaningful internships and academic study. They have created new online academic assessment tools that are being used well beyond The Language Flagship. And they have worked closely with new faculty and teaching staff, both in the United States and overseas, while reviewing overseas language centers. Many Flagship directors also voluntarily perform peer reviews of existing domestic and overseas Flagship Centers and review applications for new centers; some even engage in initiatives to enhance K–12 language learning.

From the beginning, The Language Flagship intended to change the way Americans learn languages. However, it has achieved a grander purpose: a true revitalization of the American undergraduate experience. The proof is in the numbers. A graph of 2014 post-capstone speaking proficiency outcomes shows that more than 95% of students who completed the Flagship Overseas Capstone in 2014 reached Level 2+ and more than 75% reached the target, Level 3 (professional proficiency), on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale for speaking skills (adapted from the National Security Education Program's *2014 Annual Report*).

The more compelling proof is the graduates themselves, who—as anyone who has met them can attest—stand apart from their non-Flagship peers. Flagship graduates of all majors not only impress with their language skills but also are able to navigate the world and engage with diverse peoples and cultures. This unique ability comes from an undergraduate experience fully centered on language arts and culture.



Blended Learning Pilot Brings Chinese to Several New York Schools

The Language Flagship recently awarded support to Hunter College for a 2-year pilot project to create a technology-enhanced blended learning model for K–12 Chinese language education. Der-Lin Chao, director of the Hunter College Chinese Flagship Program, says the K–12 model should "enable high school graduates to enter college-level Chinese language programs with advanced language proficiency." Hunter College will work closely with the Jericho School District in New York "to develop curriculum, provide professional development, and assess students for proficiency gains in all four modalities," says Chao. Materials also will be adapted to student levels. Chao says, "Research shows that K–5 students are adept imitators of speech sounds. Therefore, ... we will focus on building pronunciation foundations and everyday life vocabulary with spoken stories, songs, dialogues, and games. ... Secondary students are motivated when they can use the target language in real-life situations ... [their] focus will be on developing speaking and listening skills." The model will include one-on-one online sessions with a trained native speaker, study plans customized to each student's interests and needs, web exercises for at-home guided learning, and in-classroom group activities. Insights gained from the Hunter K–12 pilot will inform The Language Flagship's soon-to-be-launched Technology Innovation Center, which will coordinate blended and adaptive learning techniques among Flagship programs.



HUNTER COLLEGE

An elementary student in Jericho, New York, practices writing numbers in Chinese.



CABLE RISSON

Language Education Is Necessary in a Globalized World

Iman Ng is a 2012 graduate of the Arabic Flagship Program at the University of Maryland, College Park, and a native speaker of Cantonese. In his position as Research Editor for Due Diligence at Dow Jones and Co., Ng now uses his professional-level skills in Arabic and Chinese daily, investigating entities online in both languages and presenting his findings in reports for the company's clients.

How has The Language Flagship affected Ng's current career trajectory? "It definitely helped me get to where I am today," Ng says. He appreciates the efficiency and strong individualized approach of the Flagship program, which supports students while encouraging them to expand their limits. "It really holds you to a standard" and is "a very good investment of your time," he adds.

Ng believes strongly in the importance of advanced language education in today's globalized world and globalized economy. "If you don't learn a foreign language, you're missing opportunities," he says. Ng also emphasizes the importance of foreign language knowledge in helping people to understand those around them: "It provides a window for you to look at things from a different perspective. And, no matter which career path you choose, that's just a key requirement of being a global citizen."



Flagship graduate Iman Ng completed his Arabic Flagship Capstone in Egypt and now uses his professional-level language skills at Dow Jones and Co.

Flagship Centers

Arabic

Michigan State University
University of Arizona
University of Maryland,
College Park
University of Oklahoma
University of Texas, Austin
Alexandria University, Egypt¹
*Moulay Ismail University,
Morocco¹*

Chinese

Arizona State University²
Brigham Young University
Hunter College
Indiana University, Bloomington
San Francisco State University
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa
University of Minnesota
University of Mississippi
University of North Georgia³
University of Oregon
University of Rhode Island
Western Kentucky University
Nanjing University, China⁴
Tianjin Normal University, China¹

Hindi Urdu

University of Texas, Austin
Jaipur Hindi Center, India⁵
Lucknow Urdu Center, India⁵

Korean

University of Hawai'i, Mānoa
Korea University, South Korea⁵

Persian

University of Maryland,
College Park

Portuguese

University of Georgia, Athens
São Paulo State University, Brazil⁵

Russian

Bryn Mawr College
Portland State University
University of California,
Los Angeles
University of Wisconsin, Madison
*Al-Farabi Kazakh National
University, Kazakhstan¹*
*Saint Petersburg State University,
Russia¹*

Swahili

Indiana University, Bloomington
*State University of Zanzibar,
Tanzania¹*

Turkish

Indiana University, Bloomington
Ankara University, Turkey¹

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.



THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

Creating Global Professionals

Contact Us

The Language Flagship
P.O. Box 20010
1101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 1210
Arlington, VA 22209

Tel.: 703-696-1991
Fax: 703-696-5667
E-mail: info@thelanguageflagship.org
Web: www.thelanguageflagship.org

To receive copies of *Discourse* as they are published, simply email your name and mailing address to info@thelanguageflagship.org with "Add me to the Discourse mailing list" in the subject line.