



THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

Creating Global Professionals

Discourse

NEWSLETTER OF THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

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Reflections on The Language Flagship

Dual Immersion Programs and Flagship

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originally anticipated. The first, and most pervasive, challenge was overcoming the prevailing widespread belief among language teachers that American undergraduate students would not be able to achieve the target of professional proficiency as measured by the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Level 3 or by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) level Superior. This viewpoint was especially voiced when the program shifted away from the post-baccalaureate approach, which had challenges of its own getting students to professional proficiency. The belief was that if it was hard enough to get graduates of language majors to professional proficiency with two additional years, how could we possibly get undergraduate to that level before they completed their studies.

Another major challenge to shifting to the undergraduate approach was chiefly administrative and structural. Unlike the post baccalaureate approach, the undergraduate Flagship programs required institutions to make significant changes to the way that they taught students within their existing language and degree programs. To add to that, the Language Flagship emphasized the importance of encouraging students of all majors and disciplines to pursue high-level language proficiency during their undergraduate studies, which meant allowing non-language degree students to study in the Flagship program.

Though the shift to undergraduate program initially made the implementation of the Language Flagship on campuses much more difficult, the refocus turned out to eventually lead to a much broader national impact of the Language Flagship. First, student enrollments increased dramatically, moving from a highly selective nationwide program open to those with existing higher level language proficiency to one that was essentially open to beginning level students at all participating institutes. Second, the transition to the undergraduate program was by all measures far more cost effective, allowing the program to expand almost 10-fold

K-12 Dual Language Immersion Programs are programs where at least half of the instructional day is in a foreign language. In the U.S., there are many Spanish/English and French/English dual language immersion programs. However, more schools and school systems are now offering K-12 dual language immersion for Chinese and Russian and other Flagship languages. For students coming from dual language immersion programs, they may enter college at the 201 or 301 level in their language which creates a streamlined pathway into Flagship programs.

Last summer, administrators and staff from the University of Mississippi's Chinese Flagship program met with the International Leadership of Texas (ILT) school district to discuss mutual interests and possibilities for working together in the future. The ILT school district has over 20,000 K-12 students across the state of Texas study Chinese and Spanish from kindergarten through twelfth grade. ILT seniors came to the UM campus to observe three levels of Chinese classes and learn more about the Chinese Flagship program. "Collaboration between the International Leadership of Texas school district and the University of Mississippi is rooted in recent reciprocal visits to each other's campuses." says Donald Dyer, associate dean for faculty and academic affairs at UM, and co-director of the UM Chinese Language Flagship Program.

In the summer of 2023, 85 students from ILT will be in Oxford studying Chinese, 15 in the UM *StarTalk* program in June and 70 more participating in July in UM's Chinese Summer Language Institute for high school students, earning 6 credits of university Chinese while attending classes for four weeks and partaking of cultural activities. Additionally, UM has invited 2 of the school district's finest students to take classes this summer with their incoming cohort of Flagship students. All of the above collaborations are meant to build ties between UM and ILT.

Many students that have participated in early K-12 dual language immersion programs have expressed that their experiences have helped prepare them for the Flagship program. Issac

One of the most rewarding aspects of my entire career has been helping to shape and grow the Language Flagship from its initial design stages to the initiative we have today consisting of 31 separate domestic programs and five overseas capstone centers. When I joined the National Security Education Program in 2007 as the first Flagship Director, our stated goal was to revolutionize undergraduate language instruction at US colleges and universities. Started originally as an experimental post-baccalaureate initiative around 2002, the Language Flagship shifted from a program with only three institutions of higher education to a much more comprehensive undergraduate program with 13 programs in 2007. Those who were involved in the early years remember that this was no small feat. The few post baccalaureate programs we had established were in many cases non-degree programs separate from the established language and academic curriculum. They attracted recent graduates of US colleges and universities who wished to bring their language skills up to a level of professional proficiency over a period of two years. In most cases these were students who had graduated as foreign language majors but still needed two additional years to reach the ability to use the language in professional settings.

We faced several challenges when shifting to the undergraduate Flagship in the early years. However, overcoming these challenges eventually turned out to have a broader positive impact on language learning that we could not have

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Word from Flagship

Dr. Sam Eisen
Director
The Language Flagship



I asked Chat GPT to explain the importance of Americans learning foreign languages. The first try reproduced the usual reasons given for learning a language but missed the national security argument. It did include the observation that language learning can delay the onset of age-related dementia, which has never been a huge success in recruiting high school and college age students. The third try added national security as a factor. Chat GPT was able to cull and mirror the main arguments for language learning available across the web; however, it did not catch any of the particularism of why Americans need to learn language – it did not pick up the specifics about our culture or the status of language learning in the U.S. The third Chat GPT response is provided below. I look forward to hearing the observations from our community on what Chat GPT missed or got right, and how that might inform our further human communication about the importance of mission and advocacy for world language education.

Chat GPT response:

Learning a foreign language is an important skill for Americans for a variety of reasons. Here are a few:

- 1. Enhancing cultural awareness and understanding: Learning a foreign language exposes Americans to different cultures and helps them understand the perspectives and values of people from other parts of the world. It can also help break down cultural barriers and improve communication between people from different countries.*
- 2. Career opportunities: Many companies operate globally and require employees who can communicate in multiple languages. Knowing a foreign language can make a job candidate more competitive and open up opportunities for international assignments or travel.*
- 3. Cognitive benefits: Learning a foreign language can also have cognitive benefits, such as improving memory, problem-solving skills, and multitasking abilities.*

Reflections on The Language Flagship... (from page 1)

in institutional participation today. Third, the Language Flagship helped departments and institutions think differently about how to teach languages and cultures more effectively and with specific goals and standards. Not only did each individual program begin to implement important and pedagogical and curricular changes, but these programs also began to work with each other across the many institutions nationwide, and in some cases, across the institution where multiple programs existed. Third, though language departments were initially worried about lost revenue from supporting non language majors in their department, the opposite in fact occurred. Students from a variety of majors and disciplines who originally had not intended on majoring in languages soon found that they would easily receive enough credit to pursue a major in the Flagship language, due to the rigor and intensity of the program. The result was not only to increase recruitment to language programs, but also to diversify the subject expertise of undergraduate students studying language and eventually receiving majors.

Today, the Language Flagship has succeeded in creating a large cadre of graduates that prove the success of shifting the approach to language learning. More importantly, perhaps, is that the impact extends beyond the creation of excellent language learning opportunities. In other words, we have collectively revolutionized the undergraduate experience for those students who choose to participate in the program. Many of our students end of doubling and, in some cases,

triple majoring alongside reaching professional proficiency in the language. Students engaged in the Flagship program have a core experience that brings the students together across many different disciplines. In some ways, Flagship programs exist as a sort of quasi honors program for students that span multiple institutions, and these programs are open to any student willing to rise to the challenge and willing to put in the extra effort it takes to meet the high expectations that the program has established. As a result, we now have thousands of American undergraduates who can deliver a technical or subject based presentation in difficult languages such as Chinese, Russian, Arabic without notes and then take questions from an audience of educated native speakers. The exceptional language student has now become the rule across our programs.

Lastly, the Language Flagship has demonstrated to language Departments across the country – some facing decreasing enrollments – that students are in fact interested in learning languages as undergraduates. We now know that programs that set high expectations and at the same time create supportive opportunities for students to meet those expectations can be very successful in attracting bright, motivated, and exceptional students. These students then become the next generation of global professionals in public service. My hope over the next decade is that the Flagship program will continue to grow to the point that the Flagship approach becomes more the rule than the exception in language learning in the United States.

- 4. Personal growth: Learning a foreign language can be a fulfilling personal achievement and can also enhance travel experiences by allowing Americans to communicate with locals in their native language.*
- 5. National security: In an increasingly interconnected world, knowing a foreign language can be crucial for national security purposes. For example, the ability to understand foreign languages can aid in intelligence gathering and diplomatic negotiations.*

In summary, learning a foreign language can have numerous personal, professional, and societal benefits, making it an important skill for Americans to acquire.

Dual Immersion Programs and Flagship... (from page 1)

Reeder, a Chinese Flagship student at the University of Oregon and vice president of the UO Flagship student leadership group had this to say about his dual immersion experience.



University of Oregon Chinese Flagship Student
Issac Reeder

"My experience in immersion prepared me for Flagship mainly by helping me attain a high level of proficiency in Chinese. Through the classes I took as part of immersion I knew a lot about Chinese culture, history and language. I had the skills to analyze texts, write essays, and talk about everyday life. This allowed me to come into Flagship ready to continue to learn new vocab and fix the little mistakes and gaps in my knowledge. My biggest takeaway from my immersion experience is that there is so much more to the world than just what is around us. [...] I think learning two languages has also helped give me a new perspective from which to look at life and the things that happen around me. Every culture values different things and languages express them differently, so learning a second language for so long has given me a second way to see value and express ideas."

Transforming Language Education Highlights from Recent National Security Education Board Meeting

Representatives from The Language Flagship, Project Global Officer, and the Language Training Centers were invited to share how these programs transformed language education in American higher education institutions at the recent National Security Education Board (NSEB) meeting in March 2023. Chaired by the Honorable Shawn Skelly, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness, the NSEB members engaged with the academic community on discussing program impact and transformation.

For Dr. Christopher Jespersen, Dean of the College of Arts and Letters at the University of North Georgia, the Chinese Flagship program transformed the senior military college in Dahlonoga, GA, expanding their language programs to include Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian, Italian, Japanese, and Korean in addition to French, Spanish, and German. "The proficiency-based language learning model not only impacted civilian and ROTC students in the Chinese Flagship program, but also other languages offered at the university." Dr. Don Dyer, Associate Dean for Faculty and Academic Affairs at the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Mississippi shared how Flagship has changed the expectation of language teaching at the University of Mississippi and transformed the institution. The Flagship programs are now a 'crown jewel' at the University of Mississippi according to Dyer. Many Flagship programs expressed that high school students in-state and out-of-state are seeking out Flagship institutions as interest rises in becoming a global professional.

"A rising tide lifts all boats," said Dr. Karen Evans-Romaine, Professor of Russian and Co-Director, when describing the impact of the Russian Flagship program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The program transformed the graduate program, teaching approaches, professional development workshops, and collaboration across campus between language departments and the ROTC program, advising staff, and other departments. Similar collaboration is occurring at the University of Arizona with the Arabic Flagship program. Dr. Sonia Shiri, Professor of Arabic and Director of the domestic Arabic Flagship program and overseas Arabic Capstone program in Meknes, Morocco emphasized that as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, the University of Arizona is creating pathways for minority and first generation students studying biology, international relations, and business to reach professional proficiency in Arabic plus learn a dialect and complete the Capstone overseas year in Morocco all before graduating.

Dr. Dan Davidson, President Emeritus and Co-Founder of American Councils for International Education and Professor Emeritus of Russian and Second Language Acquisition at Bryn Mawr College, reflected on how Flagship programs vigorously document success through assessment testing, home-stay and internship reports, and video recording final presentations in the target language. Flagship students on Capstone are not just chatting with locals, but rather communicating with teachers, peers, and internship supervisors and colleagues while understanding and participating in the culture as global professionals.

Vigorous documentation, professional-proficiency based language learning, and promoting collaboration on campus is not limited to only civilian and ROTC students. Language and culture courses offered to US. Special Forces and other DOD components through the Language Training Centers strengthens capability for critical missions. General Don Loranger (Ret.), Director of the Defense Critical Language and Culture Program at the University of Montana, said, "if you teach someone a language and culture, you change the way they think."

Return to Brazil In-Person Programming

In May 2022, nearly two years after students were originally pulled from Brazil due to COVID-19, The Language Flagship program began sending its Portuguese Flagship students back abroad. After being evacuated from Brazil on March 16, 2020, students had the option to engage in online summer or Capstone programming until in-person, overseas programming was available. Portuguese Flagship students were the last Flagship program to return overseas. "The perseverance and grit of these cohorts during the pandemic cannot be overstated" says Robert Moser, Director of the Portuguese Flagship Program at the University of Georgia. "When we finally got the green light in the Spring of 2022 that travel to Brazil would resume, it was like the flood gates had opened, with emotion and giddy anticipation, but also logistically as we pivoted to prepare two capstone cohorts and a summer group. The students arrived in Brazil, I believe, with a greater sense of purpose and appreciation for the value of their overall Flagship experience."

Dr. Liliane Assis Sade, Dean of International Affairs at the Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei (UFSJ) in Brazil also shared how "after two years of challenging online work, UFSJ had the pleasure to receive the Portuguese Flagship students in Brazil again. Their face-to-face return meant much more than the mere arrival of a new cohort: it marked a new stage, full of unprecedented joy." Portuguese Capstone students direct enroll in UFSJ classes and have a professional internship experience to gain professional-level proficiency in Portuguese.

Russian Flagship to Rhodes Scholarship

Natalie Navarrete is a Russian Flagship Boren Scholar from the University of Georgia who is completing the capstone program in Kazakhstan in May 2023. "It has been so rewarding to see how all of my classmates' and my language skills have improved since we started in August. After not being able to study in a Russian-speaking country for so long because of the pandemic and on-going war, we are all so thankful for the famous Kazakh hospitality that we were met with in Kazakhstan. I have learned so much about Kazakh culture and American culture through long tea-fueled conversations with my host family and from new friends from the university volleyball team, my Argentinian tango class and 2022-2023 cohort!"

Natalie is also a recipient of the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship. "I studied abroad at Oxford in the Spring of 2022 and was so inspired not only by my amazing tutors and interesting professors, but also the atmosphere of intellectual curiosity that is reflected in the architecture and history of the city. The opportunity to study with some of the most experienced experts in the fields of Central Asian and nuclear security studies at Oxford, which provides the access to information and opportunity that would allow me to research at the crossroad of my language and security interests, inspired me to apply for the Rhodes Scholarship. I plan to pursue an MPhil in Russian and East European Studies to continue exploring the importance of Central Asia in the nuclear nonproliferation effort. After completing my MPhil at Oxford, I hope to return to the United States and work at the Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Smuggling Detection and Deterrence, where I interned during the Summer of 2021. I want to build a career in nonproliferation that specializes in counter-smuggling strategy in the Former Soviet Union. I hope to eventually work towards this goal at the international level at the International Atomic Energy Agency."



NATALIE NAVARRETE

University of Georgia Russian Flagship Student Natalie Navarrete

Flagship Centers

Arabic	Portuguese
Brigham Young University	University of Georgia
Indiana University, Bloomington	University of Texas, Austin
University of Arizona	Federal University of São João del-Rei, Brazil ⁴
University of Maryland, College Park	Russian
University of Mississippi	Bryn Mawr College
University of Texas, Austin	Indiana University
AALIM in partnership with Moulay Ismail University, Morocco ¹	University of California, Los Angeles
Chinese	University of Georgia
Arizona State University	Portland State University
Brigham Young University	University of North Carolina
Hunter College	University of Wisconsin, Madison
Indiana University, Bloomington	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
San Francisco State University	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan ⁵
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa	African Flagship Languages Initiative
University of Minnesota	University of Florida
University of Mississippi	The West African Research Center, Senegal ⁶
University of North Georgia	MS-Training Center for Development Cooperation, Tanzania ⁶
University of Oregon	Indonesian Flagship Language Initiative
University of Rhode Island	University of Wisconsin, Madison
University of Washington	State University of Malang, East Java, Indonesia ⁶
Western Kentucky University	South Asian Flagship Languages Initiative
Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center	University of Wisconsin, Madison
National Chengchi University Taiwan ²	American Institute of Indian Studies, Jaipur and Lucknow, India ⁶
Korean	Turkish Flagship Language Initiative
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa	University of Wisconsin, Madison
Korea University, South Korea ³	Azerbaijan University of Languages, Azerbaijan ⁶
Persian	
University of Maryland, College Park	

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. national security.

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

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¹Overseas Center managed by University of Arizona

²Overseas Center managed by Hunter College

³Overseas Flagship Center managed by University of Hawaii

⁴Overseas Flagship Center managed by University of Georgia

⁵Overseas Flagship Center managed by American Councils for International Education

⁶Managed by American Councils for International Education



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