



## Flagship Interns Gain Invaluable Cultural Insights

Flagship Overseas Capstone internships offer students unique opportunities to hone their advanced language skills in authentic work environments. Students also gain invaluable and often-surprising insights about the culture by perceiving how cultural norms are reflected in job tasks and employee performance.

Marketing interns, for example, have realized that successful advertising and branding strategies must take into account cultural attitudes toward family and social situations. Daniela Roldan studied in the Portuguese Flagship Program at the University of Georgia and interned at Imagem Corporativa, an advertising and public relations firm in São Paulo, Brazil. She explains that the product managers “realized that they needed to create a different packaging that was more sharable” when determining the best marketing strategy for an international chip brand in Brazil. The introduction of new packaging that appeals specifically to Brazilian social customs illustrates why international companies should “really understand the people and the way they consume” when entering a new market, says Roldan.

Three students from the Chinese Language Flagship Program at the University of Mississippi—



At CIC in Beijing, from left to right: Gillian Feng (supervisor), William Bumpas (Flagship intern), and Sam Flemming (founder and CEO).

WILLIAM BUMPAS

William Bumpas, Palmer Withers, and Liana Tai—made interesting observations about Chinese consumer culture while participating in their Flagship Overseas Capstone internships. Bumpas interned at CIC (a Kantar Media Company) in Beijing, China, where his tasks included sifting through social media content in Chinese, then analyzing data and creating reports. In examining Chinese social media trends, Bumpas noticed that Chinese consumers are less cynical of advertising and more “willing to talk about what brands they use [and to] interact with ... official [social media] accounts” than U.S. consumers are.

Withers learned “how Chinese consumers go about their own ‘consumer journeys’” while interning at Deep Focus, a global marketing agency in Shanghai, China. He remarks that “shopping for travel was a much more personal and much more human-focused experience” for Chinese consumers than for Americans. Chinese consumers tended to seek personal connections, opting to read blogs, look at friends’ pictures and posts, and scan individual reviews of travel experiences rather than focus on official marketing. They also exhibited a greater preference for natural medicine and health care, which affects consumer perception of many products. In the United States, for example, “high-tech” cosmetics are more likely to sell, but in China, “companies touting themselves as new and cool



DANIELA ROLDAN

Daniela Roldan was a marketing intern in São Paulo during her Flagship Overseas Capstone internship.

## Leadership Award Presented to David Boren

On May 18, 2015, University of Oklahoma (OU) President David L. Boren accepted the Eighth Annual Language Flagship Leadership Award for outstanding support of and work in the field of foreign language education at a ceremony near the OU campus in Norman, Oklahoma.

In 1975, Boren was elected the 21st governor of Oklahoma. Four years later, he won the U.S. Senate seat for Oklahoma and served for 15 years, including six years as chairman of the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. He is well known for his sponsorship of the National Security Education Act of 1991, which mandated the creation of a program to award scholarships to U.S. undergraduate students, fellowships to U.S. graduate students, and grants to U.S. institutions of higher education for program development in languages and regions critical to national security. The subsequently established National Security Education Program (NSEP) now implements The Language Flagship and several other language-focused initiatives, including the Boren Scholarships and Fellowships that bear his name.

Boren has demonstrated continued dedication to international education and service since becoming OU president in 1994. The International Programs Center (IPC) was created two years into his tenure



KELSEY HIGLEY

In his acceptance speech for the Eighth Annual Language Flagship Leadership Award, David Boren recounts the birth of the National Security Education Act of 1991.

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and chemical were getting absolutely clobbered by ... brands who were touting themselves as all natural, all herbal," says Withers.

Tai interned at Labbrand, a branding company located in Shanghai. Like Bumpas and Withers, she witnessed a closer dialogue between brands and consumers on Chinese social media platforms than on American ones. "Chinese consumers actually look at [brand] pages and ... at the content that these brands are posting," says Tai. While researching brand positioning for natural, nontoxic products for mother and baby, Tai also learned about the month-long postpartum period during which new mothers are expected to rest and abstain from physical activity. However, her most valuable understanding of this topic—including how modern-day mothers feel about this tradition—was gained directly from her female Chinese colleagues.

Flagship interns gain more cultural awareness from personal connections than from data and research. Many took note of differences between work environments overseas and in the United States and adopted their colleagues' cultural norms in the office. Kyle Farrell, from the Russian Flagship Program at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, was most surprised by the skilled, yet laid-back atmosphere at the news agency 365info.kz in Kazakhstan. "The workplace is very relaxed during downtime, but when there's an uptick in activity, everybody is ... professional and very good at what they do." Farrell remarked that the community of Kazakh journalists at his internship was very close. The local culture values the social aspect of tea and lunch breaks, and colleagues typically spend two hours every day in "person-to-person conversation" while at the office. This social norm helped Farrell connect with workplace colleagues over the course of his internship. Brazilians also tend to take lengthy lunches, and Roldan describes this custom as "one of the biggest surprises, because in the

United States, people sometimes work through their lunch breaks."

James Gianakopoulos, an alumnus of the Arabic Flagship Program at the University of Texas, Austin, interned at Misapress in Meknes, Morocco. His journalist colleagues strived to produce objective, unbiased news articles in a relaxed environment. Both Gianakopoulos and Farrell learned the importance of cultural sensitivity in their news agency internships. Farrell says the staff at 365info.kz emphasized "gathering more facts, presenting them to the readership, and then allowing the readership to make conclusions." Gianakopoulos explains that the Moroccan press is more discreet than the American press in discussions of culturally sensitive issues involving sex or alcohol.



Kyle Farrell (left, pictured with his supervisor) was a Russian Flagship intern at 365info.kz in Kazakhstan.

Cultural norms significantly influence how individuals view, interpret, and experience the world around them. Firsthand exposure to these norms in the workplace prepares Flagship students to function and collaborate intelligently in an international professional setting. However, the benefits to all future careers, domestic and international, are priceless. As Gianakopoulos says, "I can't express enough how much [my Flagship] internship made a difference."



Liana Tai, a student in the Chinese Language Flagship Program at the University of Mississippi, interned at a branding company in Shanghai.

Word from Flagship

Sam Eisen  
Director  
The Language Flagship



The National Security Education Program (NSEP) is demonstrating the value, in various contexts, of long-term language and cultural immersion experiences overseas. At the Generation Study Abroad Summit sponsored by the Institute of International Education (IIE), NSEP Director Michael Nugent unveiled a study recently published by IIE entitled *The Boren Awards: A Report of Language Proficiency Gains During Academic Study Abroad* (available on the NSEP website). The study data cover 15 years of Boren programs and nearly 2,500 Boren awardees. The findings document the extent to which long-term (i.e., six months or more) study abroad promotes greater language proficiency gains than programs of shorter duration.

The *NSEP 2014 Annual Report* cites similar longitudinal data from approximately 290 students over three years of the Flagship Overseas Capstone programs. Most Flagship students who start at the Advanced Low level on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency scale or Level 2 on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale make multiple-level and threshold gains in oral proficiency, reading, and listening into the ACTFL Advanced High and Superior levels (or higher) or ILR Level 3 (or higher) while overseas.

The lead article in this issue of *Discourse* qualifies how the Flagship Overseas Capstone internship provides opportunities for students to gain an in-depth understanding of local customs and how those norms translate to the workplace. Flagship student experiences illustrate the practical value of this cultural insight in business and professional activity overseas. In the Op-ed column, Bryn Mawr College President Kim Cassidy emphasizes the importance of language study in developing cultural awareness and intercultural understanding, an important aspect of the liberal arts central mission to foster understanding across multiple perspectives and disciplines. Forthcoming research based on Flagship data will demonstrate the relationship between advanced language learning and high levels of cultural sensitivity. Exploring new paths for improving and integrating cultural awareness training for advanced language learners is an important endeavor for The Language Flagship.

## Leadership Award ... (from page 1)

to support international activities and content in the curriculum and degree programs. The IPC encouraged the university to increase outreach on international matters in state, national, and international arenas and provide Oklahoma with a greater voice in international relations. (The IPC became the OU College of International Studies in 2011.) Also during Boren's tenure, the number of OU students studying abroad increased from 2 to 32 percent. Boren stayed active in the political arena by co-chairing the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, an independent element in the Executive Office of the President of the United States, from 2009 to 2013.

"One of the highlights of my career [was] to have had the chance to turn President Boren's vision into a program that has impacted so many," says NSEP Founding Director Robert Slater, who introduced Boren at the ceremony. Slater believes that NSEP would not have been created without Boren's "extraordinary inspiration, vision, and unyielding commitment."

Nahal Akbari, director of the Persian Flagship Program at the University of Maryland, College Park, presented the award on behalf of the Flagship directors. "A hallmark of President Boren's distinguished career," said Akbari, "is his long-term support for global education and the creation of the National Security Education Program, acknowledging the need to educate experts in languages and cultures of the world as a national priority."

Boren's inspiring acceptance speech recounted the birth of the National Security Education Act of 1991, which highlighted the importance of understanding other languages and cultures to secure "the future national security and economic well-being of the United States." From humble beginnings (scribbles on a brown paper folder), the legislation has grown to provide thousands of American students with opportunities to learn about the world and travel overseas.

It comes as no surprise that Slater believes that this year's awardee was especially well chosen. "There could not be a better choice for The Flagship Leadership Award than David Boren. His passion and energy inspire everyone around him to excel."



Flagship Leadership Awardee David Boren (center) is congratulated by (left to right) Dean Suzette Grillo of the OU College of International Studies, Robert Slater, NSEP Director Michael Nugent, and The Language Flagship Director Sam Eisen.

## Op-ed: Pairing The Language Flagship with Liberal Arts Yields Mutual Benefits

Kimberly Cassidy  
President, Bryn Mawr College



BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

A small liberal arts institution may seem an unlikely home for a Russian Flagship Program, but Bryn Mawr College proves the strength of such a pairing. Bryn Mawr's close-knit community, small class size, and relatively flexible major requirements have permitted students in such majors as physics, computer science, political science, and biology to participate in the Flagship program. At Bryn Mawr, Flagship students achieve their language proficiency goals through rigorous on-campus study, intensive training at Bryn Mawr's Russian Language Institute (summer) or in Russia (summer and semester-long opportunities are available), and a capstone year at a Russian university.

Bryn Mawr students bring perspectives and experiences from a rich array of academic orientations to their linguistic and cultural study, thereby facilitating their ability to understand and interact with their environments at a deep, nuanced level. Data from our successful graduates attest to the power of this combination in contributing to their linguistic and professional growth. Our students are as well positioned for employment opportunities in government, business, or the third sector as for continuing their studies in graduate school.

Participation in the Flagship program also helps students achieve many of the important goals of a liberal arts education. Linguistic and cultural understanding—especially the kind that develops during overseas immersion study, internships, or research—can broaden a student's ability to understand, appreciate, and integrate multiple perspectives. These perspectives enhance his or her view of the world; of the social, economic, and scientific challenges we all face; of otherness; and of self. Language is a powerful tool for developing intercultural sensitivity, and mastering a language helps individuals connect with others.

The ultimate goal of The Language Flagship includes creating a pool of language-capable global professionals who can provide the United States with the expertise necessary for meeting global challenges in transnational labor flows, fostering understanding in international markets, improving law enforcement, addressing climate change, reducing poverty, and controlling the spread of disease. I can think of no better way to prepare the next generation to tackle these challenges than by combining The Language Flagship with a liberal arts education.

### New Center Integrates Technology and Language Learning

The first of its kind, the Language Flagship Technology Innovation Center marks a new phase in the integration of blended and adaptive learning practices into Flagship programs and beyond. According to the center's project directors, Julio Rodriguez and Madeline Spring, the most exciting part of hosting the Language Flagship Technology Innovation Center at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) is that "the center [will] encourage the use of cutting-edge, interactive language learning technologies ... to benefit foreign language learners and teachers nationwide." The center will explore and determine how best to use existing technologies (e.g., intelligent tutoring, online role playing, group and individual video teleconferences, augmented reality games) to help students reach and exceed language proficiency goals.

Within the UHM College of Languages, Linguistics, and Literature, the Language Flagship Technology Innovation Center will forge partnerships among businesses, academia, and government. Experts in the fields of second language acquisition, educational technology, language pedagogy, and technology will work together to create innovative language learning tools that push the limits of current and future technologies. The center also will take the lead in developing effective practices for the integration of these high-tech tools into Flagship programs. This endeavor will improve each Flagship student's overall experience throughout the process of reaching linguistic and cultural proficiency in his or her target language. According to Rodriguez and Spring, this groundbreaking initiative is the first "concerted effort to create pathways that capitalize on best practices in connecting technology and pedagogy."

## Flagship Student Harnesses Interests for a Promising Career Path

After studying French intensively in high school, Amy Waterhouse chose Arabic as her next linguistic challenge. Through The Language Flagship, she combined interests in French, Arabic, and national security to pave an exciting future career path. Waterhouse attended the University of Maryland (UMD), College Park, because the Arabic Flagship Program would allow her to major in French, pursue a minor in terrorism studies, achieve a high level of proficiency in Arabic, and complete a capstone immersion experience in North Africa. She gained valuable career experience that complemented her academic studies by researching vulnerable areas of the drug-, weapon-, and human-smuggling pathways in Europe as an open-source intelligence intern with the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, a Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence. Today, Waterhouse is a short-term research assistant in the Center for Advanced Study of Language (CASL) at UMD, College Park, where she is contributing to a comprehensive, modern Yemeni–English dictionary as part of the CASL Human Language Technologies project.

Waterhouse says her 2014–15 capstone year in Meknes, Morocco—supported by a Boren Flagship Scholarship—exemplified the unique academic and professional experience that Flagship strives to provide. She pushed the limits of her Arabic conversation skills in the classroom and through internships that required her to hold meaningful, in-depth conversations with local craftspeople and women at vocational centers. On completion of the CASL contract, Waterhouse would like to secure a government- or private-sector position that will capitalize on and expand her Arabic skills.



Arabic Flagship graduate Amy Waterhouse (right)

### Flagship Centers

Arabic	Korean
University of Arizona	University of Hawai'i, Mānoa
University of Maryland, College Park	Korea University, South Korea
University of Oklahoma	Persian
University of Texas, Austin	University of Maryland, College Park
Arab–American Language Institute in Morocco <sup>1</sup>	Portuguese
Moulay Ismail University, Morocco <sup>1</sup>	University of Georgia, Athens
Chinese	Federal University of São João del-Rei, Brazil
Arizona State University	Russian
Brigham Young University	Bryn Mawr College
Hunter College	Portland State University
Indiana University, Bloomington	University of California, Los Angeles
San Francisco State University	University of Wisconsin, Madison
University of Hawai'i, Mānoa	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan <sup>1</sup>
University of Minnesota	Swahili
University of Mississippi	Indiana University, Bloomington
University of North Georgia <sup>2</sup>	MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation, Tanzania <sup>1</sup>
University of Oregon	Turkish
University of Rhode Island	Indiana University, Bloomington
Western Kentucky University	Ankara University, Turkey <sup>1</sup>
Nanjing University, China <sup>3</sup>	
Tianjin Normal University, China <sup>1</sup>	
Hindi Urdu	
University of Texas, Austin	
Jaipur Hindi Center, India	
Lucknow Urdu Center, India	

<sup>1</sup> Overseas Flagship Center managed by American Councils for International Education

<sup>2</sup> ROTC Flagship Program

<sup>3</sup> Overseas Flagship Center managed by Brigham Young University and American Councils for International Education

### 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

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