



# THE RHODE ISLAND ROADMAP TO LANGUAGE EXCELLENCE

JUNE 2012



THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

THE  
**UNIVERSITY**  
OF RHODE ISLAND

*“The United States may be the only nation in the world where it is possible to complete secondary and postsecondary education without any foreign language study whatsoever. The prevalent practice of offering and sometimes requiring one or two years of foreign language study for high school or college graduation is simply inadequate for giving students meaningful competence in foreign languages. And yet, this nation is about to cross the threshold into a new century in which globalization and internationalism will be the hallmarks of diplomatic, military, economic and social policy.”*

- Leon E. Panetta, 1999

*“If we look at our counterparts and competitors across the globe, where young professionals are expected to be at least bilingual, we, as individuals and as a nation, are at a distinct disadvantage, economically, politically, and personally if we know but one language. Rhode Island, therefore, must strengthen its language education programs as a major part of its effort to “race to the top,” and to compete effectively in the global economy.”*

- President David M. Dooley  
University of Rhode Island

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# The Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence

## Executive Summary

In December of 2011, the Rhode Island Language Summit convened 56 leaders in government, business, and education from Rhode Island to delineate current and future language and cultural skills needed for a competitive workforce that can function globally and locally. Participants concluded that world language skills and cultural capacity play a critical role in Rhode Island's ability to attract tourism, provide services to a multilingual citizenry, and compete globally. This Language Summit was the sixth in the history of the “Roadmap to National Language Excellence” federal initiative launched by the National Security Education Program’s The Language Flagship in 2007.<sup>1</sup>

Over the next several months, many of these same stakeholders convened in Working Groups to translate the conclusions from the Summit and pre-Summit Research into the Rhode Island Language Roadmap, outlining a series of recommendations intended to address the state’s workforce needs. The strategic vision for this Language Roadmap informs the efforts to enhance the teaching and acquisition of key language and culture skills in Rhode Island:

*The State of Rhode Island strives to create a multilingual, culturally savvy, globally competent Rhode Island community and workforce by creating well articulated language learning programs emphasizing proficiency and biliteracy. By 2030, the majority of Rhode Island graduates will be proficient in English and at least one other language.*

The Working Groups discussed current economic and political environments and assessed local resources to support language education in the state of Rhode Island. The following recommendations were the result of this process.

### **1. Develop and Implement a Public Awareness Campaign Promoting the Benefits of World Language Education**

This action outlines the importance of offering world language education in the pre-Kindergarten-16 curriculum (PK-16) using the URI International Engineering Program<sup>2</sup> as an internationally celebrated premiere model for integrating language and culture with the STEM disciplines to enhance business development and provide global career paths for its graduates. Goals include increasing public and political awareness of the cognitive, academic, and

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on the history and methodology of this process go to Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the award-winning, five-year dual Bachelor’s degree program with a one-year professional experience abroad, see [uri.edu/iep](http://uri.edu/iep).

intellectual benefits inherent in world language learning, as well as raising support for dual immersion, proficiency incentives, and alternative teacher certifications.

## ***2. Establish the Position of Rhode Island State Supervisor for World Language Education***

This state-level official would be responsible for assisting and advising local teachers and administrators on all aspects of world language teaching and learning, including best practices, program model development, and pedagogy. The state supervisor will also support policy development and act as a liaison between various educational divisions, state organizations, and national level agencies. The position would allow Rhode Island to have a professional participate in The National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL), a professional association of leaders in the field of elementary and secondary foreign language education.

## ***3. Establish the Rhode Island Center for Language Teaching, Learning, and Culture***

In an effort to build coalitions and promote collaboration, a Rhode Island Center for Language Teaching, Learning and Culture would promote world language learning and cultural competency at government, education, and business levels. The University of Rhode Island (URI), Rhode Island College (RIC), and Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) would act as managing partners in this endeavor, each bringing their respective expertise to the table: CCRI's open access to higher education, RIC's bilingual teacher education program, RIC's Institute for Portuguese and Lusophone World Studies, and URI's International Engineering and Chinese Flagship Programs.

## ***4. Create Articulated Pre-Kindergarten-16 World Language Sequences***

This establishes a request-for-proposal process whereby a set of schools (e.g., an elementary, a middle, and a high school), in partnership with an institution of higher education, would be awarded funding to plan the development of an articulated PK-16 immersion-style language learning curriculum in a locally determined target world language. Funding for such an initiative could be secured through a consortium of supportive companies who pay dues into a fund managed by the Rhode Island Foundation. Schools can then apply for funding to put in place a sequence of bilingual education in their schools.

## ***5. Develop Incentive Programs to Train, License and Employ Language Education Teachers***

This initiative calls for the development of incentives designed to attract, prepare, and retain language education teachers in Rhode Island schools. This includes strategies for attracting additional heritage, native, and highly proficient non-native speakers into the teaching field; improving alternative licensure procedures; promoting exchange programs with institutions abroad where the target language is spoken; offering financial bonuses to bilingual teachers; and

enhancing the clinical component of teacher training programs by partnering with local bilingual schools.

### **6. Develop Proficiency Incentives for Students Rewarding them for World Language Study**

The development of proficiency incentives is designed to reward students who gain proficiency in world language study. Credit for proficiency, such as a diploma endorsement (e.g., in the form of a seal of biliteracy upon graduation), scholarships for study abroad, and work-to-school internships are among the ideas under consideration.

### **Implementation of Recommendations**

The implementation of the recommendations in this Language Roadmap requires collaboration from leaders in the educational, business and government sectors throughout the state of Rhode Island. Engagement, as well, from the parental sector will enable the process of innovation needed to achieve the changes to support long-term language education and acquisition in the state. The recommendations require, in some cases, legislative support; in other cases engagement from the private sector to provide funding for programs and scholarships. In the end, a collaborative state effort will effect the necessary change to create the workforce needed and the community spirit to support multilingualism in Rhode Island.

*“The 21st Century is rapidly becoming an era of global economic and technological competitiveness in which language ability and its complementary counterpart of cultural understanding are fundamental paths to success. This is true at the national and individual levels. An educated population with strong language and cultural skills is a key component of our national security. On an individual level strong language and cultural skills are a significant advantage in the highly competitive global workplace. In retrospect one of the best decisions that I made was to study Chinese language and culture. It opened the doors for me to have successful careers in both the government and the private sectors.”*

-Michael Byrnes, Language Flagship Business Champion; Brigadier General, U.S. Army (ret.); former President of Tyco International, China ; and Bristol, RI native and resident

Our recommendations for the State of Rhode Island are synchronized with the recommendations of the Council on Foreign Relations Independent Task Force Report No. 68, chaired by Joel I. Klein and Condolezza Rice on “U.S. Education Reform and National Security” (March 2012). Within the context of the Roadmap, its most essential recommendation asks that,

*“The states should expand the Common Core State Standards, ensuring that students are learning the skills and knowledge necessary to safeguard the country’s national security. Science, technology, and foreign languages are essential – as are creative problem-solving skills and civic awareness,”* and that *“technology expectations be thoroughly integrated with math, literacy, science, and foreign language curricula so that students learn how they might effectively apply technological skills in diverse and constantly evolving settings... all students should have access to high-quality foreign language programs starting in the earliest grades.”*<sup>3</sup>

These task force recommendations were reiterated by Alan Goodman, President of the *Institute of International Education* during a Congressional Hearing.

*“In my view, higher education institutions should reinstitute foreign language proficiency as a graduation requirement. A hundred years this was, in fact, the case for virtually all our colleges and universities. Today, this is true literally for just a handful... While more American students are studying overseas than ever before, the total is still less than 2% of all the 20 million enrolled in U.S. higher education in any given year, and the majority of those students are studying in Western Europe and only for short periods that are not conducive to significant language gains.”*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Klein, Joel I., Condoleezza Rice, and Julia Levy. “U.S. Education Reform and National Security.” *Council on Foreign Relations* (2012): 44-47.

<sup>4</sup> Goodman, Dr. Allan E. (Statement Prepared for a Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia.) U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs. May 21, 2012.



## The Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence

### Introduction: Forming a Language Roadmap for the State of Rhode Island

In December of 2011, the Rhode Island Language Summit convened 56 leaders in government, business, and education from Rhode Island to delineate current and future language and cultural skills needed for a competitive workforce that can function globally and locally. Participants concluded that world language skills and cultural capacity are critically important to Rhode Island's ability to attract tourism, provide services to a multilingual citizenry, and compete globally. This Language Summit was the sixth in the history of the “Roadmap to National Language Excellence” federal initiative launched by the National Security Education Program’s The Language Flagship in 2007.<sup>5</sup>

Over the next several months, many of these same stakeholders convened in Working Groups to translate the conclusions from the Summit and pre-Summit Research into the Rhode Island Language Roadmap, outlining a series of recommendations intended to address the state’s workforce needs. The strategic vision for this Language Roadmap shapes the plan to enhance the teaching and acquisition of key language and cultural skills in Rhode Island:

*The State of Rhode Island strives to create a multilingual, culturally savvy, globally competent Rhode Island community and workforce by creating well articulated language learning programs emphasizing proficiency and biliteracy. By 2030, the majority of Rhode Island graduates will be proficient in English and at least one other language.*

Drawing upon the expertise and knowledge from leaders in business, government and education during a multi-month series of Working Groups, the resulting “Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence” serves as a guide or “roadmap” for state and local governments, education agencies, and professional organizations to transform world language and culture education with the idea of creating a competent, multilingual workforce. This strategic document offers a framework for realistic and locally appropriate change, well within the scope of what is possible in the state of Rhode Island.

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<sup>5</sup> For further information on the history and methodology of this process go to Appendix I.

## Why a Rhode Island Language Roadmap?

Rhode Island's economic well-being is increasingly dependent on international trade and therefore faces a number of different economic challenges, the persistence of long-term unemployment, corporate downsizing, and relatively slow growth in the demand for labor. However large these barriers might seem they can be overcome by leveraging its existing multi-lingual community and the support of business and government in Rhode Island through the implementation of the Language Roadmap as one step toward harnessing a workforce that can distinguish Rhode Island in the global marketplace. Beyond that, putting educational programs and policies into place will assist in producing a multilingual workforce that can respond to internal needs of the state by improving government services to these varied communities.

The State of Rhode Island is distinctly positioned to implement the next Language Roadmap because of its coastal location, diverse population, and small size. The United States Census Bureau estimates that the population of Rhode Island is just over one million and the capital of Rhode Island, Providence, is the 37th largest metropolitan area in the nation comprised of a number of different cultural groups and world languages including Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Cape Verdean Creole, Chinese, Cambodian Hmong, Laotian, Polish, German, Arabic, Vietnamese, and African languages. These factors, in addition to Rhode Island's commercial ports in each of 17 cities statewide, preexisting manufacturing centers, fisheries, and tourism industry are significant, indicating that Rhode Island has the business, human, and capital to fuel economic development.

Finally, Rhode Island has always depended tourism, but could become more welcoming to and attract more international visitors by becoming truly multilingual and savvy in its presentation to the world. Rhode Island must draw on and enhance the wealth of knowledge that already exists in the state to increase its knowledge-based economy at the appropriate level of skill and competence in an increasingly globalized world.

*“Language skills, ..., have a critical role to play in the development of a truly globalized workforce. The challenge we face as business people, as educators and as government leaders is to make sure that Rhode Islanders have the skills and mind-set they need to successfully meet increasing demands from the global marketplace as well as the demands from an increasing diverse and multi-lingual clientele in Rhode Island.”*

-Tom Wroe, CEO Sensata Technologies Rhode Island Language Summit Dec. 7, 2011  
Providence

## **Roadmap to Language Excellence**

Rhode Islanders have an opportunity to develop an integrated and consistent plan for the teaching and learning of world languages. As many local employers and social service providers have noted, the development of such a plan is absolutely critical for the economic and social well-being of the state.

The Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence calls for:

- the appointment of a lead world language education official;
- focus on building functional proficiency via articulated language programs;
- access to quality study abroad experiences; and
- cultivation of a qualified teaching corps.

Currently, articulated or sequenced language education is virtually non-existent in the Rhode Island education landscape, with most programs in the early and middle years being exploratory, at best, in nature. With a solid plan in place for the teaching and learning of world languages in high-quality, long-sequence, well-articulated language programs, Rhode Islanders can achieve the functional proficiency many domestic and international employers value.

## **Key Components of the Rhode Island Language Roadmap**

### **1. Implement a Public Awareness Campaign Promoting the Benefits of World Language Education**

A public awareness campaign will highlight the economic, cultural, and academic importance of world language and culture skills for the workplace and the community. We recommend creating a culture amongst Rhode Islanders to embrace the value of world languages thereby engendering support for the Roadmap's mission among parents, students, employers and policy makers. Various community events would underline the long-term value of language skills in the Rhode Island workforce and to the benefit of the local multilingual community. With nearly a 100% job placement rate, the University of Rhode Island's flagship international immersion program, the International Engineering Program (IEP), can serve as a model to market languages for the professions as well as a destination for bilingually trained students PK-12 to continue their studies in higher education. Aside from better marketability of bilingual graduates, the cognitive, academic, and intellectual benefits inherent in world language learning should be stressed.

#### **Key elements of this campaign would include:**

##### **A. Public Exchange Forums**

Public exchange forums allow participation in a state-wide effort to implement and develop world languages in Rhode Island. Workshops and other public events help educate the citizenry about the importance of language skills in their workforce and communities. These dialogues could address sources of funding; the implementation of the Center for Teaching Learning, and Culture; the pre-K-16 pipeline; teacher preparation programs and help to mobilize native world language speakers to participate in the development process.

##### **B. Marketing Campaign**

Develop a world languages marketing campaign in order to create, communicate, and deliver offerings that have value for business, government, teachers, parents and students. We recommend creating a social networking site for community mobilization and outreach.

### **2. Establish the Position of Rhode Island State Supervisor for World Language Education**

Rhode Island is one of the few states in the U.S. without a state-level supervisor responsible for world language education. State supervisors for world languages provide leadership and coordinate the development and implementation of state frameworks for world language education.

The state supervisor for world languages, housed at the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE), will provide high-quality management, programming,

leadership, and overall second language learning centralization for the state of Rhode Island. He or she will possess specialized knowledge of language acquisition, materials, content, and second language learning styles; and disseminate best practices knowledge. A refined responsibility set will be developed in consultation with RIDE.

The suggested responsibilities may include:

**A. Serve as a world language liaison between government, business, and education.**

1. Stay knowledgeable about the current state of world language education and current trends within the state of Rhode Island and the U.S.
2. Stay actively involved in the community, providing second language knowledge to the district.
3. Serve as a source of specialized information on second language learning to teachers, district staff, board members, businesses, and the community.
4. Participate in the national organization: National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSFL)

**B. Design and implement world language education benchmarks, curriculum framework, and articulation.**

1. Work with superintendents of education and teachers to improve methodology, techniques, and contemporary language teaching curriculum in relation to globalization and economic development.

**C. Provide leadership in carrying out community and grass roots initiatives to promote language education.**

1. Develop appropriate budget, seek additional funding, and manage grants to bring innovative programming and courses to the state.
2. Serve as an outreach coordinator for fund raising and marketing campaigns.

**3. Establish the Rhode Island Center for Language Teaching, Learning, and Culture**

The Rhode Island Language Teaching, Learning, and Cultural Center will be established through an inter-institutional partnership between the University of Rhode Island (URI), Rhode Island College (RIC), and the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) in order to support and complement the efforts of government, education, and business in the promotion and development of cultural competency and world language education. Each institution will bring its respective expertise to the table: CCRI's open access to higher education, RIC's bilingual teacher education program and Institute for Portuguese and Lusophone World Studies, and URI's International Engineering and Chinese Flagship Programs.

The Center for Language Teaching, Learning and Culture will be strategically located in the “Knowledge District” in Providence<sup>6</sup> which places it at the nexus of the community, academics, business, and government.

The responsibilities of Rhode Island Language Teaching, Learning, and Cultural Center include:

- A. Collaborate with the community, business, education, and government to create and sustain an inclusive and supportive culture and climate where diverse learners and teachers have the opportunity to engage in world language learning and cultural competency. (Pre-K-16, government and business leaders would meet regularly).
- B. Acknowledge, reward, and celebrate leadership and excellence from students, teachers, and other stakeholders in advancing language education and acquisition in the State of Rhode Island by organizing an annual forum on language teaching and learning, i.e., “Best Practices in Language Education.”
- C. Collaborate with others to generate a consulting center to support multilingual social networking, advertising and marketing campaigns, along with projects concerning language development through a comprehensive plan utilizing technology, communication, and outreach.
- D. Facilitate planning to retain and increase the number of certified world language and bilingual education teachers and to prepare them through extensive experience in local schools.

The following could be initiatives of the Center:

- 1. Online job match database highlighting multilingual skills
- 2. Online journal supporting language education and acquisition in the State of Rhode Island
- 3. Executive language courses for mid-career professionals

#### **4. Create Articulated Pre-K-16 World Language Sequences**

Research suggests that the key to producing Rhode Island graduates proficient in at least two languages is to start early and continually build proficiency throughout a student’s educational career. Having a student enter a planned sequence of instruction from elementary school, through high school which then articulates into a college curriculum supports the acquisition of high levels of proficiency in the language. Creating articulated pre-K-16 World Language

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<sup>6</sup> See example of nursing in the Knowledge District: <http://www.uri.edu/news/releases/index.php?id=5253>

Sequences (WLS) will change the paradigm of language education to one that is proficiency driven without creating an extra financial burden for the state. Each pilot WLS will consist of several schools within a selected district -- an elementary, middle, and high school -- working in partnership with an institution of higher education. The proposed instructional model is dual immersion, or one in which at least 50% of the instruction is given in a target language other than English.

On the elementary and secondary level, these sequential programs would build on programs at the Alfred S. Lima School, the International Charter School, the French-American School of Rhode Island, and the Central Falls School District. On the post-secondary level, they would find inspiration from the University of Rhode Island's International Engineering Program and Chinese Language Flagship Program which have integrated science, technology, engineering and math disciplines with rigorous language study, immersion, direct enrollment at partner universities, and applied language learning opportunities abroad (through experiential learning opportunities, such as internships and research). By the time students from these articulated sequences enter the workforce, government, business, and higher education employers will be able to access these graduates' educational profiles from a central database directed by the state supervisor at the Rhode Island Center for Language Teaching, Learning, and Culture. The documentation of their language proficiency will help the students in their careers; and assist employers with knowledge of their potential employees' language skills.

**To implement World Language Sequences we recommend:**

- A. Interested school districts will apply through a competitive request for proposal process for start-up funding from the Rhode Island Foundation. The selected language will be determined by districts based upon demographics and/or other locally appropriate considerations. (For example, a district with a critical mass of native Portuguese and native English speakers might implement a dual immersion Portuguese-English program, or a district with a strong desire for Chinese instruction might select Mandarin.)
- B. Teachers, educators, and the state supervisor will work together to create a distinct and specific program detailing the curriculum and proficiency benchmarks for each grade.
- C. Language education teachers will be certified based on Rhode Island Department of Education guidelines.
- D. There will be a voluntary system for second language learners and teachers to create a profile in the database at the Rhode Island Center for Language Teaching, Learning, and Culture documenting proficiency levels and time spent in other countries deploying these language skills.

## **5. Incentive Programs to Train, License and Employ Language Education Teachers.**

Teacher preparation represents the further forging of a collaborative compact between the university system, local bilingual schools, pre-K-12 districts, government, and business to facilitate enhanced preparation of the state's language education teachers, and thereby, student performance. This community partnership aims to recruit heritage, native, and highly proficient non-native speakers into the field of language education through multiple pathways to certification and to create a culture of continued professional development.

Currently Rhode Island's institutions of higher education are preparing enough world language teachers to meet the demand of local districts. However, teacher education programs will need to be redesigned or reinstated to prepare bilingually certified teachers needed to supply the new dual language programs recommended by the Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence. Existing dual language and immersion programs at the International Charter School, French-American School of Rhode Island and Alfred S. Lima Elementary School could act as models for new programs, and could also run teacher training programs in the summers.

The following programs and incentives are recommended:

### **A. Develop Programs to Prepare Language Education Teachers for Licensure**

1. Graduate degree programs in education, specifically in Bilingual and Dual Language or World Language Education for teachers already certified in other areas.
2. Graduate degree programs in Bilingual and Dual Language or World Language Education and the corresponding Independent Certification<sup>7</sup> for professionals with degrees in other areas.
3. Undergraduate degree programs in Bilingual and Dual Language Education.

### **B. Create Incentives to Attract and Retain Language Education Teachers**

1. Loan forgiveness through public and private funding.
2. State/private matching funds for the federal Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant.

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<sup>7</sup> As per Rhode Island Department of Education certification regulations at <http://www.ride.ri.gov/educatorquality/certification/>



3. Awarding benefits such as salary premiums, step increases, and promotions.
4. Incentive pay for maintaining or improving proficiency: Language education teachers will take proficiency assessments, based on the ACTFL scale, every three years and must place at the Advanced High level or above to maintain their certification. Teachers at the Advanced High, Superior, and Distinguished levels would receive varying levels of incentive pay on top of their base salary.
5. Scholarships for teachers to participate in exchange programs with institutions abroad where the target language is spoken.
6. The Business-to-Teaching initiative will provide future language teachers with the opportunity learn how businesses in Rhode Island are deploying various languages skills so that they can use this knowledge to prepare students to enter the workforce.

## **6. Develop Proficiency Incentives for Students Encouraging and Rewarding World Language Study**

Findings from the Rhode Island Language Roadmap Research report<sup>8</sup> emphasized the need to measure language acquisition by proficiency levels rather than by the amount of “seat time” or years spent learning a language. When surveyed, employers in business, government and education indicated that they seek employees with advanced levels of language proficiency coupled with cultural skills. To promote enhanced proficiency we recommend the creation of student incentives. Options include:

- A. Award world language credit at the high school level based on attained proficiency levels in lieu of seat time.
- B. Introduce a Seal of Biliteracy on the high school diploma recognizing graduates with advanced proficiency in at least two languages.
- C. Waive higher education world language seat-time admission requirements in favor of proficiency level attained.
- D. Establish a scholarship fund rewarding notable proficiency gains in higher education settings, i.e., progression from intermediate-low to intermediate high as measured by

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<sup>8</sup> Online at:

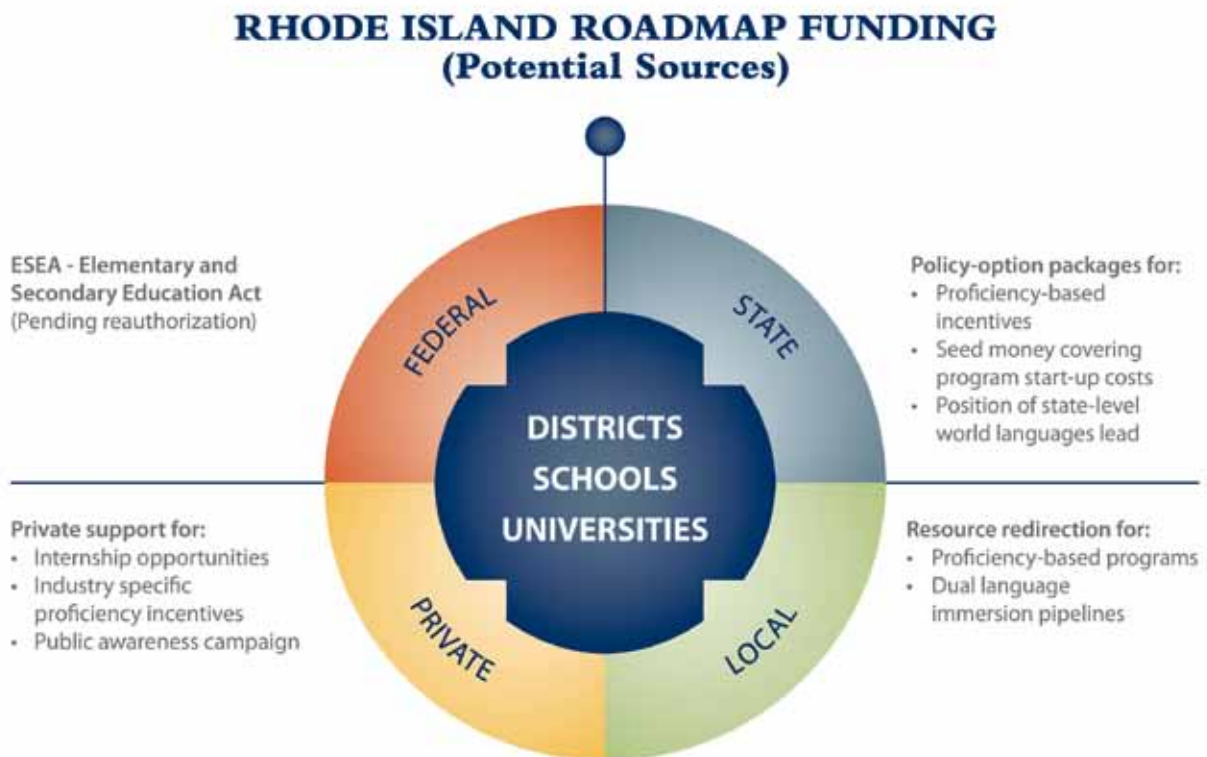
[http://www.uri.edu/rilanguage/documents/RILANGUAGESUMMIT\\_PRELIMINARY\\_REPORT\\_2011.pdf](http://www.uri.edu/rilanguage/documents/RILANGUAGESUMMIT_PRELIMINARY_REPORT_2011.pdf)

ACTFL guidelines (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) or other agreed upon metric.

- E. Establish a study abroad fund designed to offset the costs of students advancing their language acquisition by studying outside of the United States. This program would reimburse travel costs to students showing marked proficiency gains during study abroad experiences.

### Where will Roadmap Implementation Funding Come From?

The fiscal responsibility for implementation of the Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence will fall on state, local and private sources. Many of the proposed measures in the Roadmap are either cost neutral, low cost, or no cost. A potential source of federal funding in the near future may be The English and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), but as of the writing of this report, the act is still awaiting reauthorization.



Planning costs aside, local education agencies can redirect current resources to support dual language immersion programs and proficiency-based programs. Private entities can and should support initiatives calling for world language intensive internships, enhanced support for study-abroad, and raising public awareness to both the need for skilled world language capable workers, and the outstanding cognitive, academic and intellectual benefits of language learning.

At the state level, the Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence not only calls for a commitment to new thinking regarding the value of world language and culture skills, and new resource allocation as well. The formation of new public/private funding partnerships centered on improving education will help offset the financial burden. For example, a matching funds system calls for the state to match funds (capped at a pre-determined amount) with the private sector to fund scholarships and proficiency incentives. The establishment of a Rhode Island State Supervisor for World Languages will most likely require an outlay of funding at the state budgeting level, but as stakeholders from government, education, and business attest, it is a critical position to the economic and cultural well-being of the state.



## Appendix I: “State Roadmaps to Language Excellence:” History and Methodology

Since 2001, the federal government has engaged in a systematic examination of the supply of and demand for world language and global skills within a number of federal agencies concerned with national security. This federal effort has led to the development and expansion of a number of federal programs designed to promote graduates -- from high schools and colleges -- with international skills, including an expertise in a critical foreign language and culture. During this time, the nation has, more enthusiastically than ever (and certainly since the advent of the Cold War), embraced the need for language skills in support of U.S. national security.

However, the demand for global skills, including world language capabilities and cultural proficiency, needs clearer articulation, in both the public and private spheres. This articulation of demand is exceedingly critical where socio-economic considerations are concerned, not only at the national level, but at state and local levels as well. Roadmaps to National Language Excellence represents a significant undertaking to engage states and major cities in a systematic assessment of demand for language and culture skills at the state and local levels and develops locally appropriate strategic plans (roadmaps) to respond to those needs. The Language Roadmap effort in many ways represents a pragmatic approach to the language supply problem by uniting national and federal efforts with state and local level initiatives, thus structuring a new model for defining a federal-state-business partnership.

### State Roadmaps to Language Excellence: Process and Methodology

- The concept of a state language roadmap process began in 2006. Responding to Congressional interest, the National Security Education Program’s (NSEP) The Language Flagship developed and coordinated a pilot language roadmap effort. First, NSEP identified three uniquely different pilot states for the Language Roadmap Project: **Oregon, Texas, and Ohio**. The Language Flagship Centers at the University of Oregon, the University of Texas, Austin, and the Ohio State University coordinated efforts to conduct a Language Summit, assessing needs for language skills in the state; and to implement a plan to identify regional, state, and local drivers for world languages and culture skills.

Language Flagship Centers, funded by the National Security Education Program (NSEP), lead the development of innovative curriculum in specific critical languages. The centers also play an important leadership role, both within the state and across the nation, in moving the national language education agenda forward.

**Pre-Summit Research:** Each Roadmap initiative coordinated research projects to ascertain the need for language and cultural skills in local businesses and government agencies. This research provided insights into the levels of language skills needed; the use and importance of language skills in professional settings; and the languages needed currently and in the future. These

research findings complemented the conclusions made at the Language Summit and provided the basis for the Working Groups' discussions.

- **Summits:** Previous Language Summits were held during June 2007 in Portland, Oregon; Austin, Texas; and Columbus, Ohio. Subsequently Language Summits were held in Utah (2009) and in California (2010). The objective of each summit was to “map” the demand for foreign language in the state. Representatives from state and local government and business communities articulated this demand in terms of the languages needed; the level of proficiency required; the missed opportunity costs of not having language skills on staff; and the future needs in terms of expanding markets or new sets of services requiring these skills. Representatives from the “supply side” – K-12 educators, state boards of education, and universities – joined them. The summit agenda incorporated a “think-tank” style, engaging participants in discussion of factors that either drive or inhibit the capacity of the state to address the need for world language and international education.
- **Language Roadmap Working Groups:** Following the summit, each project convened a series of working groups composed of representatives from business, state and local government, and education (both K-12 and higher education). These working groups focused on developing a strategic plan that would reflect the economic, political, and social realities of the state.
- **Language Roadmaps:** The final product is a local State Roadmap to Language Excellence. These roadmaps provide strategically developed and locally appropriate initiatives designed to improve and enhance foreign language and cultural education in the state over the short (3-5 year), mid (5-10 year) and long term (10-20 years).

## **Appendix II: Key Findings from the Rhode Island Language Summit and Preliminary Research Report<sup>9</sup>**

The Rhode Island Language Summit convened 56 business, education, and government leaders on December 7, 2011 to delineate the need for language in the state. The following outlines the key findings from the working summit.

### **1. Government findings**

Rhode Island government agencies, specifically in the emergency services, health care, human services, and public transportation areas, reported that the major second language demand is for Spanish-English bilingual/biliterate employees. There is also great need for employees proficient in Portuguese, Cape Verdean Creole, French, Hmong, and a host of other languages, reflecting the current population demographics in the state and region, however, demand exceeds supply. While government agencies prefer to hire bilingual/biliterate employees (with advanced proficiency and technical, field-specific language skills), the lack of trained personnel with the desired language skills forces them to rely on contracted translators and interpretations services like Language Line.

### **2. Business findings**

Rhode Island's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and multinational corporations (MNCs) reported an increasing need for employees with professional levels of proficiency in languages other than English. Local operations would benefit from employees proficient in Spanish, Khmer, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Cape Verdean Creole, Vietnamese, and other languages of Rhode Island's immigrant communities, while international operations would benefit from employees skilled in French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Chinese, Indian languages, and Turkish. SMEs need employees with world language and cultural skills to carry out negotiations; to avoid additional business costs incurred for translation and negotiations; to communicate with subsidiaries or parent companies overseas; and to communicate with local immigrant populations. MNCs require multilingual skills at the upper management level and often hire CEOs from abroad due to the lack of locals with proficiency in languages other than English. MNCs also expressed the need for linguistic and cultural skills for efficient transference of corporate values, as well as for employees at all levels to work in global teams around the clock. The big finding here is: one local corporation, with operations all over the world, articulated an immediate need for seven engineers with Chinese language skills.

### **3. Education findings**

Currently Rhode Island's public schools and institutions of higher education are not meeting the demand for world language and culture skills. Successful interdisciplinary programs in higher

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<sup>9</sup> Download a copy of the report at [uri.edu/rilanguage/](http://uri.edu/rilanguage/)

education like, URI's Chinese Language Flagship Program; International Engineering and Business programs; Textile Merchandising and Design dual degree program with French or Italian; Pharmacy and French programs; and Foreign Language Education program would benefit greatly from a steady pipeline of high school graduates who possess intermediate to advanced level language skills. However, with no proficiency requirement in local schools, and no articulation between K-12 and higher education language programs, this demand cannot be met. Most school districts begin world language education at the high school level, although many would start earlier if funding were available. Aside from the interdisciplinary programs mentioned previously, the situation in higher education is also discouraging; close to 90% of students do not progress beyond 200-level language courses, which would produce intermediate level skills at best.



### **Appendix III: Language Education in the United States**

Leaders in government, education and business express the need to educate and prepare globally competent graduates capable of communicating, competing, and thriving in an increasingly complex world. A cornerstone of this preparation is the ability to communicate effectively in more than one language. While Americans prefer to think of English as the dominant world language, a monolingual approach not only leads to lost business opportunities, but also represents a missed opportunity to build new relationships and understand other cultural perspectives, both at home and abroad. Simply put, the emerging standard for global communication “is not English, but rather bilingualism and cross-cultural communication.”<sup>10</sup>

A report of insights from the business sector, summarized in the 2009, “What Business Wants: Language Needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”<sup>11</sup> underlines the pain points felt by businesses trying to compete globally without reliable language skills available on staff.

Providing students with opportunities to achieve academically is also a national priority. There is increasing evidence that studying a second language, at an early age, increases a child’s cognitive skills and leads to better overall academic performance, particularly in core subjects. Two-way immersion programs offer many schools an opportunity to build on the skills already inherent in the student population and empower students to simultaneously learn in two languages.

Unfortunately, the current state of foreign language learning in the U.S. does not reflect national priority status. Foreign language instruction around the U.S. is decreasing. In a 2008 study conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics titled *Foreign Language Teaching in U.S. Schools: Results of a National Survey*, researchers found “the percentage of elementary and middle schools offering foreign language instruction decreased significantly from 1997 to 2008: from 31% to 25% of all elementary schools and from 75% to 58% of all middle schools”.<sup>12</sup>

On a positive note, there are initiatives, such as The Language Flagship at the federal level; and the K-12 expansion of dual immersion programs in Utah, at the state level, that support a new vision for the acquisition of language skills in the United States.

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<sup>10</sup>Grandin, John. (2010). "Why learn another language if the whole world speaks English?" Rhode Island Foreign Language Association Annual Conference Address. Providence, RI: RIFLA.

<sup>11</sup>Download at: <http://www.thelanguageflagship.org/business/what-business-wants>.

<sup>12</sup> Rhodes, N.C., and I. Ruffal. *Foreign Language Teaching in U.S. Schools: Results of a National Survey*. Washington D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 2010. Page xv. Print.

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