



## THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

*Creating Global Professionals*

### **THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP: CHANGING THE PARADIGM OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN THE U.S.**

*The Language Flagship envisions a system of programs across the country where high school students achieve intermediate- to advanced-level language proficiency. Those who defer college and enter the workforce (or enlist in the armed forces) bring with them a critical skill. Those who move on to universities enter with an advanced language level that allows them to undertake a more challenging curriculum aimed at developing professional proficiency.*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

During the era we generally categorize as “post 9/11,” consensus has emerged that the American education system must more aggressively embrace the concept of global education for a broader population of students. The products of American education generally remain woefully unprepared to engage in a rapidly changing socio-economic and political environment that demands global skills. The most needed of these is the ability to effectively engage in languages other than English.

Since its inception in 2000, The Language Flagship has provided important funding to the American higher education system to re-tool its approaches to language education. At the core of the Flagship concept is the assumption that the development of global skills (including advanced language competency) must be mainstreamed into American education. Ultimately, any approach to achieving language competency must begin as early as pre-school and, like other curricula, be defined as an articulated process from elementary, middle, and high school into the university. The long-term vision of The Language Flagship is a system where high school graduates emerge with intermediate to advanced competencies in languages ranging from Arabic to Chinese to Swahili and find opportunities and incentives to continue their language training toward professional proficiency as undergraduates. Flagship Centers enroll students drawn from all majors including business, engineering, and science. The Language Flagship envisions an array of colleges and universities across the U.S. known for their advanced language programs in concert with other vital efforts to establish a pipeline of students from K-12 into the university.

#### **WHAT IS THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP?**

The Language Flagship represents the beginnings of a proactive community of innovators comprised of a system of 12 Flagship Centers and three K-12 programs, as well as a rapidly expanding group of partners in higher education and business across the United States. This community is led by nationally-recognized leaders and innovators in language education.

The Language Flagship is a federally-funded effort and is a component of the National Security Education Program (NSEP) at the U.S Department of Defense. It began in late 2000 as a small pilot project to challenge a few U.S. colleges and universities to

investigate their capacity and commitment to build programs of advanced language acquisition. Important opportunities were developed for a small cohort of students to engage in one- to two-year post-BA language programs that included an intensive year of language study in the U.S. followed by an articulated program of overseas study that included internships and direct enrollment in content courses taught in the target language.

The Language Flagship seeks to impact 2,000 students by 2010.

Between 2001, when the first pilot grants were awarded, and 2005, the effort expanded to include additional universities offering programs in Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian/Farsi, and Russian. In addition to the post-BA pilot efforts, two undergraduate Flagship Centers were established to test the capacity of institutions to produce undergraduate students with professional-level language proficiency. The Flagship model was further tested by the establishment of a pilot K-12 Chinese Flagship program. This pilot K-12 initiative was expanded in January 2006 to add two K-12 programs in Arabic and Chinese as part of the President's National Security Language Initiative (NSLI). Flagship Centers for Hindi/Urdu and Central Asian Turkic languages were also added as part of NSLI.

The results of these initial pilot efforts were highly encouraging. Institutions created highly effective programs and students rose to meet the challenge. However, it was clear that a post-BA model alone would mean that these efforts would remain limited and out of reach to most American students. It was also clear that truly changing the paradigm of language learning in the U.S. and achieving the Flagship goal to reach at least 2000 students by the end of the decade required mainstreaming curricula into students' undergraduate years and, at a minimum, articulating those curricula down to high schools.

Recognizing the potential of the Flagship model and the imperative to broaden opportunities for U.S. students, The Language Flagship in 2006 refocused its effort to include advanced, proficiency-based language instruction as an integral component of undergraduate education. By doing so, the Flagship model could address the needs of hundreds, if not thousands, of students who are motivated to gain professional proficiency in language during their undergraduate studies. In spring 2006, all Flagship Centers were asked to develop curricula that responded to the needs of undergraduates. The goals were simple yet highly challenging: build curricula that offer entering college freshman the opportunity to elect a track that moves them to professional proficiency regardless of their major.

The goals of The Language Flagship are ambitious. We seek to empower a small but rapidly expanding group of institutions to develop and implement new models of undergraduate language learning and to diffuse these models throughout higher education. Through our efforts combined with those of other critical federal, state, and local programs The Language Flagship aims to lead toward a national movement that will impact students throughout the nation.

*The Language Flagship movement focuses on six key elements:*

- *New curricular approaches*
- *K-12 articulation*
- *Articulated overseas language immersion*
- *Diffusion of innovation to new institutions*
- *Peer review and quality assurance*
- *Engagement of the business sector*

## **NEW CURRICULAR APPROACHES**

Our experience developing Flagship Centers has demonstrated that existing language programs need to be radically re-engineered to achieve the goal of producing graduates with professional proficiency. The Language Flagship encourages a broad range of transformative activities with respect to curricular design, institutional enhancements, and commitments to advanced language programming. Key to the transformation of the curriculum is the commitment to the following principles: 1) new pathways to language learning; 2) evidence-based language learning; and 3) institutionalization and long-term sustainable change.

### ***New Pathways to Language Learning***

Creating new pathways to language learning requires developing high-level language learning opportunities for a broad group of college and university students. Flagship students are unique because they represent a wide range of academic majors. Because of this model, Flagship programs have had to rethink the approach to undergraduate education to ensure that students are able to undertake study in their major while meeting the challenges involved in acquiring advanced language skills. Flagship Centers take these challenges into consideration in designing their method and approach to language learning.

New pathways to language learning require two important changes to the curriculum. One change is creating a language learning curriculum that meets the needs of language learners who wish to achieve professional proficiency. The second is creating a content-based curriculum for students in a variety of disciplines. In order for Flagship Centers to prepare students to use their language skills professionally in their field, they must collaborate with other academic departments and create experiential learning opportunities. Flagship curricula maximize the exposure to and use of the target language, drawing on partnerships with the full and best resources of each language field. Flagship Centers cooperate with campus units in other disciplines in both curricular design and program implementation. In addition to classroom learning, all Flagship Centers incorporate coordinated internships and/or community service into the overseas portion of students' study.

### ***Evidence-based language learning***

Evidence-based learning is a means to measure our performance as well as that of the student. Flagship programs incorporate multiple means to assess student proficiency and performance and to routinely gather and share evidence about how well our learning interventions are working. In doing so, Flagship builds continuous cycles of improvement into language learning practices. At the same time, Flagship emphasizes the accumulation of knowledge gained from testing alternative learning strategies, particularly at the more advanced level. Flagship programs also emphasize diagnostic assessment which assists in placing students in programs and allows learning strategies to be tailored to the strengths and weaknesses of individual learners.

### ***Institutional commitment and long-term sustainability***

The Language Flagship is committed to building an enduring infrastructure of programs across the nation that is fully integrated into the mainstream of higher education. As these programs involve a new approach to undergraduate language education, this infrastructure cannot exist without the strong interest and support of the highest levels of university leadership. At the most fundamental level, institutional commitment means

that these programs must be reflected in the overall long-term strategic direction of the institution. Flagship Centers have had to address a number of challenges posed by traditional language learning structures and approaches to language learning in American higher education. Many of these problems were addressed in the 2007 report of the Modern Language Association (MLA), Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages. Unlike the mainstream language departments, Flagship Centers have already put into place a number of solutions to the problems addressed in the report by the MLA. Most importantly, at the core of Flagship Centers are senior-level professors and experts in language acquisition.

### **K-12 ARTICULATION**

Few countries face the challenges we do as a result of students only beginning to learn languages when they enter college. The average American student, even one who has benefited from an immersion environment, enters the university with only basic skills in a second language. The likelihood that the average high school graduate has an intermediate to advanced proficiency in a second language is highest for the European languages where a broader network of opportunities is available in the K-12 system. Few students come to the university with measurable skills in non-European languages.

The goal of The Language Flagship is not only to graduate students at a professionally proficient level of language but also to “push the model” down to elementary, middle, and high schools so that students will enter college with an established and measurable skill in a second language. Without such input, higher education programs will continue to devote limited resources to remedial efforts to prepare incoming students through pre-collegiate summer immersions and first-year “catch up” programs. These efforts are currently needed to bring students to a higher proficiency level, after which Flagship programs can integrate them into a more challenging and advanced curriculum. The integration of language skills into K-12 education is vital to our capacity to educate a citizenry prepared to address the nation’s well being in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Sensitive to the need to provide leadership and direction, and as an integral component of a national effort to address language education, The Language Flagship has supported three groundbreaking efforts designed to model a K-12 language curriculum development and implementation process. These efforts, located at the University of Oregon (Chinese); Michigan State University (Arabic); and Ohio State University (Chinese) provide national models of articulated curricula designed to graduate high school students at the advanced level of proficiency.

Ultimately, the goal is the development of K-12 language instruction programs that graduate high school students with an advanced level of competency and that allow Flagship programs to take them to the next level. Flagship is working closely with each of its Centers and programs to improve the flow of more highly proficient language graduates into the university.

### **ARTICULATED OVERSEAS IMMERSION**

Evidence is compelling that students require an intensive and rigorous program of overseas study to reach the professional proficiency level as well as to develop the cultural skills that are associated with this level. The Language Flagship provides unparalleled opportunities for students to engage in carefully articulated programs of study that include advanced language instruction, direct enrollment in classes taught in

the target language, specialized tutors, and internships involving practical use of the language.

Flagship Center directors work together in *Overseas Academic Councils* to design and implement curricula that address the needs of students matriculated at different institutions. The long-term goal of Flagship is to create an overseas infrastructure that can respond to a growing supply of students from throughout U.S. higher education who have demonstrated a proficiency level that qualifies them for intensive Flagship overseas study.

The overseas undergraduate immersion model assumes that students require a full-year program of overseas study once they have achieved an advanced level of proficiency. This full-year immersion may take place during the third, fourth, or fifth year of a student's undergraduate program. The model also assumes that, in addition to full-year study, some students will require shorter periods of immersion overseas to accelerate their language learning and to accommodate academic schedules.

### **DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION**

Diffusion of innovation is an important and well-documented approach to ensuring that innovations are effectively communicated and adopted throughout a system. At the core of Flagship is the commitment to a process that diffuses successful models throughout higher education. As such, Flagship follows a process that funds innovators to develop and implement new models of language learning, assessment, and standards development, and then share them with "early adopters." These early adopters are committed to move these innovations into new institutional settings. The model is designed to increase the scope and scale of advanced language learning by making Flagship language programs available to an increasing number of students across the U.S.

In order to promote diffusion of innovation, The Language Flagship offers grants to encourage new partnerships to engage in program development. During 2007-2008, The Language Flagship has actively sought to partner existing Flagship Centers with other committed institutions of higher education to "nationalize" the model of advanced language learning. This will not only assist The Language Flagship in reaching its goal of 2,000 enrolled students by the end of the decade but will dramatically enhance the reach of The Language Flagship as a potential national movement.

### **PEER REVIEW AND QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The goals of The Language Flagship are closely tied to clear measures of success and outcomes that are common across all Flagship Centers. Though the methods and approaches of each Flagship Center may differ, the end result is the same: to produce college graduates from many different disciplines who are highly proficient in all modalities of language usage (speaking, reading, writing, and listening). Such goals call for the development of standards and methods of quality assurance that have been rare in language education in the American higher education system. Peer review is central in determining the standards a Flagship Center must meet.

Peer review provides a means for Flagship Center Directors to evaluate the quality of their Flagship peers. It ensures that directors learn from each other through close communication, student and faculty interviews, and discussions with staff. Through this process, The Language Flagship establishes a means of quality assurance and

standards that help provide clear guidance for new institutions who wish to become part of The Language Flagship family.

### **ENGAGEMENT OF THE BUSINESS SECTOR**

The Language Flagship has, since its inception, promoted the value of partnership between government, education, and business. Through such a partnership we are able to set the foundations for long-term financial sustainability as well as affect the way a variety of sectors value language in the workplace. Beginning in 2007, Flagship took the lead to coordinate the *2007: U.S. Language Summits: Roadmaps to Language Excellence*, which engaged more than 30 businesses in a half-year process to shape change at the state level and create a plan that will produce global professionals with advanced language and cultural skills. The success of the summits sparked The Language Flagship to continue its efforts to explore opportunities for engaging the business sector as a partner. This effort begins by recognizing business' current and future needs for language skills. Flagship views businesses as future employers of its graduates, suppliers of crucial internship opportunities, and potential financial supporters.

### **A CLOSER LOOK AT FLAGSHIP CENTERS**

#### **FLAGSHIP CENTERS AND PROGRAMS**

The Language Flagship supports undergraduate and post-BA programs and a limited number of pilot K-12 programs. Flagship Centers are based at institutions around the United States and offer an on-campus curriculum coupled with a strategy for intensive study at an Overseas Flagship Center. Overseas Flagship Centers are located at participating foreign institutions and are coordinated by a lead Flagship Center. The Language Flagship supports three K-12 Flagship Programs at public schools in Ohio, Oregon, and Michigan. These pilot programs are intended to serve as a national model for articulated K-12 language instruction in the U.S.

#### ***2008-09 Flagship Institutions***

- *12 Flagship Centers*
- *6 Flagship Partner Program*
- *3 K-12 Flagship Programs*
- *7 Overseas Flagship Programs*

#### ***Same goal - different pathways***

Though all Flagship Centers have the same goal—to create graduates of American colleges and universities who are professionally proficient in key languages—each Flagship Center follows its own pathway to reaching that goal. These different pathways are based on a number of factors, the most important being the language offered, the methodological approach of the language experts, and the types of students enrolled. Chinese, for example, is a high demand language. This is reflected by the fact that The Language Flagship supports five different domestic Chinese Flagship Centers and programs as well as two different Overseas Centers. These Overseas Centers are coordinated by the Chinese Flagship Academic Council, which ensures that the structure and curriculum overseas is well articulated with the different domestic curricula. In addition, at least two of the five Chinese Flagship Centers work closely with Flagship-funded K-12 programs. Two Chinese Flagship Centers offer post-BA/graduate degrees.

On the other end of the spectrum, The Language Flagship approaches the teaching of smaller enrollment languages by focusing on language groupings, such as Central Asian

Turkic languages, Eurasian languages, and African languages. Because these language groups represent low national enrollments, The Language Flagship approaches these languages through a partnership, or consortial, approach. Recognizing that no institution of higher education has a large number of students who are ready to learn these languages at the higher levels, these programs engage multiple partner institutions to create a critical mass of students. These students eventually study overseas at selected locations that can accommodate direct enrollment at universities.

The Flagship approach is based on flexibility. Flagship Centers are designed to accommodate students who enter the program at different levels of proficiency. Some Flagship Centers focus on attracting students who already have intermediate-level language skills. However, as Flagship Centers become more experienced in training students at the higher levels, they admit entering freshmen with no prior knowledge in the target language with the understanding that the student may have to take an extra year to reach professional proficiency.

Regardless of the language in which a student is enrolled, the pathway to proficiency ensures that students receive intensive, directed language and cultural instruction alongside their academic majors. Such an approach means that Flagship Centers need to reevaluate many long-standing policies shaping academic requirements, student financial aid, and overseas study.

### ***Expansion***

Since the beginning of the pilot program the goal of The Language Flagship has been to increase the scale and scope of the program to impact as many students as possible. Beginning in 2007 the program expanded Flagship by creating new Flagship Partner Programs through the Promoting Diffusion of Innovation grant program. These partner institutions join with Flagship Centers to implement Flagship curricula, but are not yet fully-fledged Flagship Centers. The first Flagship Partner Program was formed at Arizona State University; five additional partner programs have now been added. The Language Flagship plan is to aggressively seek and add new partners each year beginning in 2008 through our Diffusion of Innovation grant program.

## **FLAGSHIP CENTERS**

### **AFRICAN**

TBD(SEPT 2008)

### **ARABIC**

Michigan State University  
Dearborn Public Schools K–12 Arabic Program  
University of Texas, Austin  
University of Maryland, College Park  
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor Flagship Partner Program  
University of Oklahoma Flagship Partner Program  
*Alexandria University, Egypt\**  
*Damascus University, Syria\**

**CENTRAL ASIAN TURKIC LANGUAGES CONSORTIUM**  
American Councils for International Education

**CHINESE**

Arizona State University Flagship Partner Program  
Brigham Young University  
Indiana University Flagship Partner Program  
Ohio State University  
Ohio Public Schools K–12 Flagship Program  
University of Mississippi  
University of Oregon  
Portland Public Schools K–12 Flagship Program  
*Nanjing University, China\**  
*Qingdao University, China\**

**EURASIAN LANGUAGES CONSORTIUM**

American Councils for International Education  
Bryn Mawr College  
Middlebury College  
Portland State University Flagship Partner Program  
University of California, Los Angeles  
University of Maryland, College Park  
*Saint Petersburg State University, Russia\**

**HINDI/URDU**

University of Texas, Austin

**KOREAN**

University of Hawai'i, Mānoa  
*Korea University, South Korea\**

**PERSIAN/FARSI**

University of Maryland, College Park  
*Tajik State National University, Tajikistan\**

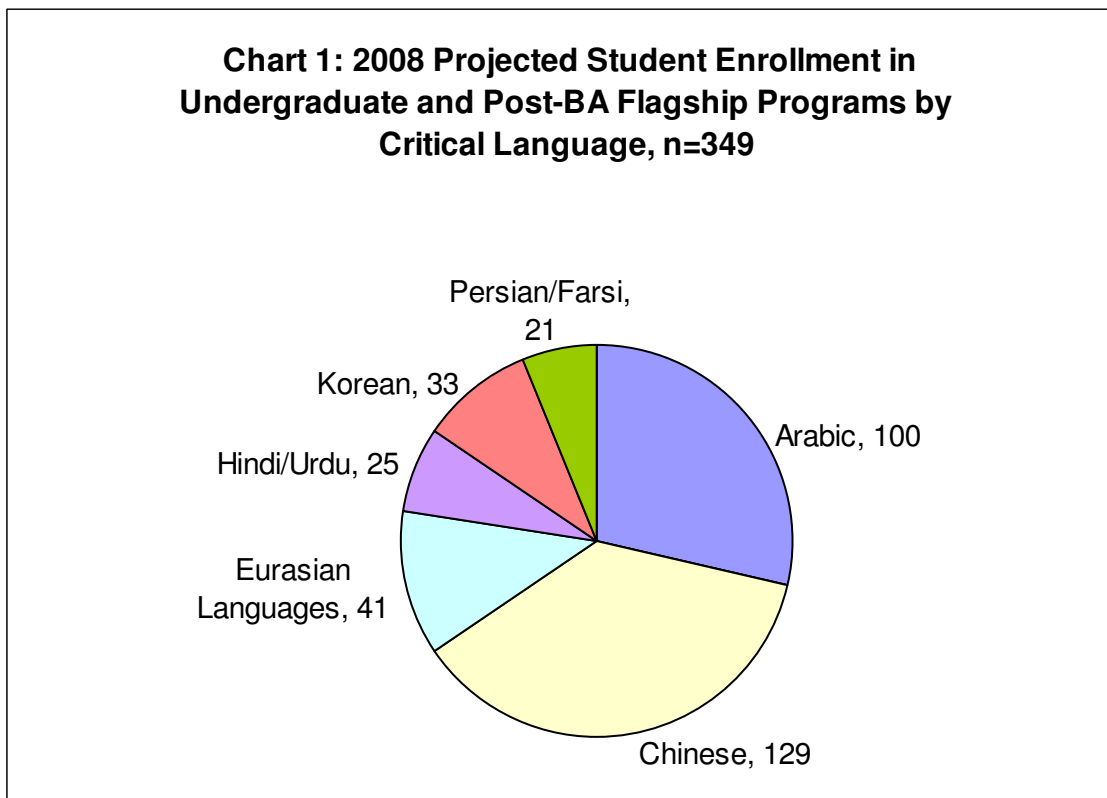
*\*Overseas Flagship Center*

**FLAGSHIP STUDENTS**

Flagship students at the K-12, undergraduate, and post-BA levels represent the next generation of global professionals in the United States. Students come from all regions of the nation and pursue their own academic interests in addition to language study.

The success of the Language Flagship has meant that the Centers have already begun attracting top students to their campuses. Flagship programs cater to students' individual proficiency levels, tailoring language instruction to meet the needs of each learner. This model has proven to be a successful approach to stimulating student interest and keeping students engaged in learning both language and culture. Retention in Flagship programs is high; the majority of students progress from year to year with greater language proficiency.

Flagship enrollments have doubled every year since 2003, however the program remained relatively small as a result of its focus on post-BA students. In 2007 Flagship added new undergraduate programs and enrolled 136 undergraduate students. Together with the Flagship post-BA program enrollment of 100 students, the total student enrollment in Flagship undergraduate and post-BA programs for 2007 was 236. In 2008 we will expand to add more undergraduate programs in Chinese, Korean, and Persian/Farsi. As depicted in **Chart 1**, we anticipate 349 students to enroll in these and existing undergraduate and post-BA Flagship programs. Of these 253 will be undergraduate students and 96 will be Post-BA students.



#### FLAGSHIP STUDENT PROFILES

Flagship students come from all parts of the United States with a variety of levels of language proficiency in a Flagship language. Students share the goal of reaching professional proficiency and using their language and culture skills to contribute to a global society. Each student is contributing to and fulfilling the Flagship vision in his or her own unique way. Below is a sampling of students who have joined the Flagship movement.

- ❖ A Flagship Scholar and junior at Michigan State University studies Arabic in the Flagship program and is majoring in Interdisciplinary Humanities. She plans to work in the field of international development using her Arabic skills.
  
- ❖ A post-BA Russian Flagship Fellow completed the overseas program at St. Petersburg State University and went on to interpret for U.S. and Russian personnel for the Washington, D.C.-Moscow Presidential Hotline. He is now

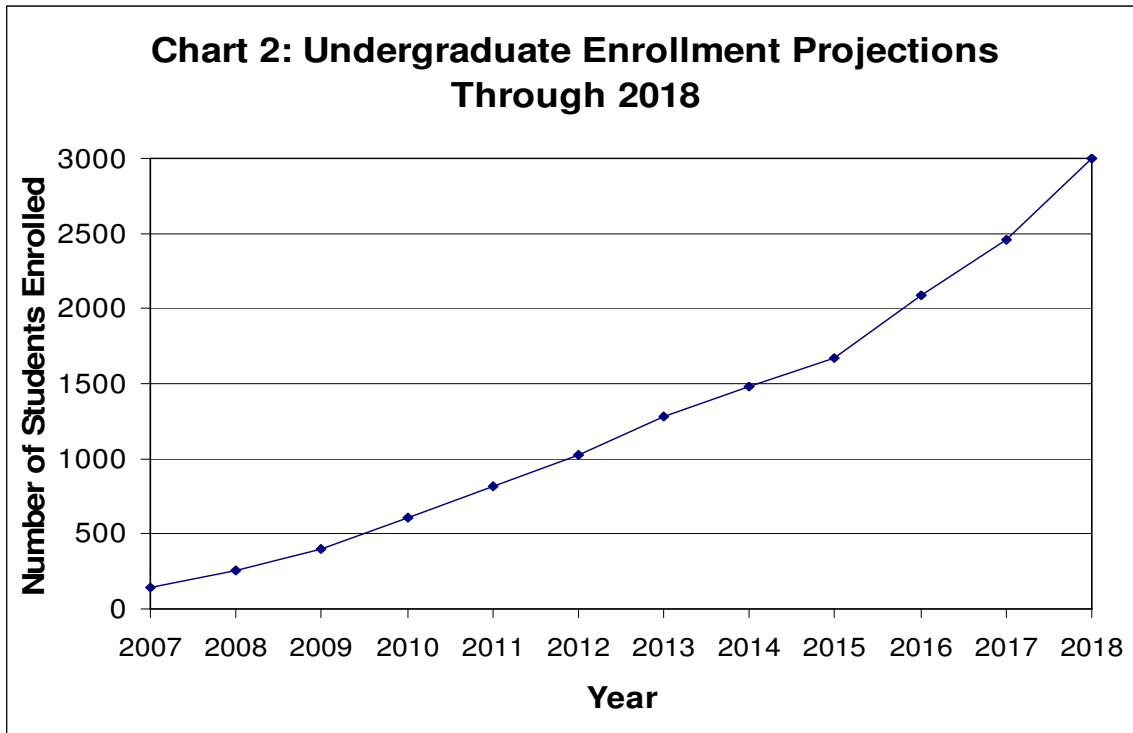
- pursing a master's degree at Harvard University studying religious and ethnic issues, especially the interaction between Christianity and Islam in Central Asia.
- ❖ A Flagship Scholar and BS/MA senior in biochemistry and Chinese at Ohio State University was recently recognized as a member of the prestigious USA Today Academic First Team. He is currently studying traditional Chinese medicine in Beijing, China, and hopes to pursue a career in medicine with a focus on international public health.
  - ❖ A post-BA Flagship Fellow in Korean and a student of mathematics at the University of Hawaii designed his own course of study in the Korean language with a Korean-speaking professor from University of Hawaii's College of Engineering. He went on to earn an MS in information security from Korea University and is currently working toward a Ph.D. in statistics from Ohio State University.
  - ❖ A Flagship Scholar and senior from Brigham Young University is studying linguistics and Chinese studies at Nanjing University in China. She plans to pursue a law degree with a focus on international law.
  - ❖ A post-BA Persian Flagship student is studying at the Dushanbe Language Center in Tajikistan. He is also proficient in French and hopes to work for the FBI in the Language Services Section.
  - ❖ A post-BA Flagship Fellow completed the Arabic Flagship program at the University of Maryland. Previously she earned a master's degree from American University in Cairo, where she studied forced migration and refugee studies. She is now working for the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

### **THE FUTURE OF FLAGSHIP**

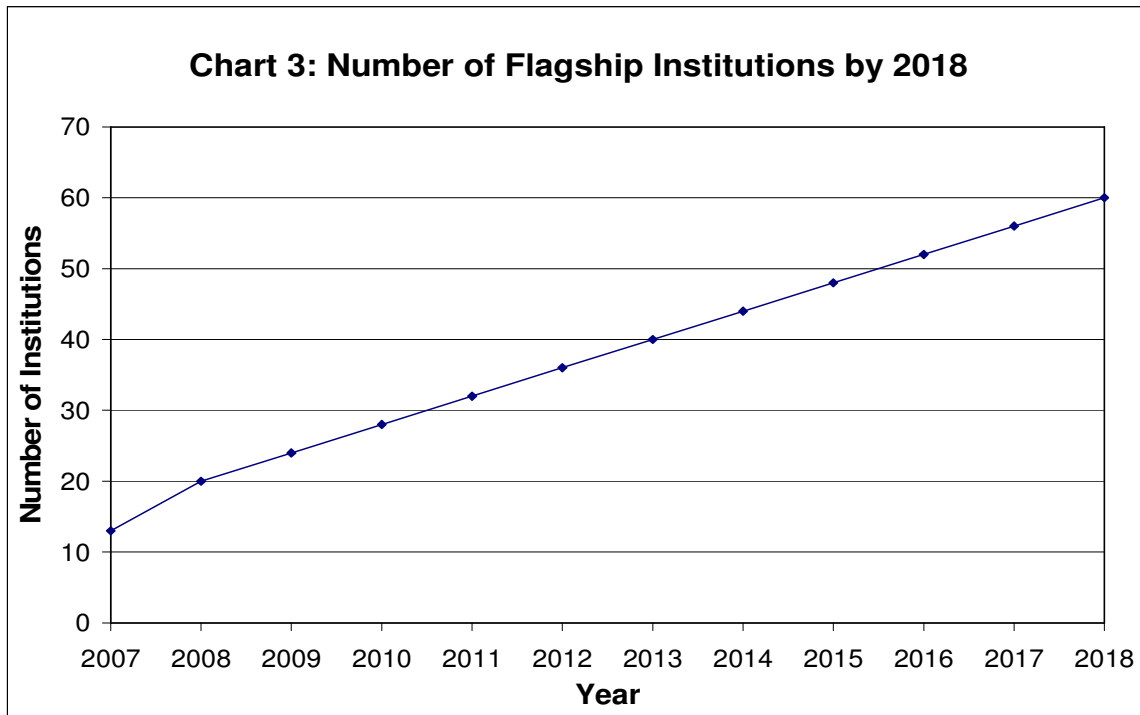
Following the transition to undergraduate programs, The Language Flagship is growing rapidly and is beginning to change language learning at U.S. institutions of higher education. As we expand and diffuse Flagship innovations, more universities are recognizing that they want to change the way they teach languages. Students are embracing Flagship programs to prepare them for future careers as global professionals. Already, The Language Flagship has changed student expectations for undergraduate study. As The Language Flagship moves forward, increasing numbers of students will come to expect high-quality language programs as part of their undergraduate experience. Such expectations drive the market. Institutions hosting Flagship Centers have already seen the power of these programs as recruitment tools. This has been evident in the relatively short time that Flagship Centers have had to develop, implement, and recruit students. Though many of our Flagship undergraduate programs started as late as 2007, Flagship Centers have demonstrated on the whole a high level of interest and increased enrollment.

As mentioned above, one of the core goals of The Language Flagship is to increase its scale and scope by having existing Flagship Centers and programs work closely with interested adopters. **Chart 2** depicts the rapid growth of The Language Flagship projected to the year 2018, including enrollments in the undergraduate and post-BA

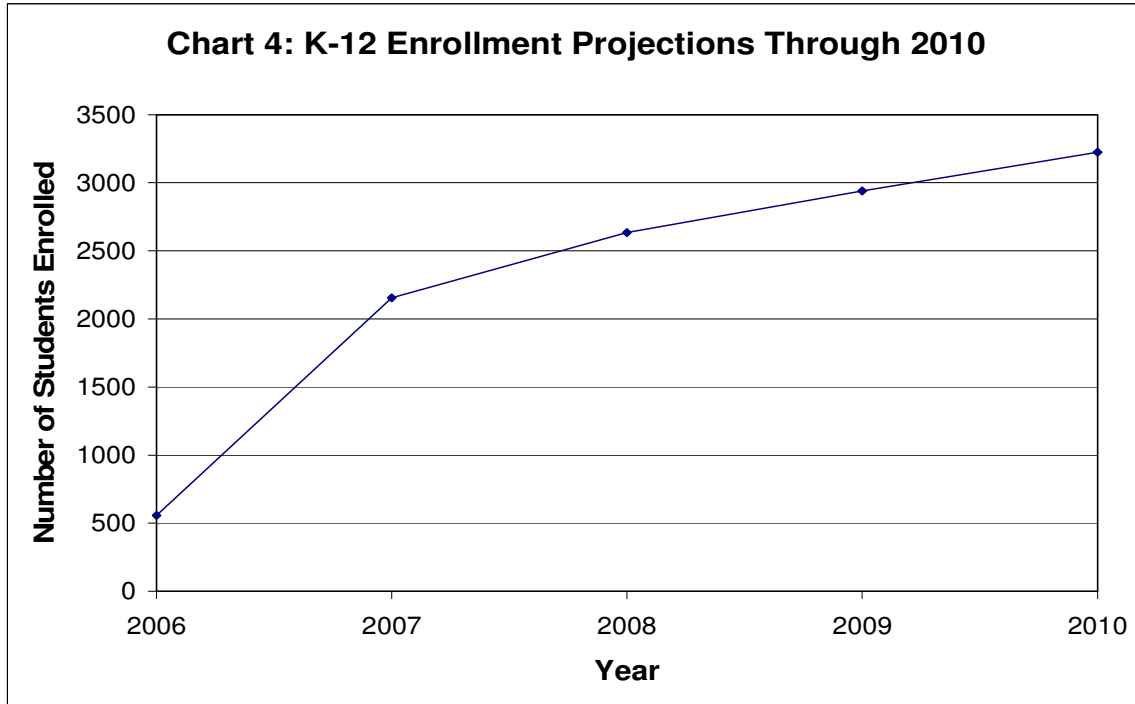
programs. A conservative estimate is that Flagship programs will enroll no fewer than 600 students during the 2010-2011 academic year and meet the goal of reaching at least 2000 students by the end of the current decade.



The Language Flagship is developing a growing national structure of U.S. colleges and universities offering advanced language opportunities to undergraduate students. **Chart 3** shows current and projected numbers of institutions involved in Flagship initiatives through 2018. These projections assume a conservative estimate of an additional four undergraduate programs funded through Diffusion of Innovation grants each year.



Flagship's involvement in K-12 language education is designed to provide a national model which school districts around the U.S. may embrace in the future. Although a small pilot initiative, K-12 Flagship programs have already demonstrated remarkable success in numbers of students impacted by The Language Flagship. **Chart 4** demonstrates current student enrollment and projected growth in K-12 Flagship programs.



**THE WAY AHEAD**

The Language Flagship has, in just a few short years, demonstrated the power of innovation and change in American higher education. Flagship programs have begun to transform the landscape of language learning by offering extraordinary opportunities for students to develop skills that rival those of their counterparts across the globe. In the coming years we will see more opportunities nation-wide for students to achieve both advanced degrees and professional language proficiency. As we grow and expand The Language Flagship we hope to have a lasting national impact, creating a society of global professionals that will last well into the future.