



## THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

Creating Global Professionals

# Discourse

NEWSLETTER OF THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP  
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## Undergrads Flock to Flagship Programs

What was an experimental pilot initiative is becoming a national model for U.S. undergraduate language education. In 2006, The Language Flagship decided to expand a successful post-bachelor's degree model of language learning to include undergraduate students. After only 2 full years of operation, Flagship undergraduate programs are already serving as major recruitment vehicles to language departments and their host institutions. The new programs offer pathways to a goal that strikes a harmonious chord with global-minded undergrads: professional training combined with superior language skills.

Students are attracted to Flagship undergraduate programs because they offer an opportunity to gain not only advanced proficiency in general language usage but also an ability to communicate professionally within the context of their academic disciplines. Flagship students can combine majors in international studies, law, or biology, for example, with intensive courses in a critical language like Arabic, Chinese, or Hindi. Michael Metcalf, director of the Chinese Flagship Program at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss), describes this approach as "language study for professional purposes rather than for the language or the discipline itself."

One characteristic that sets undergraduate Flagship programs apart is that language is spread

across the curriculum; content courses offered in the target language support this concept. In addition, reading, writing, listening, and speaking — skills critical to any global career — are given equal weight in the classroom. According to Elizabeth Stein, a junior in the Arabic Flagship Program at Michigan State University, "It's all Arabic, all of the time; novels, short stories, essays, articles, presentations, guest speakers."



JONATHAN SEEFELDT

Chelsea Aldridge, a Hindi/Urdu student at the University of Texas, Austin, appreciates that the Flagship program allows extra sessions with teaching assistants like Anoop Kaul. "This amazing asset has helped me progress immensely in these past 8 months," she says.

Another defining feature is the focus on achieving a targeted proficiency level, and students know what is expected of them even before they apply for a program. Madeline Spring, a nationally recognized professor of Chinese and director of the Chinese Flagship Partner Program at Arizona State University (ASU), applauds the inherent flexibility of the Flagship program, which allows doing "whatever it takes to ensure a student's success." Some students are advised to participate in an additional intensive summer course overseas before they begin the program, others get one-on-one tutoring on campus, and all students have ready access to instructors and staff who take student progress and achievements seriously.

Flagship undergraduate programs are designed on the basis of years of experience, research, and evidence demonstrating that achieving professional-

## Promoting Meaningful Overseas Study

An effective and challenging overseas program of study is a compelling component of The Language Flagship. Each Flagship language has carefully articulated programs at Overseas Flagship Centers at participating institutions (see the complete list on page 4). These programs integrate with the stateside curriculum to ensure that students receive the most comprehensive language and content area training.

The active participation of Flagship directors and staff is vital to the overseas program design. At the Flagship Centers for languages with larger enrollment, such as Chinese and Arabic, Flagship Councils comprised of representatives from each center carefully design overseas programs to fit into the undergraduate curricula. Students are approved for overseas study when a Flagship Council determines that they are ready on the basis of performance and assessment measures. This process ensures that students enter the overseas programs at similar levels of language usage in all four skill areas: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

A system of Flagship Levels has been developed to measure the language proficiency of students going overseas. This system is important because The Language Flagship attracts students with various linguistic backgrounds. For example, heritage

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KENNEDY HORTON

Ole Miss student Ben Woodrick (addressing classmates in Qingdao, China, during summer 2007) knows Flagship students majoring in fields from anthropology to political science. "Having Chinese speakers in all fields and disciplines is in the interest of the United States," he says, "regardless of the career paths students choose."

### The Flagship Difference

- Language teaching at a level of intensity that ensures achieving professional proficiency
- Required overseas immersion
- Cultural awareness and literacy cultivated along with language study
- Content courses offered in the target language
- Student accountability for academic progress
- Emphasis on practical use of the language
- Required proficiency testing of all graduates

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## Undergrads ... (from page 1)

level language proficiency requires a systematic approach: Students must experience the target language and culture first-hand, through content-based language learning and overseas immersion. This carefully articulated experience is so attractive to students that The Language Flagship “can dynamically change the visibility of a school and its programs,” says Spring. She reports that students are increasingly choosing to study at certain institutions — even at schools that they would not have considered otherwise — because of the Flagship Centers that they host. Ben Woodrick transferred to Ole Miss as a junior after studying Chinese for 2 years in a traditional track at the U.S. Naval Academy. “The Chinese Flagship was the best way to rapidly increase my language ability without significantly extending the amount of time I would have to spend in school,” he says.



ELIZABETH STEIN

*Elizabeth Stein (pictured at the Pyramids of Giza, Egypt) started learning Arabic so she could travel in the Middle East and conduct Egyptology research. Enrolling in the MSU Arabic Flagship Program this year was a simple decision because she wanted “to master the Arabic language, and the Flagship program is built on that idea.”*

Undergraduate Flagship programs are particularly interesting to students who have studied in K–12 immersion programs, taken advanced placement courses in a language, or traveled abroad previously. Jennings Treutel was fluent in Flemish and had studied French before he even started high school, where he took 3 years of Latin courses. Then, “looking for a challenge,” he decided to study Chinese. In summer 2006, he participated in a high school program in Qingdao, China, where he “fell in love” with the culture and customs. A year later, he was a freshman first-year student in the Ole Miss Chinese Flagship Program. For Treutel, the quality of the instructors and curriculum, paired with the high standards for student performance, makes the Flagship program unique. What’s more, he says, “You’re

guaranteed to learn as long as you put in your time and effort.”

Flagship students unanimously agree: The program is tough. Chelsea Aldridge, a first-year student in the Hindi/Urdu Flagship Program at the University of Texas, Austin, believes that personal motivation is essential to a student’s success. “Most students in other language classes are learning the languages simply to fulfill a requirement,” she explains, whereas Flagship students typically are passionate about the languages that they study. Intense interest translates to a strong commitment, drive, and willingness to rise to the challenge of Flagship programs. Similarly, sophomore and first-year Ole Miss Chinese Language Flagship student Cooper Rimmer realized that he would never develop the ability to use Chinese in his professional work without Flagship’s structure and rigor. “The Flagship program has pushed me to be much better than I would be otherwise,” he claims.

Despite their infancy, Flagship undergraduate programs are not only expanding enrollment but also working with other institutions to share their experiences through The Language Flagship’s Diffusion of Innovation grant program. One grant recipient is ASU, which collaborated with the University of Oregon to develop the Chinese Flagship Partner Program. Already, ASU faculty members in other languages in the School of International Letters and Cultures are looking to Flagship successes as models for adapting their own curricula. At Ole Miss, there are plans to build a Critical Language Institute based on the Flagship model, because, as Michael Metcalf reports, “the ethic and example of the Chinese Flagship is catching fire.”



ROBERT JORDAN

*Ole Miss Assistant Professor Yi Lin (right) works with first-year Chinese Flagship students Jennings Treutel (left) and Cooper Rimmer (middle). “The focus is on character memorization and internalization,” says Rimmer. The purpose is to teach students how to understand characters even if they haven’t explicitly learned them.*

## Word from Flagship

Dr. Michael Nugent  
Director  
The Language Flagship



MARIE BAKER

As awareness of The Language Flagship grows, I increasingly find myself being asked to describe how our undergraduate language programs differ from non-Flagship language programs on college and university campuses. This issue of *Discourse* describes these differences by highlighting the undergraduate Flagship program and its unique overseas component.

Flagship Centers collaborate closely with each other to ensure coordination and integration among all partners in developing their undergraduate programs. Considerable attention is paid to creating articulated linkages with overseas partners, where programs face their own academic and administrative challenges. Such integration takes a high level of creativity, devotion, and commitment on the part of Flagship Center directors and staff. Building a Flagship program involves not only developing new approaches to learning language but also working with experts in student housing to develop language houses, coordinating with financial aid staff to provide incentives and support for students, and communicating with development officers to garner support from key alumni and members of the business sector.

Most important, Flagship faculty and staff dedicate much of their effort to cutting-edge teaching and research. Flagship students benefit immeasurably from this teaching and mentoring, which rivals that of any undergraduate honors program. As a result, Flagship programs have begun to attract some of the best students in the nation. Joshua Lotz, featured in this issue of *Discourse*, is a perfect example of the kind of student who is attracted to and excels in the Flagship program. In addition, some of the best faculty and staff in their fields are joining Flagship programs because of the new challenges in teaching, research, and scholarship that they present.

As an evolving organization, The Language Flagship looks forward to sharing with you the results of our research, development, and scholarship in the future.

## Promoting Meaningful ... (from page 1)

students tend to come to the program with less formal training and stronger speaking and listening skills, whereas non-heritage students tend to have a stronger foundation in reading and writing.

Stages of overseas study are designed to accommodate different student proficiency levels. The first stage normally consists of an intensive summer language program completed after study at a stateside Flagship Center. Usually 8 or 9 weeks long, the program is designed to provide students with opportunities not only to speak and use the language in a real-world environment but also to learn about living in the culture that they have been studying. To participate in this stage, students must demonstrate a minimum level of proficiency that is agreed upon by the Flagship Council.



BEN WOODRICK

*Kennedy Horton, a student in the Ole Miss Chinese Flagship Program, addresses classmates and instructors in Chinese during the ceremony to celebrate the end of the session in Qingdao, China, summer 2007.*

The second stage is a full year of overseas study. During the first semester, students directly enroll at an Overseas Flagship Center in one or more courses that correspond to their undergraduate majors and receive the appropriate degree of language support. During the second semester, students participate in planned internships or community service that provides real-world experience with the language skills that they have acquired. To participate in this stage, students must demonstrate the equivalent of the advanced proficiency level, as defined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

The integration of stateside and overseas programming is based on research and practice that demonstrates the relationship between overseas language learning and proficiency in the target language. Davidson (2007) and Brecht et al. (1995) report that students who spend longer periods overseas in well-structured programs consistently demonstrate higher language proficiency than those who do not.

Davidson, Dan E. (2007). Study Abroad and Outcomes Measurements: The Case of Russian. *Modern Language Journal*, 91: 276–280.

Brecht, R. D., D. Davidson, and R. Ginzberg (1995). Predictors of Foreign Language Gain During Study Abroad. In *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context*, Barbara F. Freed, ed. Philadelphia, Pa.: J. Benjamins, pp. 37–66.

## Op-ed: Flagship Sets the Bar High

Richard Brecht  
Director, Center for Advanced Study of Language  
University of Maryland, College Park



AXEL PERSAUD

The attention paid to language in the United States has increased extraordinarily since the events of Sept. 11, 2001, highlighted the deficits that Americans have in communicating with societies worldwide. Many university language departments have been repositioning their programs to respond to these deficits. Among the most significant developments and championing the most innovative approach is The Language Flagship, which is raising the bar for language learning in the United States. No longer must students settle for basic functional skills in a foreign language; they can graduate with professional proficiency. Institutions are held accountable to an extent never before known in U.S. language education. Finally, students from all majors can integrate advanced language study with academic coursework.

The Language Flagship's precedent-setting approach derives from its origins as a program launched to benefit the U.S. government by training students in languages critical to national and economic security. Although this mission remains, the ramifications of the program's successes are felt throughout the education system. National reports cite the need for critical languages and high-level skills and often point to Flagship Centers as models. Accordingly, national language organizations that represent both mainstream and less commonly taught languages are increasingly focusing attention on standards, advanced skills, and accountability in foreign language instruction.

The resonance of The Language Flagship is understandable within a broad societal context. National surveys demonstrate that Americans' attitudes toward language learning have never been more positive. Many government agencies have passed the tipping point in their demand for and investment in language capabilities. The private sector makes little distinction between "business" and "international business" as it seeks employees who can help internationalize and localize products and services.

Although science, engineering, and technology — along with English — are still the darlings of government education efforts, foreign languages are no longer forgotten orphans. The Language Flagship's model challenges old ideas about what language programs can accomplish, sets new expectations, and implements programs that meet those expectations.

## Dialogue Continues at Metro Language Series



Since its inception, The Language Flagship has engaged the business sector in promoting U.S. language education. The success of the June 2007 Language Summits, a special Flagship initiative, has sparked the creation of the Metro Language Series. These meetings are focused on identifying the language skills that businesses need and defining the role that the business sector can play to advance language education in the United States. The Metro Language Series kicks off in spring 2008 with "think tank" sessions in San Francisco, Calif.; New York, N.Y.; Seattle, Wash.; and Washington, D.C. "The goal of the series is to seek insight from business leaders who know that their corporations will benefit hugely by the global professionals graduating from Flagship programs," comments Flagship senior strategist Susan Duggan. "Learning how these companies can help promote language learning is at the crux of the Metro Language Series."



MATILDA LENELL

Chinese Flagship Scholar Joshua Lotz

## Flagship Scholar Bridges Medicine and Chinese

Biochemistry and Chinese may seem like a daunting combination. But for Joshua Lotz, a 2006 Flagship Scholar at Ohio State University (OSU), they are an enticing challenge. The 23-year-old took a year off after high school to study in Beijing, where he became interested in traditional Chinese medicine. "I was intrigued by how it seemed to be an integral part of the modern Chinese medical system," Lotz explains. "When I came back, I decided to continue with my Chinese studies while pursuing a pre-med degree in biochemistry." Lotz notes that the Flagship Program has allowed him to integrate his interests in medicine and Chinese by providing special services such as a personal tutor to study medical subjects in Chinese and administrative, financial, and logistical support to conduct research on traditional medicine in China.

Lotz plans to work in international public health, and a career in public service seems inevitable. He has experience managing a health clinic in China and is a co-founder of the OSU chapter of the Global Health Initiative, a student group dedicated to increasing awareness about and providing educational opportunities related to global health issues. Lotz's achievements have not gone unnoticed. Last year, Lotz was awarded a Truman Scholarship. In February 2008, he was one of 20 exceptional undergraduates recognized by *USA Today* for outstanding commitment to community service and named to the 2008 All-USA College Academic Team.

### 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 seeks to graduate 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 superior-level language proficiency. Programs are available at undergraduate and post-bachelor's degree levels and 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*

### A new brand for a new language paradigm

The Language Flagship is a partnership among government, education, and business. Our logo comprises a blue diamond for government, the creator and seminal funder of this program; a gold diamond for business, a key beneficiary and supporter of this effort; and a green diamond for education. Education is at the center of this collaborative effort, responding to advanced language demands in both government and business. Two converging white lines thrust across all three partners, leading the nation to a new paradigm for advanced language education.

*An initiative of the National Security Education Program*

### Flagship Centers

#### Arabic

Michigan State University  
Dearborn Public Schools K-12 Flagship Program  
University of Texas, Austin  
University of Maryland, College Park  
*Alexandria University, Egypt\**  
*Damascus University, Syria\**

#### Central Asian Turkic Languages

American Councils for International Education

#### Chinese

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

#### Eurasian Languages

American Councils for International Education  
Bryn Mawr College  
Middlebury College  
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*

### Contact Us

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

Tel.: 703-696-1991

E-mail: [info@thelanguageflagship.org](mailto:info@thelanguageflagship.org)

Web: [www.thelanguageflagship.org](http://www.thelanguageflagship.org)