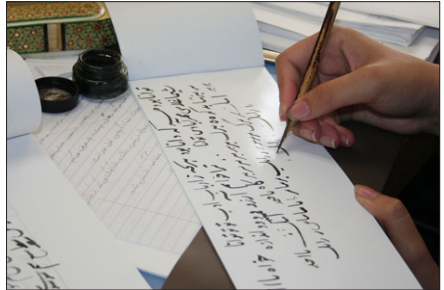




Middle East Language Learning in Higher Education



Web Publication

**National Middle East Language
Resource Center**

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Chapter 1

Far From Our Potential

On 17 September 2001, Robert Mueller, director of the FBI, appeared on national television calling for American citizens “with a professional level of proficiency in Arabic and Farsi.” We hope there will never be another day like 11 September 2001, but the prospect of this never happening again cannot be left to luck. The better prepared this nation is linguistically and culturally, the more we know about the world, the better we are at communicating with the rest of the world in culturally appropriate ways, the better prepared we will be to head off such tragedies and, better yet, the more effective we will be at working with peace-loving peoples across the globe to address the underlying causes that give rise to such events. We are far from where we need to be (Brecht 2010). American expertise in the languages of the world is of vital importance to the well being of the nation and the world.

This report presents a variety of data that documents the current state of Middle East language learning in U.S. higher education, as well as some insight into K–12 developments. Most importantly, we, the National Middle East Language Resource Center (NMELRC) report here and with supporting evidence and illustration on our web site (nmelrc.org) on a number of innovations from recent years that suggest the very real possibility of a bright future for Middle East language learning.

Middle East Language Enrollments in Higher Education

The past ten years have witnessed a significant rise in interest among American students in studying foreign languages. Enrollments in most foreign languages are up (Furman et. al. 2010) and participation in study abroad programs is increasing (Open Doors 2010). In the release of the results of its most recent nationwide survey conducted in fall 2009, the Modern Language Association yet again reported strong growth for Arabic but not the dramatic gains

seen earlier in the decade, as can be seen in Table 1. Enrollment increases for Persian and Turkish have been far more modest, with loss of ground for Modern Hebrew, as can be seen in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Table 1. Recent Arabic Enrollments (MLA Survey Data)¹

	1998	2002	2006	2009	% change		
					1998 - 2002	2002 - 2006	2006-2009
Two-year	1,158	1,859	4,384	6,235	61%	136%	42%
Undergraduate ²	3,212	7,502	17,442	28,066	134%	132%	60%
Graduate	445	531	940	782	19%	77%	-20%
Total	4,815	9,892	22,766	35,083	105%	130%	54%

The apparent recent 20% drop in graduate enrollments in Arabic is cause for concern, particularly given the large numbers of undergraduates documented in the pipeline in fall 2006. We need to ask ourselves why more of these students have not continued their studies as graduate students. MLA data show this trend of negative growth in graduate enrollments in spite of positive growth among undergraduates is common across a number of languages, including French, German, Japanese, Chinese, and Russian (Furman et.al, 2010:21). One possible explanation for fewer graduate enrollments, one that is partially but certainly not adequately satisfying, is that more and more undergraduate students are reaching higher levels of proficiency earlier, as a result of starting earlier and pursuing more intensive study options in both summer and academic-year programs. For example, Georgetown University reports this semester (fall 2011) eighty-three undergraduate students are enrolled in fourth-year Arabic courses (compared to their previous high of 53 in 2008).

Table 2. Recent Modern Hebrew Enrollments (MLA Survey Data)

	1998	2002	2006	2009	% change		
					1998 - 2002	2002 - 2006	2006-2009
Two-year	360	430	423	330	19%	-2%	-28%
Undergraduate.	6106	8,060	8,442	7,399	32%	5%	-14%
Graduate	205	411	697	355	100%	70%	-96%
Total	6,671	8,901	9,562	8,086	33%	7%	-18%

According to Table 2, Modern Hebrew enrollments declined in all categories but especially among graduate students. While there does appear to have been a significant decrease in the numbers of graduate students enrolled in Modern Hebrew, much of the decrease appears to be the result of MLA's survey sample (at least one significant reporting error and the failure of a number of institutions to report their graduate enrollments in 2009). A few institutions with federally funded Middle East Centers reported significant increases in their graduate enrollments during this period and since. For example, Harvard reports it now has five graduates enrolled in Modern Hebrew, as opposed to one in 2009. Enrollments at most of these institutions appear to be essentially stable since 2009.

1. This report does not examine those Middle Eastern languages primarily spoken in Central Asian nations such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, given that the Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region at Indiana University is the Title VI language resource center responsible for these. This report focuses on the four gateway languages: Arabic, Hebrew, Persian and Turkish.

2. "Undergraduate" here and elsewhere (unless otherwise specified) refers to undergraduates at four-year institutions.

Table 3. Recent Persian Enrollments (MLA Survey Data)³

	1998	2002	2006	2009	% change		
					1998 - 2002	2002 - 2006	2006-2009
Two-year	233	328	629	652	41%	92%	4%
Undergraduate.	175	546	1226	1799	212%	125%	47%
Graduate	64	130	125	103	103%	-4%	-21%
Total	472	1,004	1,980	2554	113%	97%	29%

Persian undergraduate enrollments show impressive gains. Again, the drop in graduate student numbers appears to be largely due to institutions with major graduate programs not reporting their enrollments in 2009. Some of the larger programs, such as the University of Arizona, did report decreasing graduate enrollments, but others, like the University of Columbia and the University of Chicago, more than doubled their graduate enrollments from 2006 to 2009, according to MLA data. We continue to see such fluctuations within institutions between 2009 and 2011. For example, the University of Arizona has moved from two to eleven graduate student enrollments.

Table 4. Recent Turkish Enrollments (MLA Survey Data)

	1998	2002	2006	2009	% change		
					1998 - 2002	2002 - 2006	2006-2009
Two-year	0	1	0	8	100%	-100%	800%
Undergraduate	181	241	531	571	33%	120%	8%
Graduate	37	61	83	59	65%	36%	-41%
Total	218	303	614	638	39%	103%	4%

Turkish undergraduate enrollments appear to have changed little since 2006, but graduate enrollments appear to have gone down considerably, apparently here too MLA figures are suspect for institutions with Title VI Middle East Centers. MLA shows no graduate Turkish enrollments for four of the seven centers reporting enrollments to NMELRC for 2009. If we add the missing thirty-six graduate enrollments to the figures for Turkish in Table 4, we find that there was apparently a 13% increase from 2006 to 2009. In these seven institutions, we find graduate Turkish enrollments for fall 2011 are up 26% from 2009. Undergraduate Arabic and Turkish enrollments increased approximately 10% each over the same time period, with Hebrew decreasing 6% and Persian 12%. A more detailed analysis of MLA survey data for Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish, and our own survey data that include fall 2011 enrollments may be found at <http://nmelrc.org/enrollments>.

What the Students Want

Enrollments are up considerably for Arabic, Persian, and Turkish over the past ten years, but few, if any, would claim that the U.S. is currently producing graduates with sufficient proficiency in these languages to meet the nation's needs. We do not know precisely how many highly proficient graduates will be needed to fill the gap, but the responses of over a

3. This table also includes enrollments reported to MLA as "Farsi" and "Farsi/Persian."

thousand respondents from seventy-seven institutions to NMELRC student surveys indicate this shortfall of fluent graduates is not for lack of interest on the part of students. Most of these students reported they are serious about learning Middle East languages and they want to learn them well. In response to the statement, “I am determined to achieve a level of proficiency in [Arabic, Modern Hebrew, Persian or Turkish] that would allow me to function in it comfortably in my professional activities,” 73.2% of survey respondents expressed agreement, with only 9.9% disagreeing and 16.8% remaining neutral⁴. Table 5 provides a more complete account of their responses to this item.

Table 5. Students’ Language Proficiency Goals

“I am determined to achieve a level of proficiency in [name of language] that would allow me to function in it comfortably in my professional activities.”

	Total	Arabic	Hebrew	Persian	Turkish
Strongly Disagree	2.7%	6.1%	5.6%	3.2%	3.7%
Disagree	3.1%	7.4%	6.6%	4.1%	4.4%
Neutral	11.1%	23.6%	14.8%	9.1%	13.4%
Agree	28.7%	30.1%	22.4%	31.5%	28.6%
Strongly Agree	54.3%	32.8%	50.5%	52.1%	50.0%
N	1,766	1,055	296	196	219

N=1,766

Discussions with students during site visits to various colleges and universities around the nation and to intensive programs abroad confirm that students at all types of institutions across the country are very interested in achieving professional-level fluency. If most students studying Arabic, Modern Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish are indeed serious about attaining such proficiency as Table 5 indicates, their numbers total in the tens of thousands.⁵ Cynics may brush off such youthful enthusiasm, and many of these students are probably ignorant of what is entailed in achieving the proficiency they so strongly desire, but mounting empirical evidence confirms significant numbers of students would achieve their goal if only afforded the opportunity. While comprehensive figures for the numbers of students reaching advanced levels of proficiency in higher education and for government and other language training facilities are not available, we can safely say we are far from achieving our potential.

Unfortunately, opportunities for achieving Advanced and Superior proficiency in Middle East languages are at present rather limited, even though they are more plentiful than they were in 2001. The single greatest impediment hindering students from achieving their goal of professional-level fluency is the shortage of experienced and well-trained language professionals in position to help students effectively move forward in their quest for fluency.⁶ Such language professionals are desperately needed in the U.S. and abroad to develop and maintain

4. The precise level of proficiency that respondents intended is not entirely clear. Those familiar with the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (http://www.actfl.org/files/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012_FINAL.pdf) or the Interagency Language Roundtable Scale (<http://www.govtirl.org/>) may be prone to jump to the conclusion that the ACTFL Superior level (or ILR 3) is the minimum target that respondents have in mind. Given that most students are not likely to be familiar with these guidelines, care must be taken in interpreting the response to this item. Responses to other survey items, however, do indicate that most of the respondents targeting professional-level proficiency have at least the Superior level in mind but responses to other items suggest that some would be quite pleased with Advanced or Advanced High proficiency. Swender (2003) points out that the Advanced and even Intermediate level would be sufficient for some occupations.

5. Far more students would doubtless enroll in Middle East and other languages if they were more widely available. Many institutions have been unable to keep up with the demand for Arabic and have been forced to turn interested students away. More serious yet, approximately 90% of U.S. colleges and universities do not offer a modern Middle Eastern language.

6. This conclusion is based on a great deal of observation, interviews, surveys, and outcomes, as documented in this report and elsewhere.

effective language programs, provide timely and accurate advisement, and coordinate programmatic efforts that will result in better articulation between domestic and abroad programs. Professionalization needs and solutions will be addressed in detail in Chapter 3.

Professional development is the top priority for all Middle East language fields, but the shortage of such professionals is most acutely felt in Arabic, where the greatest enrollment gains have taken place. Since 2001, all indicators suggest the total number of students enrolling in Arabic courses continues to rise. Much of this growth is due to the creation of new programs at institutions that have not previously offered Arabic, as Table 6 illustrates.⁷

Table 6. Arabic Growing Pains

Institution Type	Institutions Offering Arabic				Total Students		
	1998	2002	New	%Δ	1998	2002	%Δ
Two-year	14	34	20	143	643	1,117	74
Liberal Arts	10	24	14	140	132	402	205
Master’s	12	37	25	208	303	895	195
Doctoral	65	103	38	59	2139	4988	133
Doctoral with ME NRC	15	17	0 ⁸	0	1,346	1,936	44

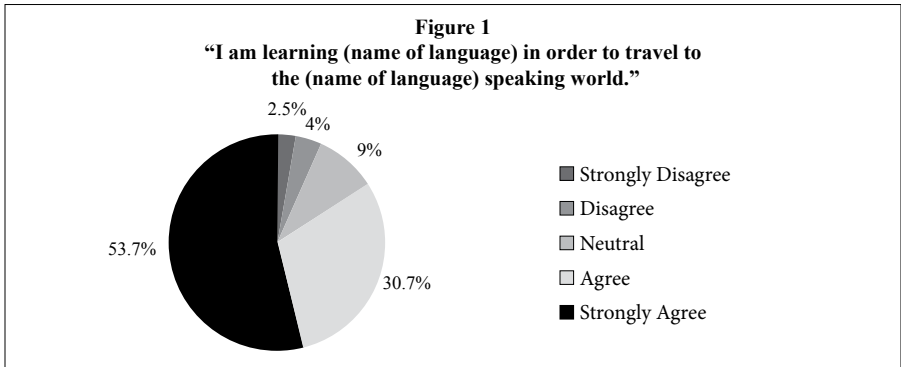
In 2002, relatively few students (20%) studied Arabic at institutions with federally funded Middle East National Resource Centers (NRCs), as is evident in Table 6. This contrasts significantly with the results of MLA’s 1990 survey when nearly half of all Arabic students (48%) were enrolled at an institution with a Middle East NRC. In 2009 we estimate that the percentage of Arabic students at such institutions has fallen to approximately 10% and is almost certainly lower than this today.⁹ This is a significant shift with far-reaching implications. Of greatest concern is the fact that most students of Arabic are undergraduates and therefore typically less-experienced language learners—and they are increasingly enrolled at institutions that have little or no experience in assisting students in acquiring advanced-level skills, the goal of most students. For example, most of the students that have qualified for full-year fellowships to pursue professional-level training at the Center for Arabic Study Abroad (CASA) in Cairo or Damascus have come from institutions with NRCs. As the premiere Arabic study abroad program for students from the U.S., supported by federal and private funding and a consortium of thirty-four universities, CASA leads in producing Superior-level speakers. Its graduates fill the ranks of Middle East Studies academics and professionals, including at least three current ambassadors and two Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalists. Our analysis of data on 1999-2011 CASA applicants indicates that, barring significant intervention, few students who begin Arabic at an institution with a new or smaller Arabic program—of which there are more every year—will go on to a program like CASA. In addition to the upsurge in U.S. Arabic enrollments, a rise in the number of students studying abroad has also meant considerable

7. We focus here on Arabic due to the fact that it has experienced the greatest enrollment increases and therefore represents an important case study in the challenges of responding to rapid growth in a less-commonly-taught language.

8. The number of federally funded Middle East National Resource Centers increased but such institutions are not new-comers to offering Arabic and are thus not counted as being new institutions offering Arabic.

9. These estimates are based on corrections of the largely underreported 2009 graduate enrollments from seven NRC institutions and 2011 data from them and 24 other non-NRC institutions.

growth in both existing and new programs in the Arab world. No student survey item elicited a stronger positive response than the statement: “I am learning Arabic in order to travel to the Arab world,” as can be seen in Figure 1, which reports results for Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish combined.



American students want to study abroad, and they are voting with their feet. Comprehensive figures are not available for enrollments in study abroad programs, but the recent history of the CASA program serves as an instructive case study.¹⁰ Table 7 illustrates the demand for advanced-level Arabic training.

Table 7. CASA Applications and Fellowships Offered by Year

Year	Number of Applications	Summer-Only Fellowships	Full-Year Fellowships
2000–01	42	6	23
2001–02	54	8	18
2002–03	50	8	15
2003–04	81	6	25
2004–05	99	6	28
2005–06	118	6	32
2006–07	129	4	36
2007–08	127	6	35
2008–09	123	6	38
2009–10	162	4	39
2010–11	192	5	40
2011–12	161 ¹¹	1	46

CASA has witnessed both a striking increase in the numbers of applicants and their preparation. Unfortunately, significant numbers of well-prepared applicants are almost certain

10. We do not discuss beginning-level abroad programs as a priority in this document because experience shows that study abroad is more effective in terms of language gains when a student has a good foundation, preferably three or four semesters of quality study. That said, one should not overlook the value of early in-country study or travel as a powerful motivating factor for recruiting or retention, which will be discussed in Chapter 2.

11. The decrease in applications in 2011 is likely due to the fact that this was the first year that students could not apply for only a summer fellowship.

to be turned away in the coming weeks, given that funding for CASA is projected to decrease, due to the closure of its Damascus branch and due to limits set by the U.S. Department of Education on the amount it may fund a program that takes place in one country. Providing that funding for Fulbright-Hays is not cut completely, which is a possibility now on the table, **the outlook for 2012–13 is to award only 20–25 fellowships, a 50% reduction.**

Students want to attain professional-level proficiency, and they want to do so expeditiously. Experience and mounting empirical research show quality, intensive programs are key. However, time and time again promising students of Arabic ask where they should go to study during the summer or for a semester or more abroad and Arabic teachers find themselves at a loss as to what programs to unequivocally recommend. Students need regular access to such programs but Arabic program directors are largely too busy with bulging classes and have neither the time nor resources to ensure affordable, quality, intensive programs are available.

Quality learning opportunities at the highest levels are available abroad in greater supply for Hebrew and Turkish, though the latter is under increased pressure from greater numbers of students, especially from Europe. Unfortunately, **current federal budget deliberations threaten the few sources of funding now available for students to pursue advanced-level study in the U.S. and the Middle East.** The shortage of intensive study opportunities is critical for Persian, given the current difficulties U.S. citizens face to study in Iran. We strongly encourage the establishment of stateside summer and longer intensive programs, ideally near major Persian-speaking population centers. Such programs are far more expensive to run than a comparable program in Iran; increased funding for such is therefore a significant priority. The lack of quality study abroad programs, as well as possible solutions to remedy this, will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

“If You Build It, They Will Come”

Making the Most of Student Motivation

Thousands of American students want to acquire professional-level fluency in the languages of the Middle East but relatively few succeed. This must change, and the sooner the better. In this chapter, we demonstrate that relatively modest investments could result in far more students achieving their aspirations of fluency. We warn that **critical infrastructure is in peril** and has already been adversely affected by recent federal funding cuts.

Attitudes and beliefs powerfully influence behavior. If more students are to succeed in learning the languages of the Middle East well, they need an accurate idea of what they must do. They need to know the facts. Unfortunately, the facts about language learning are in short supply in American culture. There are two contradictory beliefs in wide circulation, both having to do with the amount of time needed to acquire skill in using a foreign language. Glossy advertisements in travel magazines play on the folk belief that there are magic-pill methods to quickly developing facility in using a foreign language. On the other hand, many individuals harbor irrational beliefs about the difficulty of language learning. As an instructive illustration of this dangerous tendency, we now continue our case study of Arabic language learning in America.

The national media continue to tout the difficulty, the supposed enormous amount of time—anywhere from eight to ten or even twenty years—necessary to attain a high level of fluency in

Arabic. Far from reflecting the realities of what can be done in learning modern living Arabic, such comments hark back to a day when Arabic was taught as the pinnacle of Semitic language development. As pervasive as they are harmful, such claims are found not only in the press, but one wonders if they do not in some measure underlie even the Foreign Service Institute's own classification of Arabic as a "super hard" language (along with Chinese, Japanese, and Korean)—which designation sounds all too much like an echo of native Arab attitudes, who almost universally reverence Arabic as the most difficult language in the world. We do not have time for fables or, worse yet, self-fulfilling prophecies that undercut the enormous potential of this nation. Fortunately, solid empirical evidence shows this Arabian myth to be patently false for at least the streamlined Arabic of current usage. Motivated students, given the right opportunities, can acquire significant proficiency in speaking and reading Arabic in as little as a calendar year—without fifty-plus weeks of full-time commitment to studying nothing but Arabic.

Intensive or immersion study has long been hailed as a sure antidote for monolingualism. Probably part myth and part reality, Arabs of the Classical period believed immersion among the Bedouin to be the best way to learn proper Arabic well. While there are no guarantees in life, single-minded pursuit of fluency has a reasonable track record. In our time, the Middlebury College Summer School of Arabic became something of a myth in its own right. For many students, Middlebury has been almost a religious experience, a magical memory. Whatever its metaphysical properties, the reality is that Middlebury's summer Arabic program has played a key role in assisting scores of students to stride forward in their pursuit of fluency. It has also played a key role in methodology and curriculum development advances and in training a generation of teachers who know from experience that today's Arabic is quite learnable.

We document here a variety of programs in the U.S. and abroad that demonstrate young Americans will indeed embrace rigorous intensive learning opportunities, if just given the opportunity. Many students are serious about reaching "professional-level" proficiency, but there's little chance of this happening in a timely manner unless they get more time on task than foreign language majors typically get in four years (Rifkin 2005). We need to keep this firmly in mind. If we remain stuck in traditional modes of "helping" students learn the languages of the Middle East, they are in trouble. The following case studies paint a picture of hope for helping determined students go the distance and reach advanced levels of proficiency in far less time than many would think possible.

Case Study: The Brandeis–Middlebury Connection

The right partnership can make all the difference. Middlebury College and Brandeis University have teamed up to offer a variety of learning opportunities that are changing the landscape of Hebrew learning in the U.S. and beyond. Vermont now plays host to another significant step forward for the languages of the Middle East, the Brandeis University–Middlebury School of Hebrew. Established in 2008, it has already distinguished itself as a linguistic powerhouse. Student testimonials on the experience can be found at <http://www.middlebury.edu/ls/hebrew>. The high degree of commitment of both the students and the superb staff provided NMELRC a prime opportunity to collect video footage for its Professional Development Library, which stands to benefit scores of teachers who cannot personally visit the program (<http://nmelrcstage.byu.edu/prof-dev-library/>).

The Middlebury Summer School prides itself in its motto: “No English spoken here.” Students are required to sign a pledge to speak only the target language and are strictly held to this commitment. One may quibble about the merits of absolute exclusion of English, but there is no doubt that for at least some students the Middlebury immersion experience works very well. Professor Benjamin Rifkin, former director of the Middlebury Summer Russian program, has observed this aspect of the Middlebury experience helps to guarantee more students will succeed in their quest for fluency in that they have the benefit of overcoming linguistic shock in Vermont, before they face the culture shock typically experienced when one studies or works abroad, far from familiar patterns of living and thinking (Rifkin 2005).

Brandeis and Middlebury are also sponsoring a semester abroad option at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, where qualified students will have the opportunity of **direct enrollment**, that is, taking one or more of the university’s regular courses along with students who are native speakers of Hebrew (<http://www.brandeis.edu/now/2011/february/middlebury.html>). This semester abroad fills the requirements for an “**experiential learning**” venture, a Brandeis initiative to deepen its students’ liberal arts education (<http://www.brandeis.edu/admissions/academics/experiential.html>). Such experiences are available through study abroad as well as through on-campus courses, such as “Israeli Drama: Creative Expression through the Arts,” which involves students deep learning of Hebrew through creative writing and performing.

Case Study: University of Texas at Austin’s Summer Persian Language Institute

Access to the study of some critical languages in the country where they are natively spoken is at times limited or completely out of the question. In recent years, a number of U.S. universities refused to grant credit to students studying in Israel, due to the potential of liability lawsuits for encouraging students to study in a country on the State Department’s travel warning list. In spite of such warnings, U.S. students do study Persian in Iran, but they have long faced significant challenges in doing so. Maintaining high quality stateside intensive options for U.S. students is a smart move.

Since 2010, the University of Texas at Austin’s Summer Persian Language Institute has offered intermediate and advanced Persian courses to undergraduates, graduate students, and independent scholars from across the country. The ten-week program is distinguished by its content-based approach, in which students register for courses taught entirely in Persian that cover topics related to Iranian history, politics, and culture. These innovative courses aim to enable students to reach at least Advanced-level proficiency in reading, writing and speaking through discussion and direct contact with authentic materials. The program has featured courses on topics such as Youth Culture in Iran; Religion and Society in Iran; Revolutionaries and Reformers in the Islamic Republic; and Persian Film and Fiction. More details on the approach can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/mes/summer/persian.php>.

Results have been impressive, as can be seen in Table 8. None of the four students are heritage students; all were true beginners who enrolled in their first Persian course (six credit hours per semester) in fall 2010.¹All went from no knowledge of Persian to essentially Ad-

1. Programs around the country would do well to look at developments underway in UT-Austin’s Department of Middle Eastern Studies, including their using two semesters of “intensive” 6 credit-hour first-year courses to get students to at least Intermediate Mid proficiency. For more information, see: <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/mes/languages/overview.php>.

vanced-level proficiency in twelve months (Intermediate-High/ILR 1+ is basically Advanced/ILR 2 except that one cannot sustain performance at the higher level). Further noteworthy is the fact that students’ reading and writing skills are on a par with their speaking abilities.

Table 8. Pre- and Post-Program Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) Estimates² for UT—Austin Students with Two Semesters of Persian prior to Institute

	Estimated OPI Rating Beginning of June 2011	Estimated OPI Rating Beginning of August 2011
Graduate Student	Intermediate-High (ILR 1+)	Advanced-Low (ILR 2)
Undergraduate 1	Intermediate-Mid (ILR 1)	Advanced-Low (ILR 2)
Undergraduate 2	Intermediate-Mid (ILR 1)	Advanced-Low (ILR 2)
Undergraduate 3	Intermediate-Mid (ILR 1)	Intermediate-High (ILR 1+)

Dr. Kamran Aghaie, director of the Institute and of the University of Texas Middle East Center, is a historian by training. Aghaie became convinced of the need for a bridge between Austin’s lower-level Persian language courses and its courses in Persian literature taught at a level more appropriate for native speakers of the language. He benefitted from frequent advice on pedagogy from Dr. Esther Raizen (Hebrew) and Dr. Kristen Brustad (Arabic). This institute and the resulting model for helping students move expeditiously to advanced levels of proficiency would not have happened if not for Title VI funding, which is currently threatened.

Case Study: Cornell’s Intensive Arabic Experiment

There is, of course, no substitute for firsthand experience in the target language culture. Students know this and long to be “in-country.” Again, no survey item elicited a stronger positive response than: “I am learning Arabic in order to travel to the Arab world” (See Figure 1). Let us consider an intensive Arabic program that yields particularly instructive insights into the potential of intensive study in the U.S. and abroad.

In fall 2009, Munther Younes of Cornell University ran an on-campus intensive program for students who had already completed two semesters of Arabic. Students used mostly authentic materials, all in Arabic, with some bridging resources to help them handle such materials. The following semester, they studied at the Hashemite University in Jordan under Dr. Younes’ supervision. They enrolled in four specially designed content courses on the Arabic media, Jordanian society, and Arabic grammar taught by Dr. Younes and a faculty member from the Hashemite University. A number of students also audited regular courses (political science, psychology, etc.) with their Arab peers. Content courses are a significant predictor of language gains for study abroad students (Vande Berg et. al. 2009). Video clips of these students in action can be found at <http://neareaststudies.cornell.edu/academics/intensive.cfm>.

2. Interviews were conducted by an ACTFL-certified tester but were not double rated, as is required for official ratings. Results shown here, however, are comparable to programs of similar design and intensity in other languages.

The students are matched with Arab roommates and speaking partners. They also participate in service learning opportunities and in meaningful final projects. **The right configuration of learning experiences clearly makes all the difference for a group of dedicated students**—and the gains are not merely linguistic. A student who studied in Jordan last year recently observed: “In terms of self-discovery, it’s been the most impactful experience of my life.” This program is now in its third year, with nine students preparing to depart for Jordan soon. Key to the program’s success is the fact that a Cornell faculty member accompanies the students to Jordan and is intimately involved in overseeing their experience.³

Case Study: University of Maryland Arabic and Persian Flagship Programs

The Arabic and Persian Language Flagship Programs at the University of Maryland provide innovative and intensive education in language and culture to talented undergraduate and graduate students. Through a combination of rigorous study and cultural workshops, events, internships, and language partners in College Park and overseas, the goal is to produce students who speak Arabic and Persian at the professional level (ACTFL Superior/ILR 3) and who demonstrate outstanding cultural competence. Admission is highly competitive and the number of applicants is growing each year.

The scores shown in Table 9 are from summer 2011 and were achieved by Flagship students who had been provided extensive training and language learning support at the University of Maryland and then completed their program at overseas Flagship sites during an immersion period in-country. These eleven were designated either Flagship Fellows (graduate students) or Boren Scholars (undergraduate students). These are prestigious, high value awards that were competitively awarded and have a government service requirement attached to them. Each Fellow or Scholar is officially tested by the Foreign Service Institute on their return from their overseas program.

Each fellow or scholar is officially tested by the Foreign Service Institute on their return from their overseas program. Unfortunately, FSI testing for non-NSEP funded students was not conducted, since it is only available for students with a government service requirement, so while our data pool is small, it is still noteworthy. The scores of non-fellows/scholars are based on other recognized tests, such as the ACTFL OPI and the Maryland programs’ internally developed assessment instruments; Maryland reports these also indicate a high level of success in moving students to “Superior”-level proficiency and beyond (scores are available on request).

These results are impressive, especially for programs that are relatively new. Maryland is determined to repeat and surpass the performance of these cohorts in future years. Their graduates increasingly put their language skills and cultural knowledge to work in various fields, and they are frequently approached by prominent employers from the public and private sector who would like to recruit their students based on their positive experience with other Arabic and Persian Flagship graduates they have previously hired. The Language Flagship just announced that it will no longer fund study for graduate students. This is yet another casualty of federal budget cuts.

3. The College of William and Mary had some good success with direct enrollment at the University of Aleppo in 2007/8, but Dr. John Eisele reports the lack of reliable on-site supervision ended up bringing about the program’s demise. The Arab American Language Institute in Morocco (http://web.me.com/annemarieskye/AALIMOROCCO/Welcome_to_AALIM.html) currently offers a direct enrollment option for students with the language proficiency to benefit from the experience. Sitting in on various content courses offered at the Hebrew University (<http://overseas.huji.ac.il/hebrew>) is part of its advanced-level courses for students learning Hebrew.

**Table 9. 2011 University of Maryland Arabic and Persian
Flagship FSI Language Scores**

Grad/UG	Reading	Speaking “Modern Standard Arabic”	Speaking—Dialect	Dialect
Grad	4	4	3 / 3+	Syrian / Moroccan
Grad	3+	4	3	Syrian
Grad	3+	3+	3+	Syrian
Grad	3+	3	2	Syrian
Grad	3+	3+	3	Syrian
UG	2+	3	NA	NA
UG	3+	4	3+ / 3	Moroccan / Egypt.

Grad/UG	Reading	Speaking Persian	Speaking—Dialect	Dialect
Grad	3+	4	3	Tajiki
Grad	3	3	2+	Tajiki
Grad	2+	2+	2+	Tajiki
UG	2	2+	3+	Tajiki

Case Study: STARTALK/Arabic without Walls/NSLI-Youth

Enrollment results indicate more and more students are starting their language study earlier. Isaac, a high school student from Orem, Utah, enrolled in Brigham Young University’s 2007 STARTALK intensive Arabic summer camp and continued his studies during the academic year with Arabic without Walls (<http://www.nmelrc.org/arabic-without-walls>). During summer 2008, he studied in Cairo on a NSLI-Youth scholarship (<http://www.nsliforyouth.org/>). As a result of a lot of hard work and favorable learning conditions, he made impressive gains and was funded to study in Jordan during summer 2009 (the first high school student ever to be admitted to BYU’s intensive Arabic program). He did well and began BYU’s Middle East Studies/Arabic major three weeks later at a level of proficiency many such majors aspire to reach by the time they graduate. In the summer between high school and college he certified as an Advanced-level speaker and answered every Advanced-level item correctly on the NMELRC Reading Proficiency Test. Only three of the forty-one BYU students with whom he studied did this well in reading.

Isaac is no longer an anomaly. Forty-three high school students enrolled in BYU’s 2011 summer residential camps, thirteen returning from the previous year to press on in their Arabic study. All took the regular BYU 101 or 102 final examination, which allows for comparison between their progress and that of regular BYU students who complete these courses on campus in both intensive and non-intensive formats. We have never seen a more successful year, with many scoring as well as our better BYU students. Many are now continuing their study with Arabic without Walls and most would welcome the opportunity to study abroad with NSLI-Youth. Unfortunately, few will have the opportunity, due to the limited numbers of fellowships. While the STARTALK experience is an excellent way to build confidence and get a jumpstart, far more students are taking advantage of Arabic without Walls to pursue the Arabic study without such a benefit. BYU Independent Study currently has seventy-seven high school students enrolled, representing twenty-eight states.

Case Study: The U.S. Arabic Distance Learning Network

Montana State University (MSU) is home to a consortium of universities exploiting synchronous distance learning and study abroad to provide opportunities for students to study Arabic language and Islamic culture. The network provides institutions a well-developed first-year Arabic course (including training for an onsite teaching assistant); the model includes a follow-on abroad experience for students that builds on their stateside experience. Another important feature of the program is its commitment to accountability. Students learning Arabic through the network's program have tested consistently at or above proficiency levels of students learning Arabic in more traditional learning environments. For more information, see <http://www.arabicstudies.edu>. It is noteworthy that both Arabic Without Walls and the network were recipients of a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) of the U.S. Department of Education and both have won national prizes for educational excellence.

Case Study: University of Arizona's Turkish Program

Recruiting students to typically under-enrolled languages like Turkish is critical to meeting national needs. The results of the University of Arizona's innovative methods for helping learners to more fully engage in learning Turkish suggest an approach that is perceived as immediately relevant to students, more actively involves them in using Turkish earlier, and exposes them to authentic multimedia in a highly interactive manner early in the process can go far toward recruiting and retaining students. Video footage of the classroom and of interviews with students will shortly be found at <http://nmelrc.org>. There are currently twenty-four students enrolled in Turkish 101, more than double the average enrollment at other institutions around the country. Their Turkish Global Simulation is a fourth-semester course incorporating intercultural communicative competence and promoting student functional and professional success in a computer-assisted learning environment. These methods were also developed with Title VI funding.

Case Study: The Critical Languages Scholarship Program

One of the greatest challenges students face in reaching advanced levels of proficiency is finding quality, intensive programs that will assist them to expeditiously move forward in their quest for fluency. The Critical Languages Scholarship Program (CLS) has helped to address this problem. CLS recipients are fully funded to study Arabic, Persian (in Tajikistan), or Turkish during the summer. Students' proficiency is measured at the beginning and end of the program, but relatively little is known of the effectiveness of the various programs, in spite of repeated requests for evidence of program outcomes. A site visit to the Tunis program and an interview with a 2011 participant of its advanced-level program suggest the decision to hire well-trained language professionals to run these programs is yielding significant returns. There has been some effort to shift more of the funding to advanced-level scholarships, but the number of qualified applicants still far exceeds the number awarded. More information can be found at <http://clscholarship.org>.

Case Study: AATT-ARIT-BU Summer Fellowships for Advanced Turkish

The American Association of Teachers of Turkic languages (AATT), the American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT), and Bogazici University (BU) offer a remarkably

successful advanced-level intensive Turkish summer program in Istanbul. Students from across the nation compete annually for these highly desirable fellowships. Students typically have studied approximately four semesters before going, but some have qualified in a shorter time. Outcomes for the 2011 program are found in Table 10.

TABLE 10. 2011 AATT-ARIT-BU Student Final Reading Scores and Oral Proficiency Rating NMELRC Reading Proficiency Test

Intermediate	Advanced	Provisional	ACTFL
Level	Level	Rating	OPI
100	100	Adv-Mid*	Adv-Hi
95	90	Adv-Mid*	Adv-Hi
80	50	Int-Mid	Adv-Hi
95	95	Adv-Mid*	Adv-Mi
95	95	Adv-Mid*	Adv-Mi
100	90	Adv-Mid	Adv-Mi
100	85	Adv-Mid	Adv-Mi
85	85	Adv-Mid	Adv-Mi
100	70	Adv-Mid	Adv-Mi
95	100	Adv-Mid*	Adv-Lo
100	95	Adv-Mid*	Adv-Lo
95	85	Adv-Mid	Adv-Lo
95	85	Adv-Mid	Adv-Lo
95	60	Int-Mid	Adv-Lo
75	60	Int-Lo	Adv-Lo
70	55	Int-Lo	Adv-Lo
95	90	Adv-Mid	Int-Hi
95	85	Adv-Mid	Int-Hi
85	80	Adv-Mid	Int-Hi
85	80	Adv-Mid	Int-Hi
95	70	Adv-Lo	Int-Hi
85	67	Adv-Lo	Int-Hi
90	65	Int-Hi	Int-Hi
90	65	Int-Hi	Int-Hi
100	95	Adv-Mid*	Int-Mi
75	60	Int-Lo	Int-Mi

*Some of these students would likely score Advanced-High or even higher but without a Superior-level test, we cannot say for certain.

Like CASA, this program is the result of many years of careful work and is a cornerstone of national capacity for moving students to advanced levels of proficiency in Turkish. It is funded through the U.S. Department of Education Fulbright Hays Program, which **funding is currently in danger of being eliminated completely, or continuing at significantly lower levels** than in the past. More information on the program can be found at <http://www.princeton.edu/~turkish/aatt/funding.htm>.

Chapter 3

Professionalization

While America may not have the “linguists” it currently needs, there is no shortage of motivated students, who—given the opportunity—would gladly rise to the challenge of meeting the needs of the nation and the world.¹ Likewise, we have tried and tested models for assisting such students to rapidly acquire higher levels of linguistic and cultural proficiency, including a model that does not require the investment of large sums of money per student. What we do not have is sufficient numbers of well-trained language professionals in position to assist these students in moving efficiently and effectively forward in the pursuit of their goal of “professional-level fluency.” There are, to be sure, some excellent people and a few institutions that are succeeding in recruiting and training such people, but **pervasive systemic weaknesses in higher education are undercutting efforts to build national capacity**. The fact is the U.S. is not making the most of the few well-trained professionals now in service, and it is largely failing to attract and train the new talent necessary to help thousands of students realize their potential and their desire to make a difference in the world.

We must invest in the professionalization of language teaching.

The sudden post-9/11 need for scores of qualified teachers of Arabic coincided with alarmingly low numbers of graduate students specializing in Arabic Language/Linguistics (Betteridge 2003). The personnel outlook is no better, if not worse, for Modern Hebrew,

1. The distribution of student enrollments across the languages of the Middle East is certainly uneven, but some channeling is quite possible through advisement and appropriate incentives. For example, relatively few of the thousands of new students enrolling in Arabic (not to mention those who would like to enroll but cannot due to limited availability) understand the importance of Turkish and Persian, and not just as critical keys to future dealings with Turkey and Iran but to many other nations and peoples of Central Asia and, increasingly, to the swelling numbers of minority communities in Europe and the U.S. With proper structures in place, some students currently unable to get into Arabic courses could be recruited to under-enrolled languages.

Persian, and Turkish. This should come as no surprise. The general academic climate and staffing practices, especially at many larger universities where most NRCs are located, are not conducive to encouraging bright students to consider a career in language teaching. Those who teach language are increasingly appointed as lecturers, who often have little or no job security or influence in the departmental and programmatic decision-making process. Junior tenure-track faculty with a research focus on language pedagogy often find themselves in a tenuous position, given that their field is not a traditionally recognized academic discipline.

NMELRC’s survey of seventy-five teachers of modern Middle Eastern languages indicates the trend toward hiring more non-tenure track language faculty is cause for serious concern. Table 10 below reports on teacher satisfaction with society’s esteem for language teaching, showing the longer teachers are in service, the less content they are with the status of their profession.

Table 11. Teacher Satisfaction with Society’s Esteem for Language Teaching.

Rank	%
Assistant Professor	63
Associate Professor	29
Full Professor	33
Lecturer	43
Senior Lecturer	30

While teachers reported they are generally satisfied with their jobs, the results reported in Table 12 sound a warning for the future: Most lecturers report they would not recommend their students pursue a career in language teaching. Given that more and more lecturers may be the only role models of language faculty that many students will know, the results summarized in Tables 12 and 13 suggest that, without significant intervention, it will become increasingly difficult to recruit promising teachers and retain master teachers.

Table 12. Percentage of Teachers Who Would Recommend Language Teaching as a Profession to their Students.

Rank	%
Assistant Professor	63
Associate Professor	86
Full Professor	63
Lecturer	34
Senior Lecturer	36

Further cause for concern is the fact that most language teachers would not even recommend their students major in a language, as can be seen in Table 13. Again, lecturers and those who have been in service longer are more pessimistic about a future in language.

Table 13. Percentage of Teachers Who Would Recommend their Students Major in a Language

Rank	%
Assistant Professor	50
Associate Professor	70
Full Professor	40
Lecturer	45.5
Senior Lecturer	35.7

To the best of my knowledge, there are no PhD candidates anywhere in the U.S. in Modern Hebrew language, nor PhD candidates in applied linguistics or in second/foreign language acquisition whose concentration is Hebrew.

—Professor Shmuel Bolozky, NMELRC chair of Hebrew Board, former president of the National Association of Professors of Hebrew

The place of language in the academy is a matter of serious national concern (Patrikis 1996).² This is particularly the case for less-commonly-taught languages. Every year one or more tenured Middle East language specialists retire and are replaced with a lecturer—if at all. Lecturers (persons devoted primarily or exclusively to teaching) are important members of any large language program. But there is a tendency, in the name of economizing, for more and more language teaching to be relegated to lecturers, including administration of at least the first two years of language instruction, the critical years. Lecturers can be wonderful teachers and savvy language program coordinators, but they rarely have the clout to effectively advocate for what is needed to build and maintain first-rate language programs. They typically have no voice in their departments and are fortunate if they have a multi-year contract. Even more unfortunate, fewer of the tenured and tenure-track faculty specialize in language teaching (15%) than of the non-faculty teachers (25%),³ meaning that those who know the most about building strong language programs are least likely to be heard in department and college meetings. In short, they are second-class citizens in the academy, typically enjoying less security than custodial, food services, grounds, and other staff. Little wonder some lecturers are leaving the field or leaving large universities for better jobs at smaller schools or for work in government language schools.

Large universities, where graduate programs are located, should be graduating talented teachers for K-16+ and government schools, as was the case a generation ago, but current circumstances are such that these large universities are facing a significant talent drain that threatens to compound itself and make the nation's rather mediocre foreign language capacity even worse. It is noteworthy that not one NRC language program coordinator who responded to the NMELRC survey reported they were “very satisfied” with the applicant pool as they have interviewed to hire full- or part-time instructors (not including student

Turkish at NRC Institutions

- 1 Associate Professor
- 2 Assistant Professors
- 1 Professor
- 13 Lecturers/Lectors/Preceptors
- 1 Adjunct Lecturer
- 4 Instructors
- 1 Assistant Instructor
- 1 Adjunct Instructor
- 2 Teaching Assistants

Compared to 1972, seven well-known NRCs that had professorial rank faculty now have only lectureships.

2. Patrikis 1996 is a must read for all who care about language learning in higher education, as is “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World” (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, 2007), available at http://www.mla.org/pdf/forlang_news_pdf.pdf. Belnap (2008) gives more details on Arabic teachers' morale, as well as reviewing important statistics on the use of contingent faculty in higher education generally and summarizing recommendations that have already been made by gatherings of scholars from a variety of disciplines. Belnap (2008) is available at http://nmelrc.org/unhappy_arabic-teachers..

3. It should be noted the percentages here may be inflated. As this was a survey regarding foreign language instruction, one would expect teachers who specialize in this field to respond in greater numbers than those in other specializations. Nevertheless, these findings do echo our observations of institutions we have visited or with which we are in regular contact.

instructors). We seem to be mired in a cycle of lower status positions that draw less-qualified applicants. Fortunately, some stellar counterexamples can be found.

The very nature of the rewards system in academe encourages bright, motivated language lecturers to focus their energies not on honing their teaching skills and putting their best efforts into building strong language programs but on developing themselves as scholars in traditionally respected fields, such as literature or history, and to leave language teaching as quickly as possible for a more prestigious and secure future as a tenured faculty member in a more traditional discipline. Even those lecturers who feel good language teaching is one of the most rewarding of jobs find themselves at a considerable disadvantage if they want to further develop themselves as teachers and language program administrators. NMELRC teacher survey results confirm that tenured and tenure-track positions significantly correlated with opportunities for professional development, receiving adequate funding for attending conferences and workshops, and advancement credit earned for such meetings. The bottom

E-mail message received on 25 July 2003 from an individual who directed a large Arabic program at an NRC institution before taking a job in Islamic Studies at a liberal arts college:

You had asked me to detail the reasons I am leaving the field of Arabic language instruction. First, let me give you some background on myself. I received training in teaching a language from the Director for the Arabic language program at this institution while completing my PhD, first as a teaching assistant and then as an adjunct instructor. For the past two years I have taught Elementary and Intermediate Arabic as a Language Lecturer, bringing my total years of experience teaching Arabic to five. My work has been very successful, as judged by professional review, student evaluations, and the receipt of an Outstanding Teaching award. My retention rate of students moving from one level to another has been extremely high.

I made the decision to apply for other jobs last year for several reasons.

- 1) Workload. First and foremost, the heavy teaching load was becoming increasingly difficult to bear. I was teaching three classes (1 hour, 15 minutes each), four days a week to completely full classes. Language classes, as you know, must be highly interactive and energetic to be effective and I found myself exhausted at the end of each day. Homework was usually assigned daily, giving me something like 50 homeworks to correct every night. Additionally, I strove to keep my lesson plans interesting by the addition of outside material from newspapers and the Internet. Office hours were busy with students requesting extra help in a difficult language.
- 2) Salary. It also became increasingly apparent to me that, despite the fact that my workload was greater than any non-language junior faculty in my department, I was paid less and the gap between our respective salaries would only increase as they attained tenure.
- 3) Lack of sabbatical or other paid leave. Despite the fact that my research was as well-received as non-language faculty, the position was not tenure-track. It was difficult to see how I would be able to complete future research and writing projects without paid time off. The university does not require research from language teachers as part of their job description, but I frankly don't know anyone qualified to teach Arabic at the university level who is not interested in doing research.
- 4) Difficulties in developing language projects. It also became increasingly clear to me that the University would not grant course reduction or paid leave to implement the language instruction projects I was interesting in developing.
- 5) Lack of professional and residential space. Language lecturers in the university are no longer guaranteed private offices and are definitely no longer eligible for university housing, despite the fact that these are part of the basic deal for tenure-track faculty.

Despite the difficulties I encountered here due to a poorly designed position, I loved teaching Arabic and I am sorry to be stopping. I would have been happy to stay if the two-tier structure at the university was changed so that language teachers were granted the same benefits as non-language teachers.

line is we cannot expect significant improvements in the applicant pool if the jobs available are clearly second-class positions.

Again, a look at the Turkish field is instructive and alarming. Three lecturers have left for positions in Turkey; one currently in a senior lecturer position is threatening to do the same and is now in negotiations with her institution. Several lecturers with PhDs have started looking for faculty positions in their fields and would walk away from teaching Turkish immediately if given the opportunity.

In the face of such conditions, some are tempted to abandon the American higher education system as a locus for training young people in critical foreign languages. While understandable, this would be a mistake. For all its shortcomings, American higher education is without parallel for its potential to identify talented and motivated language learners and channel them toward productive learning opportunities, but immediate intervention is necessary if we are to stop losing ground and begin to realize our potential.

The Need for Leadership

Great language teachers come in many forms. Some have extensive training in foreign language pedagogy while others are naturally gifted communicators who need little training to know how to strike the delicate balance between high expectations and encouragement. It may well be that truly great teachers are born and not made, and that such people can be highly serviceable in at least some ways without a good deal of training, however, it nevertheless requires a good deal of training and hands-on experience to become a well-rounded language professional.⁴ Such individuals are indispensable to the process of building and maintaining a quality language program. Such programs are rare not only because such individuals are relatively rare, but also because most programs are not programs at all but loose configurations of courses that supposedly build on each other but in fact are more the reflection of the personal preferences of the teacher than a coherent curriculum that is the result of a team of dedicated teachers working toward a common, well-defined goal.

NMELRC survey research confirms that for most institutions, if there is a pedagogy specialist at all, that person is most likely to be a lecturer and such persons are rarely in a position to be an effective advocate. This must change. A language professional, who knows what s/he is doing, needs to be clearly in charge of overseeing the process of building and maintaining language programs. We therefore strongly recommend the appointment of at least one

Dr. Sonia Shiri is the Middle East Language Programs Coordinator at the University of Arizona. She was hired this year in a tenure-track position, having worked for years as a lecturer/program coordinator at an NRC institution. The dean initially suggested the position be non-tenure track, but Dr. Anne Betteridge, director of the University of Arizona's Center for Middle Eastern Studies, successfully made the case that the coordinator needs to be someone with status and a voice in the department in order to succeed. Initial partial funding of this position comes from their Title VI NRC grant. Dr. Betteridge observed that the process was considerably facilitated because the University of Arizona recognizes language and pedagogy as a legitimate academic field, as is evident from its Second Language Acquisition and Teaching PhD program and its Title VI Language Resource Center, the Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language, and Literacy (CERCLL) (personal communication, 4 Dec. 2011).

4. Unfortunately, many with little or no training but who have learned at least one foreign language fancy themselves experts. Such individuals may be gifted language learners and they may understand very well what works well for them personally, but such gifted learners are often least well equipped to understand and help the majority of their students, particularly the swelling numbers of undergraduate students.

The State of Persian Language Teaching in America

(adapted from email received 6 March 2004)

1) Currently the majority of Persian language teachers (who spend at least 2/3 of their time teaching language) are not tenured or tenure-track. There are cases where we have tenured professors, but the actual teaching is done by others.

2) Since many universities do not offer attractive positions to language teachers—in terms of salary, teaching load, tenure, etc.—many of those who are involved in the field are trying to leave. Those who stay are not motivated (or required) to keep up with new methodologies and innovations in the field. (I am trying to think when was the last time a Persian teacher attended ACTFL!)

3) It is true that the number of students interested in Persian has increased but many universities are trying to take advantage of that by hiring part-time teachers who teach only one or two levels of Persian—and this while we need people with higher levels of proficiency. More advanced-level courses are extremely important in the case of Persian because our students—in comparison to students of other LCTLs—do not have many opportunities to go to Iran and improve their skills.

4) Since these positions are not attractive, current students do not consider language teaching a viable career and therefore we have no teacher training programs (certificate or degree programs). Of course lack of interest on the part of students is only one reason; the other reason is lack of interest on the part of universities which still think “any native speaker can do the job” and so why should they use their resources for such programs.

5) Because of the structural inequality between language teachers and other faculty members, language teachers do not have a strong voice inside their institutions so that they could initiate any change from inside.

6) This structural problem has a cumulative effect. For example, there are occasions when language teachers need or would like to work on projects related to their field but since they don't have any research time, the quality of these projects leaves quite a bit to be desired. This is what I mean by cumulative effect: we have unattractive positions, discouraged teachers, lack of interest on the part of students to become professional language teachers, lack of materials, . . . and you can imagine the consequences. It will get only worse because there are still a few people left in the field who are the products of better times. I wonder who is going to replace this generation. Of course I am certain that there will be students interested in Persian and so there will be teachers but given the fact that we are not training anyone at this point and also the unattractiveness of these positions, I don't want to even imagine the quality of those classes!

7) A few examples of Persian language losing ground:

a) A senior Persian professor retired from an NRC and no one replaced him. About five years ago, we had two full time positions for Persian language and literature at this institution. One of them was a tenure-track position. Now we have only one non-tenure track.

b) In the past few years a number of universities have started teaching Persian (to take advantage of the increasing number of students interested in learning Persian). None of these positions is tenure track. A number are not even full time. I don't want to suggest that those who teach in these places are not qualified but as a general rule, such positions do not attract the best teachers.

c) We are not sure but we are hearing that a number of universities are waiting for the old or current generation to retire so that they can follow the example of the NRC mentioned in 7a.

8) I should also mention positive examples. The first one that comes to my mind—which could be used as a model—is the Univ. of Texas at Austin. They have a large number of Persian students. They have two tenured professors and a TA. Their other languages also are being directed by at least one tenured or tenure-track professor. Any university which offers three levels of one of the LCTLs should be required to hire a tenure-track or tenured person to direct their programs. I think this is a reasonable approach.

So, let me summarize. If we are thinking about training students with high levels of proficiency, we should immediately change our approach. The first thing we need to do is to convince major centers and departments (those funded by Title VI) to hire tenured or tenure-track teachers to direct their language programs. This will obviously attract qualified people to the field. These individuals will then be able to work on projects such as: 1) initiating degree or certificate programs (teacher training, translation certificate, etc.) 2) materials development 3) offer new courses which would encourage students to reach higher levels of proficiency.

such person to function as the coordinator of Middle East languages at every institution serious about building and maintaining a strong language program. This should be a requirement for NRCs. This coordinator needs to have clout, a seat at the table in department meetings, a voice that will be heard and respected. Naturally, that person should be skilled at working with people, a real leader, a team player. If an institution's language offerings are so small that this sort of

**Language Program Coordinator/Lecturer
A parody of a job description**

Job opening for a non tenure-track language program coordinator. The successful candidate must have a PhD in hand, demonstrate an excellent record in teaching this language at all levels, be versed in language methodology and in second language acquisition theory, and have experience in training teachers in higher education. The successful applicant will teach ten times the classes taught by tenured faculty in the program. The successful candidate will bear a workload one-third heavier than that of a tenured colleague. The salary will be on a scale that is lower than that of TA's that you supervise. In this appointment you will never attain tenure. At department meetings when tenured faculty are invited to vote and you are not, just pretend you are invisible. Be prepared to supervise many of the department's TA's but do not expect to necessarily have a say in choosing them. Do not expect that these TA's will want to follow in your footsteps when considering career options. Expect that tenure-track colleagues may take an interest in your duties and make decisions on your behalf without consulting with you. You will hear about those decisions in good time. For as long as you serve in this position, you will not be entitled to sabbatical leave or leave with pay, and research does not count. As you know, accidents happen: every now and then your name will fall off the payroll for some reason or another. Just let the union know and the university will fix it. Finally, make sure to enclose three letters of recommendation from tenured faculty that are able to speak to your patience and endurance. This institution is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer.

position is out of the question for the present, that institution should enter into a symbiotic relationship with a regional center of excellence that could provide the necessary leadership.

Lecturers and part-timers are an integral part of large language programs. Some have no interest in pursuing research or pursuing it at the pace or in the manner a tenure-track position might require. They may want to devote most or all of their efforts and energies to teaching. Many feel it their calling. Such individuals need to feel that their contribution is not only valued but critical, that their experience and expertise is admired.

Another lecturer, a gifted teacher and scholar who functions as the program coordinator of a respected Arabic program, wrote the following in order to underscore the seriousness of the plight of contingent faculty:

We must provide opportunities for teacher training and professional development

The rapid increase of Arabic enrollments in all categories of Arabic programs across the U.S., combined with a sharp rise in the number of new programs established since 2001, has overwhelmed the nation's capacity to provide quality instruction to students. Even before this dramatic increase there was a shortage of experienced and pedagogically trained language teachers, in Arabic and other languages. As a result, well-established Arabic programs have struggled to find qualified teachers to handle the increased demand and have had to rely to an even greater extent on adjunct and part-time instructors. Institutions that decided to begin offering Arabic after September 2001, often on a part-time basis, have struggled to adequately staff their programs; those institutions that have committed to tenure-track or long-term lec-

turer lines have done well in the competition for top candidates. At such institutions, administrators typically know little about what type of training or preparation to expect of an Arabic teacher; as a result, many of these programs have opted to hire people with no experience in teaching Arabic as a foreign language to provide instruction. While this has meant more programs offering Arabic, it has not ensured top quality educational experiences for students. We are thus facing a situation in which large numbers of teachers need basic pedagogical training in teaching Arabic as a foreign language. Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish have fewer inexperienced teachers in service but these teachers, too, are typically in need of a good deal of training. Professional development thus represents a top priority for all Middle Eastern languages. The most efficient way to respond to this urgent situation is to develop a national strategy with both short and long term objectives.

In the short term, teacher training should aim to provide the following components:

1) *Intensive Professional Development Workshops*. Such workshops are intended to introduce participants to principles of language teaching, classroom management, preparing syllabi, and testing. Ideally, these workshops would provide participants with the opportunity to observe experienced teachers in action and then prepare and teach lessons under the supervision of a master teacher (micro-teaching).

Long experience and evaluation of such workshops confirm that the most important components are class observation, micro-teaching, and reflection on the experience, all under the direction of a master teacher. Multiple classroom observations are key in helping trainees understand the application of the pedagogical principles they study, and in allowing less experienced teachers to see what students are capable of producing in a challenging and rewarding classroom. Micro-teaching gives trainees the chance to apply what they have learned from reading and from observing real classroom situations and to experiment with approaches and materials under the guidance of a professional. Reflection on both classroom observation and micro-teaching serves both to confirm and correct the trainee's conclusions and to plan follow-up teaching activities that build on the experience.

2) *Mentoring Teams*. Mentoring relationships are commonplace in many universities as a way to help junior faculty earn tenure and promotion. In the case of teacher development, mentoring involves pairing a master teacher with less-experienced teachers. Such arrangements could be facilitated by national organizations and set up at the regional level. The teams would hold periodic meetings throughout a semester or year to exchange syllabi and discuss classroom techniques. Campus visits back and forth as well as exchanging videotaped classes could supplement mentor-mentee discussions, and the technology of videoconferencing provides a way to overcome expensive and time-consuming travel. Brown (2007) presents some useful models for teacher collaborations, including peer coaching, collaborative curriculum development, and teacher support groups. Investing in this kind of support for new teachers will not only ensure better instruction, but will also help attract promising new colleagues to the field and keep them in it by helping them succeed and advance.

3) *Online Professional Development Resources*. Print materials are important but not nearly enough. A powerful way to effect change is to expose teachers and students to good examples, master teachers and successful students in action; this can be facilitated through

technology, which can provide a valuable tool in providing training when a more intensive option is unavailable. We need extensive documentation of quality teaching and learning on video. Such materials will be a lifeline for the novice and a valuable resource for the working professional striving for a more dynamic classroom. Teachers versed in traditional methods especially need to see what works for today's learners. These resources are key to providing innovative and effective ways to reach those who need and want help but may not have opportunity to participate in much, if any, fact-to-face training. Making such materials available to students and administrators will also function to raise the bar for teachers, encouraging them to work to create highly interactive classrooms focused on using the target language. NMELRC has collected a good deal of video footage and is in the process of assembling a set of on-line materials for use by all. Stage II of this project will consist of a more extensive library of video materials and online sample syllabi and lesson plans. Such aids will be invaluable to the novice who is all too often pressed into service without adequate training. These materials will also benefit veteran teachers who desire to improve their teaching and experiment with new techniques and approaches.

4) *National and Regional Institutional Leadership.* The continuing growth in the number of new programs requires special effort on the part of established, successful programs to assume regional leadership. Administrators who know little about Middle Eastern languages need solid information about successful programs in order to make informed decisions. Ideally, a fledgling language program would become closely associated with a regional powerhouse program in a symbiotic relationship. Such relationships will help the traditionally strong programs by helping to attract graduate students to the field as well as providing employment opportunities for their graduates.

Over the long term, the needs of the Middle East language teaching profession require the establishment of regional centers where graduate students can obtain systematic training to become teachers. Such training should combine relevant training in linguistics, educational psychology, well-grounded theories of learning, learning strategies, and teaching methodologies. This training must also include ample opportunity for classroom teaching and sustained reflection on teaching practices and experiences under the guidance of a master teacher.

Chapter 4

Recommendations: A Vision for the Future

Foreign language proficiency must move from the educational periphery to the core for American students to become a well-informed citizenry and workforce fit for the twenty-first century. The well being of our nation and the world are at stake. Most international communication will continue to be in English for many years to come, but the advantage will always go to the bilingual individual. Learning a second and even third and fourth language will sharpen students' English and general cognitive ability. The writing is on the wall: The future belongs to those skilled in communication, math, and science. The particular foreign language(s) a student studies is not nearly as important as the learning experience, but we do need to find ways to make sure the languages of the world are covered.

Our long-term plan in the academy, in schools, and in our communities should be to build a culture that values excellence in our ability to understand and communicate with the world. Well-articulated sequences for meaningful language and culture learning from pre-kindergarten through postgraduate opportunities should be carefully cultivated so all students experience the benefits of an early start and as many as possible achieve professional levels of linguistic and cultural proficiency. This fundamental education should be available to all, whether a student goes on to be a bilingual M.D., carpenter, or pilot, or a trilingual meeting planner, economist, or brigadier general in the Marine Corps.

As we work to achieve this long-term plan, we need short- and medium-term plans that 1) deal strategically with almost infinite needs but operate effectively under the constraints of finite resources and 2) consist of small steps that will lead to the best self-sustaining realization of the long-term ideal as possible. As a result of our surveys, our site visits, and our interviews

with students, teachers, and program administrators, we have identified the following points as the most pressing challenges that need to be addressed immediately:

Student Needs

We need to help young Americans become lifelong learners—effective stewards of their own learning who will go on to leverage their skills into meaningful service and careers. For their sake and ours, foreign language learning needs to be seen as a core skill and not a luxury. With increasing competition for funding, innovative strategies are the only hope.

1. An early start is the ideal, preferably during infancy or early childhood; however, hybrid solutions combining summer intensive opportunities like STARTALK, overseas opportunities such as NSLI-Youth, and online opportunities like Arabic without Walls demonstrate that astounding progress is possible during the high school years, and these programs are now available for those who otherwise have no access through the Internet.

We need to get the word out and build on lessons learned to markedly increase offerings.

2. In this time of budget cutting, we should proceed wisely. Cuts we make today to save a few dollars may seriously undermine our short-term readiness and our long-term prosperity. Political infighting looks more and more like cutting off our nose to spite our face. Funding for advanced-level study, domestic and overseas, should be safeguarded. We should be extremely cautious about taking away the carrots that play a key role in keeping students on track to reach high levels of language and cultural proficiency. We should proceed with utmost caution as we consider funding cuts that could destroy domestic and overseas infrastructure that has been decades in the building.

3. We are fortunate to have increasing numbers of high school and undergraduate students who are taking a serious interest in learning the languages of the world. We need to find ways to effectively channel larger numbers of them toward learning opportunities that will draw them onward and that will benefit us all. Launching students into real-life learning and networking opportunities through service learning, internships, volunteer opportunities, and direct enrollment in national universities abroad may well be the wave of the future to take students well beyond what we have largely attempted to accomplish through classroom language instruction. Acquiring significant language and cultural proficiency through a curriculum that culminates in intensive immersion overseas may prove to be the most effective and even economical means to the deep, mind-expanding experiential learning that is core to a quality education. Institutions would do well to consider making such experiences integral to their academic programming. Making real connections with the target language community should begin from the earliest stages of learning. Even limited electronic communication with peers abroad have proven to be highly motivating to students who know little more than greetings.

4. Good coaching is as essential to the development of skill in a foreign language as it is to athletic or musical ability. Even the best of students are prone to engage in avoidance behavior, especially as they deal with the psychological stresses of intensive and overseas study. Students are far more likely to remain fully engaged and acquire significant levels of linguistic and cultural proficiency when they have access to 1) professionals experienced in guiding students to success, 2) role models, including peer mentors, who

inspire them to press on, and 3) adequate orientation and regular opportunities to process their learning experiences.

Teachers: Developing the Workforce

We cannot reasonably expect talented individuals to become the language professionals and coaches we need if their efforts are not appropriately valued. More and more institutions are recognizing the difference a well-trained professional can make, but such individuals deserve a fitting position. For the good of the nation and for the future of higher education, the academy must adopt fair hiring practices. The current two-tiered system is harmful to the employer, the employee, and to students. We cannot expect professionals to stay in the field if there are not appropriate professional opportunities. Employees are most productive when they are autonomous, empowered, and engaged. If we want to yield the best results in preparing American children for the twenty-first century work force, we need to invest in the people who are in charge of this future. We need to empower teachers and keep them intellectually engaged so they can inspire our children. Steps in this direction include:

1. Institutions receiving external funding, whether private or public, should be required to demonstrate best practices in hiring and working with teachers.
2. Institutions should adopt practices that foster quality learning experiences for students. Attention paid to these should be at least as rigorous as tenure reviews. This includes adequate provisions for part-time and non-tenure track teachers' short- and long-term professional development.
3. Full and part-time teachers, especially new hires, should be teamed up with tenure-track faculty who serve as mentors and are available to answer questions, help familiarize the newcomer with the system, and act as an agent and advocate on their behalf.
4. Part-time and non-tenure track faculty must be integrated into the academic community, as recommended by the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages (2007) and other professional organizations. They must have a voice in decision making, enjoy the rights of academic freedom, and be protected and be afforded the same job security as ladder faculty. Faculty in every department employing contingent faculty should carefully examine their personnel practices to make sure that they are not party to what they often condemn in their publications and lectures: the exploitation of the powerless.

Building Strong Language Programs

First-class language programs are built on a solid understanding of student needs and interests. They regularly measure student learning outcomes in order to track progress toward well-defined program objectives. Such programs are rare. For most institutions, the course continues to be the primary unit for evaluation and grades are the only measure of student achievement. Grades, of course, are of little use in measuring the progress of a program from year to year.

As funding opportunities become scarce or enrollments decline, in a typical open market fashion, programs will inevitably compete for survival, which is not a bad thing. Competition is the ultimate quality assurance tool and the only guarantee for excellence. To begin to realize our potential and build strong and vibrant language programs, we need to:

1. Develop a culture of accountability—first and foremost, to ourselves. We need to set

realistic but challenging program goals and measure our progress toward them. This would include: wise pre-and post-measurement of student learning outcomes; frequent observation (including teachers observing each other) and team discussion of how to improve; regular program evaluation.

2. Diversify offerings: A quick inventory of offerings now available reveals a need for developing niche. In the U.S. and abroad, programs tend to offer the same undifferentiated courses, as if one size fits all needs. Programs would do well to consider their institutional mission, their students' needs, and their competitive advantage and design customized programs accordingly.

3. Ensure better articulation between stateside and study abroad providers: More attention must be paid to our overseas partners. Neglecting the study abroad component is essentially committing the mistake of outsourcing a core competency, a mistake we cannot afford to make. We need to build bridges through strong partnerships with overseas institutions to make sure that our students are appropriately challenged while in country and that we are all on the same page.

4. Encourage and safeguard excellence: Outstanding programs that deliver, such as CASA and ARIT, opportunities that are the goal of our best advanced-level students, need to be constantly cultivated and challenged in order to ensure that those students who are bent on high levels of proficiency are not discouraged or impeded.

We must build a culture that values and rewards individuals and institutions for building and maintaining strong language programs.

Some institutions have already discovered the benefits of wisely investing in their language programs. Better prepared students are, of course, their own reward, in and out of the classroom. Quality learning opportunities attract students and increase opportunities for external funding. Enrollments increase, making formerly small language programs more cost effective. Unfortunately, the number of institutions that have discovered the keys to building strong language programs are few compared to the tide of institutions inadvertently carrying the nation's youth along with them toward what would appear to be an inevitable entropic state of American inability to learn foreign languages to any meaningful degree.¹

All is far from lost. We happen to find ourselves at a critical point in time in our nation's history when students, faculty, administrators, and donors all realize that we must engage the world positively if we are to save it and ourselves from the ignorance and distrust that threaten us all. To harness this good will and positively channel it will take leadership and organization, at every level. We cannot allow it to dissipate into hopelessness, nor can we afford the disappointment that will surely follow if we simply throw what money we can find at those aspects of our educational system that have shown themselves over decades to be ineffective for most students.

Stemming the tide will not, of course, take place overnight. On the other hand, positive revolutions have a way of quickly propagating themselves. Documenting success could go far in inspiring other institutions to follow suite.

1. Even if such study does not result in significant linguistic gains or likely lead to subsequent such study, it typically does result in a valuable eye-opening cultural experience. Of course, most students would prefer to walk away with both the linguistic and cultural proficiency and this should be a much greater priority for all institutions offering language courses that claim to offer such results.

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