The Global Professional

Gilles Bousquet
University of Wisconsin at Madison

As educators in an increasingly global society, we realize that we need to train students—undergraduate and graduate—to live and work in a global environment. This idea is not a new one; scholars, administrators, and government officials have been promoting similar notions for several decades, especially since the advent of the Cold War.

David Ward, president of the American Council on Education, emphasized at the 2003 annual meeting of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges that international education can no longer be considered "business as usual." The concept that graduates must have cross-cultural knowledge and expertise—long recognized in the languages and humanities—has steadily gained support to become an important goal and a marker of achievement for many professional schools in the United States today.

The aims of this paper are threefold. First, I will consider some of the principle factors driving the internationalization of our campuses. Against this backdrop, I will discuss how selected professional schools have responded to the call for internationalization in their disciplines through innovations in language training, international experiences, area studies collaboration, and technology. Finally, in light of these developments, I will suggest how we, as language instructors might respond.

Over the past three to five years, two major forces have combined to shape a new, more robust, ambitious, and challenging international education agenda where languages have taken center stage.

The first of these is globalization. Over the past decade, we have witnessed the increasing interconnectedness of many parts of the world, fueled by the interdependence of financial markets, population displacements, health and environmental concerns that transcend borders, and the spread of information technology and infra-
structure. The circulation of capital and information—at increasing speed, in unprecedented quantity, and to remote, once-inaccessible corners of the earth—means that few remain untouched by worldwide flows and geo-politics.

The breakdown of the post-World War II and Cold War partition of the globe precipitated the adoption of capitalist market ideology by most parts of the world; with it, we have seen an increasing role for multinational, economic, financial, developmental, and political organizations such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the UN.

A decade of rapid globalization, however, has not brought homogeneity to the planet. Beyond the financial, economic, and technological flows that have sent a tide of English coursing around the planet, globalization has also meant an unprecedented flow of people, cultures, and ideas throughout the world. Consequently, our globalized world is increasingly multilingual and multicultural. The world of innovation is already multipolar, not only in technological terms, but also in cultural, social, intellectual, and economic terms. Breakthrough technologies, ideas, and practices now come from not just the U.S., Western Europe, and Japan, but from new corners of the world such as India, Singapore, Korea, Brazil, and Ireland.

For international education, the new and evolving reality of this multipolar world sends a clear message: the graduates of tomorrow will need knowledge of the world both through its languages and an international academic experience that takes them not just to Western Europe, but to different regions of the world. An international academic experience—even in the form of a two-week study-tour—is a suitable first encounter with another culture’s way of being. But it will be a poor introduction indeed if students have not already been exposed to key cultural, social, and historical concepts before they go abroad. Students will develop a better grasp of other cultures’ realities, as well as preparing themselves to work more effectively and live more harmoniously in these regions, if they are able to speak the local language(s).

The English-only version of the world and the dominance of the West are, at best, only half the story. Those who do not recognize and prepare for a multicultural, multipolar, and multilingual world will be condemned to increasing isolation and predictable decline.
This situation holds clear and significant implications for the languages and, in particular, for the less commonly taught languages.

Globalization is not only a story of global inventiveness and worldwide circulation. It is equally one of new divisions and unbearable discrepancies between the health and prosperity of one part of the planet and the poverty and misery of much of the rest. We see growing inequalities not just between regions, but within regions and countries. Consider the spread of infectious diseases, poverty and hunger issues, population growth, safeguarding the environment, as well as controlling the manufacture and sale of weapons; in all these domains, partnerships and collaborations are urgently needed. To forge such relationships, an understanding of cultures, societies, and institutions around the world must be a priority. This means that more experts with high-level proficiency in foreign language and sophisticated knowledge of world areas and global issues are essential. It is not enough therefore to say that we must prepare the next generation of graduates to live and work across cultures. They must be able to work with other cultures and societies to meet the challenges generated by globalization across a range of critical areas such as health, environment, population, food, and security.

The events of 9/11 and their far-ranging implications for national and global security and U.S. foreign policy constitute the second force to have a strong influence on the international education agenda. In the area which I have monitored most closely, that of international education, questions related to foreign language training, proficiency, expertise, readiness, and effectiveness have risen to the top in virtually unprecedented fashion.

Such questions have also been discussed in the media, debated in the public space, and examined by government officials, and there has been widespread recognition that the U.S. faces an insufficiency of expertise in the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). In assessing federal strategic language needs, the General Accounting Office found that 70 federal agencies have foreign language needs. Yet, a January 2002 GAO-issued report found a shortage of translators and interpreters, as well as diplomats and intelligence specialists with foreign language skill in its review of the Army, Department of
Commerce Commercial Service, FBI, and State Department. It concluded that this deficiency might have hindered U.S. military, intelligence, and law enforcement agencies (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002).

While the latest data from the Modern Language Association show that foreign language enrollments on college and university campuses are on the rise, and often dramatically so (Arabic up 92.5%, Chinese up 20%, Portuguese up 21.1%), only 8.7% or approximately 1.4 million students of higher education study a language today, an increase of 17.9% over 1998, but a decline from the 1960s figure of 16% (Welles, 2004). Of today’s students, only 5% study the non-European languages spoken by 85% of the world’s population, and only 10% of these complete four years of instruction. Less than 1% of graduate students are studying a language deemed critical to national security by the federal government (ACE, Beyond September 11).

Further, there is no unified approach being taken by government to encourage study of LCTLs. Congress and the agencies differ on the best way to address the language shortage. The former is calling for more training of employees, while large federal agencies have preferred to invest in translation technology (FBI) or their own language schools (CIA). A few federal agencies, such as the Army Foreign Officers Corps, fund employees to study languages at universities. Department of Education Title VI programs currently train about 85% of the experts in LCTLs.

While there has been a lot of talk about a national strategic need for more LCTL proficiency in government, the issue has been eclipsed by what have been viewed as more pressing strategic security needs in visas, controlling biological agents, emergency response capabilities, homeland security, and action in hot spots such as Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition, there is little hard data about what national language needs are, and what would be required to increase the number of experts and proficiency levels. This lack of information hinders development of a national response strategy. There are currently no new Congressional proposals for language funding in the pipeline and, given the current budget deficit, new funding seems unlikely in the near term.
In the realm of public education, we have not fared much better. In a forthcoming issue of the *Modern Language Journal* entitled "Teaching Foreign Languages and Cultures in a Post 9/11 World," J. David Edwards, Executive Director of the Joint National Committee on Languages, the lobbying arm of more than 60 language-related professional organizations, maintains that the U.S. suffers from a "national security language crisis," in part because we have not valued languages and integrated them into the core standards of our elementary and secondary schools.

Today, despite the increased attention paid to languages in the post-9/11 public discourse, language policy remains contradictory and short-term. English-only and bilingual movements are in conflict; heritage languages, which may be viewed as a national resource, are seldom taught, even in their own communities. As Edwards points out: "Although languages are being seen as a security issue, they are not being valued as an education issue. Until policy makers realize the connection between education and real security, we are not likely to see serious change that improves language learning in the United States and prepares our citizens to deal with the rest of the world." Such is the general situation of international education today. While it is not entirely bleak, neither is it always encouraging.

Business, Engineering, and Medicine offer a window into the different internationalization processes taking place across the professions. Each of these fields has made efforts to incorporate international elements, including languages, in their training as they work to produce graduates with the skills and knowledge to be truly global professionals. However, there is considerable variation in the ways in which professional schools have approached internationalization, largely as a result of differences in the intensity of external and internal demands.

The federal government has long recognized the necessity of internationalization in the professional schools to meet critical national needs, but federal support for internationalization has been minimal and fragmented. More recently, the public has recognized the benefit of international education; a national survey found 93% of respondents acknowledging that international issues are important
and an equal portion that thinks greater understanding of other cultures and customs is important to our ability to compete in a global economy (ACE, 2002).

Another source of pressure for internationalization has come from within higher education itself, as many university leaders have made internationalizing the campus one of their priorities. At the UW-Madison, “accelerate internationalization” is one of the chancellor’s five strategic priorities for the campus. National higher education associations have also produced a flurry of reports noting the importance of internationalizing the professional schools. For example, ACE’s “Comprehensive Policy on International Education” calls for efforts to “significantly expand the international knowledge of faculty and graduate students in professional and technical fields such as business, education, the environment, law, crime and terrorism, economics, finance, health, food and hunger, conflict resolution and information technology” (ACE, 2002, p. 15). Finally, faculty, students, and alumni have also pushed professional schools to move in a more international direction.

The internationalization of American business education provided the stepping-stone for the internationalization of the professional schools. Business schools were among the earliest of the professional schools to incorporate international expertise into their curriculum, citing the need to maintain American competitiveness in a globalizing economy. Within business schools, the primary impetus for internationalization is pragmatic and market-based; it is driven by demand from employers (including alumni) seeking globally competent graduates, students demanding global skills, accreditation agencies, and the competition for prestige and rankings among business schools (Schoorman, 1999).

As early as 1974, the American Assembly of Collegiate Business Schools (AACBS) called for an increase in international content. The process was further galvanized in 1982 by a new federal funding program through Title VI (Center for International Business Education and Research-CIBER), which provided financial support and disseminated ideas and models. As employers pushed for more global skills, the AACBS requirements became broader for both undergraduate and graduate curricula. In 2000, curriculum standards included
“ethical and global issues, demographic diversity and the influence of political, social, legal and regulatory, environmental and technological issues,” and each school had to develop additional standards in accordance with its goals (Fugate and Jefferson, 2001 p. 161). Now, most business school programs include courses on international business and many schools have created majors, minors, certificate programs, or other specialized tracks in international business. International business programs grew tremendously from 1989 to 1999, increasing from 163 programs to 420 (Scherer, Beaton, Ainina, and Meyer, 2000).

Internationalization of other professional schools has been less uniform. Demand for engineers with international experience has increased slowly over the past decades, yet engineering development and manufacturing increasingly involve interactions within or between firms that cross national boundaries. Employers seek qualified applicants who are able to think in broad cultural terms, work in culturally diverse teams, converse in foreign languages, and further the company’s international agenda. Internships abroad are especially valued because the student has proven his/her ability to work in another language and culture (Swearengen, Barnes, Coe, Reinhardt, and Subramian, 2002). Despite the apparent need for graduates who fit this description, the field of engineering has not been overwhelmingly responsive (Jones, Oberst, Siller, and Johnson, 2002). While some engineering programs have introduced international content into the curriculum, and a few have developed exemplary international engineering majors, most engineering schools have not systematically created the types of connections with overseas universities and companies necessary for exchanges and international collaborations. The slowness to develop these overseas interinstitutional links results partly from the difficulty of coordinating and sequencing curricula, transferring credits, and creating space for language and cultural training (DeWinter, 1997). The number of engineering students studying abroad has not risen as it has in other fields. Engineering students account for only 2.7% of American students who studied abroad in 2000–2001 (IIE, Open Doors, 2002).
The field of International Health has grown substantially in the last twenty years. Medical students are demanding more training in primary care and courses with international content. They are beginning to realize the personal and professional benefits of going abroad and obtaining a degree in international health. Yet, few schools have established centers for international health or made an effort to increase their international offerings. Some administrators are skeptical of the benefits of international health experiences while others are concerned about the quality of the experience and supervision. Safety and liability issues are also an important factor. Because of these issues, medical students who want to go abroad often run into obstacles within their degree programs (James, 1999). However, student demand and recent cross-cultural training requirements from the U.S. Liaison Committee on Medical Education have created a mini-mandate for internationalization in the health field.

To meet the challenge of integrating international content within their structured degree requirements, professional schools have generally used four tools: language training, international experiences, area studies collaboration, and technology. In determining which tools were used and how particular schools applied them, I consulted websites and responses to an informal survey from the following institutions: University of Rhode Island, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Georgia Institute of Technology for Engineering; Johns Hopkins University, Tulane University, the University of Washington, and Michigan State University for Health; University of South Carolina, Indiana University, San Diego State University for Business; and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**Language Training**

Language training requirements among professional school programs range from none at all to high levels of proficiency, up to and including a mandated overseas program taught in the foreign language. For example, San Diego State University (SDSU) International Business Program and the University of Rhode Island's International Engineering Program (IEP) are double majors, requiring the equivalent of a major in a foreign language, with overseas study and
an internship requirement in addition to rigorous professional training. San Diego State’s expectations are made explicit: “Study abroad is mandatory. If you do not intend to study abroad, please choose a different major” (SDSU, 2002). Other schools offer a variety of options along a continuum to fulfill their professional language requirement. The University of Rhode Island International Engineering Program leads to a Bachelor of Science in Engineering, and a Bachelor of Arts in German, French or Spanish.

San Diego State and Rhode Island, which require both a study and work period abroad, have substantial enrollments (185 engineers at Rhode Island, and 750 international business majors at SDSU) and no trouble placing their graduates. However, these degrees require five years to complete in order to accommodate the combination of professional training, language training, and overseas experience.

Professional school students need specialized language training. We have found that Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) courses have successfully addressed that need. Rhode Island’s International Engineering Program is one of the best examples of a successful institutionalization of the LAC model. For example, during the first 3 years of language training, IEP students are in a separate track that focuses on the language needs of engineers, with courses taught by language faculty who have retrained themselves to teach engineering language and texts. By crossing disciplinary boundaries, IEP has had positive impacts on the campus that extend well beyond the engineering curriculum. Collaboration has opened new faculty agendas such as the cultural definition of technology and engineering, and their representation in art and language learning (Kirchner, 2000).

The Professional French Masters Program at UW-Madison exemplifies another successful model of collaboration for professional language training. This program is a language-first program that requires graduate-level proficiency in French. It is housed in the French and Italian department, but includes significant interdisciplinary training in student-centered concentration areas and a mandatory professional internship abroad.
Language learning is beginning to play a more central role in medical education as well. Doctors and medical students have called for more language training and international health experiences among health care professionals (James, 1999). Recent studies have shown that language barriers in hospitals are a common problem that leaves patients in danger of misunderstanding their diagnoses and treatments (O’Neil, 2003; Marchione, 2003). A committee formed by the International Health Medical Education Consortium is working on suggested curricula in international health (IHMEC, 2000). Language proficiency can be integrated into medical school programs, as at Tulane, where proficiency in a foreign language is a graduation requirement for the Masters in Public Health.

While a small number of professional programs have been able to require and successfully achieve high levels of language proficiency in very specialized international programs, it is not realistic to expect that we can require this level of language acquisition for the majority of professional school students. Even among language majors, proficiency levels vary. One possibility is to provide a continuum of options, such as those offered by Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business and the University of South Carolina’s international business programs, that offers the opportunity for professional school students to become highly proficient, while recognizing that even minimal language learning and exposure will increase cultural awareness and sensitivity (Siedeli, Dollinger, and Doyle, 2003).

International Experiences

As the world becomes more interconnected, the value of a global outlook and cross-cultural skills gained from living and learning abroad is readily accepted by most educators and employers. This experience can take a variety of forms such as exchanges, study abroad, internship, or scientific research programs of varying length. The major questions for professional schools revolve around fitting overseas experiences into the curriculum and balancing practical career preparation with the acquisition of language and cultural skills.

Many business schools have developed targeted study-abroad programs with specialized, business-oriented curricula. This model
has enabled students to go abroad and still make significant progress toward their degree. In addition, business schools have added significant institutional structures to support exchanges and advise business school students on fitting international options into their program.

The experience in the health field has been somewhat different. Several top medical schools with international health programs such as Johns Hopkins, Washington University, and Tulane have formalized centers that help support electives in developing countries and provide faculty advisors and orientation. However, these programs are the exception; despite a surge of interest in international health, many institutions lack such support, and relatively few international offices exist at medical schools. Barriers to international health training include cost, lack of benefit assessments, and concerns about safety and liability. As a result, students at many institutions arrange their own overseas programs. To help facilitate the development of international experiences for medical health professionals, the International Health Medical Education Consortium (IHMEC) was formed in 1991. It provides connections for faculty and publishes resources on international health electives, curricula, and language courses, and hosts an annual meeting (James, 1999).

Dana James postulates that one of the reasons many medical schools have been reluctant to invest in institutional overseas electives is the limited amount of evidence showing academic benefits, although the few studies that exist are positive. One study of 60 medical students who participated in training in a developing country found the benefits included cultural sensitivity, enhanced world views, better clinical and communication skills, social and public health awareness, and concluded that medical schools should increase the number of high quality international electives (Haq et. al., 2000).

A partnership between Indiana University School of Medicine and Moi University Faculty of Health Sciences in Kenya offers a unique model for exchange. This medical school partnership emphasizes bilateral exchange, mutual benefit, and long-term commitments. Since 1990, more than 110 IU residents have participated in an elective rotation in Kenya. The residents report that the experience is "life changing" and consistently rate the elective as one of the high-
lights of their residency training. Additional programs beyond the residency have been added, including clinical electives and a program for first-year medical students. Success can be attributed to mutual benefit, institutional commitment, and open and regular communication, flexibility and tolerance by both partners. Strong support from medical school leadership has generated faculty acceptance, which, in turn, fosters the intellectual and organizational energy necessary to maintain the partnership, as well as fundraising to sustain it.

While engineering schools have lagged behind many other professional fields in the number of students studying overseas, a few well-developed international engineering programs provide models for successful internationalization. For instance, overseas study and work experience are required elements of the University of Rhode Island International Engineering program, which offers a dual engineering and language degree. In addition, an unusual aspect of the Georgia Institute of Technology's engineering program is the Georgia Tech Lorraine campus, located in Metz, France. Enrollment at Georgia Tech Lorraine has gone from 5 graduate students when it opened in 1990, to 190 graduate students and 120 undergraduate students in 2001. Undergraduates attend GT-Lorraine during the summer and enroll in engineering, elementary language, and cultural courses.

Because students in professional disciplines often face obstacles in building study abroad into their programs, professional schools are expanding their overseas options and tailoring programs to the needs of their students. Assessment strategies have not kept pace with the expansion of study abroad. A well-developed set of assessment strategies documenting the benefits of study abroad, including mastery of academic content, language skills, intercultural skills, critical reasoning skills, and personal growth, would help convince more professional schools that study abroad is an integral part of creating well-rounded, globally literate professionals (Gillespie 2002; Haq et. al., 2000).
Area and International Studies Collaboration

The concerns of the professional schools have proven difficult to fit into the area studies curriculum. Engineering schools need to address technical questions such as global standards (ISO) and global production processes, while business schools need to focus on training managers to sell, source, and produce products in different markets. Medical schools are concerned with training professionals that are sensitive to the way people from different cultures respond to health issues and treatment. Such needs are usually addressed within the professional school curriculum.

Collaboration between area studies and professional schools is more likely when professional schools recognize broader cultural issues or thematic globalization concerns as part of the curriculum. The deepest collaborations appear to occur when this overlap in interests leads to joint degrees. The process of creating and maintaining a joint degree requires constant faculty interaction to negotiate content and develop and assess the degree structure. Other credentials, such as certificates or concentrations also require some level of faculty collaboration and can lead to more cross-disciplinary interaction.

Area studies and professional school curricula are also brought together by language and international education requirements within professional schools. The MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives (MISTI) program states that it “believes that lasting economic and social relationships require language and cultural familiarity of foreign countries and regions.” It requires students to take two years of a foreign language and courses on the politics and economy of the country, as well as attend “retreats” held by the program before participating in an internship in China, France, Germany, Italy, India, or Japan. Courses on the country, culture, and language are taught by area studies faculty. In 1999–2000, 159 interns went abroad under this program.

Linkages between international health and the social sciences are evident in dual graduate degree offerings at several leading institutions in international health. At Johns Hopkins, the Master of Health Sciences can be pursued as part of a dual Master of Arts degree with
the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). The Tulane Department of International Health and Development collaborates with the Department of Sociology to offer a Master of Science degree in "Applied Development," focusing on interdisciplinary analytical and methodological skills combined with an understanding of key problem areas.

At the University of Washington, students may earn a concurrent Master of Public Health and Master of Arts in International Studies through the Jackson School, or earn a certificate in international development policy and management, designed to complement graduate degrees in professional disciplines, natural science, or social sciences. Electives in the certificate are offered by the College of Forest Resources, School of Nursing, School of Public Health, and the Department of Anthropology, demonstrating its interdisciplinary nature.

Michigan State's Institute for International Health is unique because it houses an interdisciplinary specialization for undergraduates in health and humanities. Students take courses on cultural and social dimensions of health, science, technology, and biomedicine. MSU's graduate programs also offer Medical Anthropology and Medical Sociology specializations, with courses spread over multiple disciplines.

Technology

Today's graduates must be familiar with the intellectual contributions of other parts of the world and with the global connections in their field. Some of these goals can be achieved without leaving the country. Using the Internet, American students can interact with people and work on joint projects anywhere around the world, as long as the technologies are compatible. Rapid dissemination of information not only exposes students to other cultures and issues, but does so in real time. Technology also allows U.S. faculty to teach classes to students abroad, bring expertise from abroad into the classroom, and coordinate projects with foreign companies and institutions. Study-abroad offices and advisors can maintain connections with students
overseas, and students on campus and abroad can gather news and information from around the world.

Technology plays an increasing role in internationalizing professional schools. UW-Madison, for example, offers continuing engineering education and technical Japanese in the College of Engineering; an interactive, distance-learning international business course with Kazakhstan is available in the business school; language departments use CD-ROMs extensively; and distance-education courses have been incorporated into the environmental studies curriculum. This sampling represents a few of the technologies that have become part of the campus landscape. These tools bring the world to the campus, infuse an international dimension into the curriculum, and enhance research and overseas partnerships. While not a substitute for an overseas experience, technology offers many opportunities for international interaction.

Recognizing the stimulating effect that new technological advances can have on students and instructors alike, a new American Council on Education project is attempting to encourage the use of innovative technologies such as the Internet, distance learning, and two-way international communication to facilitate international relationships. An ACE/AT&T grant will recognize advances in the use of technology in undergraduate learning, particularly technologies that can be adapted by other interested institutions. As the new ACE project demonstrates, the use of technology for international education is an area where university, federal, and corporate partnerships show promise for testing and sharing new ideas.

Globalization and the post-9/11 political landscape have added new and weighty priorities to the field of professional language instruction. We must respond by asserting our expertise as language and pedagogical specialists, for the prominence of language in the new international education agenda and the necessary inclusion of language and cultural training as part of a professional school curricu-
lum aimed at training globally competent students have implications for us, our departments, and our profession.

Who will be the language students we teach? Do we see a new "global professional" student, emerge? And what will that mean for us—how will we teach, what will we teach—and will we be able do it without compromising what we hold dearest, namely the highest levels of language, literature, and culture studies?

As language professionals, we must develop structured and mutually beneficial collaborations, based in innovation, integrated in a larger framework with strong advocacy for broad-based language education.

As a consequence of globalization, new societal needs, and market demands, there will be more students combining language learning with professional or scientific training. The language needs of these students differ from those of the typical language major. If we want to be in a position to engage this new kind of student we must in some ways restructure what we offer and how we think about language teaching. We must create tailored entry points for these students, otherwise they will turn elsewhere. And though we may be serving only a small number of students, we should remember the importance of not isolating ourselves from them and their needs.

"Splendid isolation" is a temptation for us, but it also a danger, because the need to provide this type of special-purpose language instruction is strong, and it will only grow in the future. If we do not work with professional schools and students without reconsidering some of our own views, without making accommodation for them, then they will turn to other sources for language instruction. This is already happening; some professional schools have created language programs customized to meet the needs and schedules of their students, and have gone off campus to do so because the existing language programs were too restrictive. There is danger in isolation, and strength in collaboration; by reaching out and partnering we strengthen the core of what we do and enhance our influence and our position, both institutionally and externally.

The question that we must ask ourselves is how to manage these collaborations internally. The traditional department structure
may not be entirely prepared to do so; it may be that collaboration should be handled through centers, institutes, or joint programs that appeal to and involve only a portion of the department, but that would, at the same time, represent an extension of the department and its activities. We do not have to imagine these collaborations as negative, but rather as a way to influence the agenda of the schools with which we are partnering and a means for us, in the languages, to gain access to new and greater resources, as well as new students for our courses. Once these students begin taking language classes, some of them, just as we did, will fall in love with language and become majors or learn the specialized language at an advanced level; collaboration is an occasion for us to whet their appetites. Further, students who are serious about their discipline will see the great advantage of being linguistically and culturally proficient. Collaborations can extend beyond the campus to include additional stakeholders such as business, governments—both U.S. and foreign—public interest groups such as the Rotary or the Peace Corps with which we share interests, or groups that have some of the same professional goals.

Collaboration is not simply service, but a two-way process that benefits both partners. If, as language teachers, we are treated simply as service providers, with no room for growth, we should turn to different campus partners. With new constituencies, we should consider new methodologies, which may also advance research and teaching of language, and new formats such as intensive weekend or summer sessions. We have successful examples of these innovations now. And we should look seriously at best practices in technology use, not to replace, but to strengthen and enhance language teaching.

Innovation in formats, methods, tools, and teaching materials will contribute to research and course development. In consequence, we may have access to new sources of funds for training opportunities. So again, we innovate not because we are forced to innovate, but because it is a challenge to us as professional language educators. It is a relatively new area of development, and one where the LCTLs have been leaders. An example of this is UW-Madison's summer Arabic program, and the intensive summer formats that are making South Asian language teaching viable.
Another challenge is integration. As we encounter new audiences, as we understand the context in which our languages are needed and used, I believe we should see language proficiency as part of a larger and evolving framework that encompasses global competence for our graduates. Language is not merely oral or written expression, but access to other ways of thinking and viewing our world, to different social and historic contexts and traditions that open windows on other cultures and allow the language learner to live, work, or study in diverse fields and a variety of places.

Finally, we must become advocates for all languages. As a response to new national and international needs, languages may be called to take center stage more and more often. The voice of the language community needs to be heard forcefully articulating a clear and uncompromising message: language is a fundamental, integral part of education—early education, secondary education, and higher education. It is a fundamental subject like math or science; it is a fundamental skill like writing.

This strong yet simple message does not favor Spanish or French, Japanese or Korean, but advocates generally for language teaching. Yes, there is some risk that if you offer Chinese, Japanese, and Italian, then Spanish and French enrollments (French in particular) may drop. But the broader picture requires that we work together with the various constituencies concerned, with secondary-school teachers and with our colleagues at the university. We need to find the courage to sit down together for the greater good and articulate a message that is in tune with the new individual, national, and international needs in the professional schools and across the academy. I am not suggesting you discard your scholarship, but expand it. Ultimately, we—the languages—will be stronger for it.

References


