

## NEWS OF THE FIELD

### A New Era for Foreign Languages

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Not since the late fifties and early sixties of the Cold War and the Space Race have languages enjoyed the support and attention that they are currently receiving. Over the last few years, numerous studies, reports, and hearings, have noted our nation's serious language shortages and called upon the federal government to increase and improve the United States' language capabilities. For example, last November the prominent Abraham Lincoln Commission released their report, *Global Competence and National Needs: One Million Americans Studying Abroad*, calling on Congress and the Administration to provide \$125 million by 2011 for scholarships and fellowships for one million students to study overseas. In early February, the very influential Committee for Economic Development (CED) released their study, *Education for Global Leadership: The Importance of International Studies and Foreign Languages for U.S. Economic and National Security*, urging increased investment in international studies and foreign languages. Among their various recommendations was "expanding the training pipeline at every level of education to address the paucity of Americans fluent in foreign languages especially critical, less-commonly taught languages."

These studies and others, as well as the language community's own advocacy efforts have helped create public pressure, media attention, and consideration by policy makers that are producing new opportunities and advantages. Recently, attention and concern have given rise to new and increased federal policies and funding for languages and international studies. While this may not yet be the golden age of language study, it is quite evident that the United States has entered a new era with respect to the knowledge of other languages and the understanding of other cultures. It is a new era that

is being determined by national security and economic competitiveness, but its most serious impact will be upon education.

One of the most significant of these new policies is the "National Security Language Initiative" (NSLI) launched by the President of the United States speaking at a National Summit of College and University Presidents held at the State Department in early January. The NSLI is a joint effort by the Departments of Defense, State, and Education, as well as the Intelligence Community, which will provide \$114 million for languages. This figure is roughly divided into \$57 million for ED, \$27 million for State, \$25 million for DOD, and \$5 million in Intelligence.

Specifically, within the Department of Education, despite past opposition to the program, \$24 million will be for a "refocused" Foreign Language Assistance Program. Other new or expanded programs will include \$24 million for developing a pipeline through Flagship K-16 Language Programs; \$5 million will go to develop a Language Teacher Corps; \$3 million is to expand teacher-to-teacher language seminars; and \$1 million will create a new E-Language Learning Clearinghouse.

While the NSLI has been in the planning stages for well over a year, some of the sponsoring agencies had already undertaken impressive internal efforts and achieved progress toward addressing their language needs and developing their language capabilities with policies of their own. Within the Department of Defense, the National Security Education Program (NSEP) has been providing scholarships and fellowships for study abroad in a nation's language for almost fifteen years. Within recent years, NSEP has initiated the National Language Flagship Initiative, a K-16 Chinese Language Initiative, and laid the groundwork for the creation of a Civilian Linguistic Reserve Corps (all of which will be expanded under the President's initiative). The entire Department of Defense will implement a Defense Language Transformation Roadmap that, among other things, increases resources for the Defense