

**A CALL TO ACTION
FOR
NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAPABILITIES**



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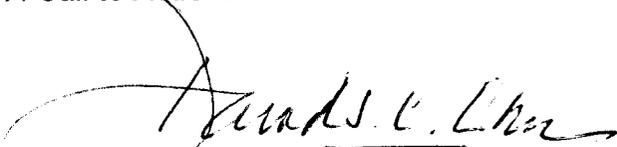
PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

A Call to Action for National Foreign Language Capabilities

The *Call to Action for National Foreign Language Capabilities* is the culmination of an unprecedented 2004 gathering of leaders from government, industry, academia, and language associations. At this National Language Conference, the leaders recalled October 4, 1957, when the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik I. Congress immediately passed the National Defense Education Act to respond to the threat of Soviet technological superiority. The generation of scientists, engineers, mathematicians, linguists, and area specialists created by this act put a man on the moon, helped win the Cold War, and today has a spacecraft 746 million miles from Earth soaring amidst the rings of Saturn. During the Conference, the participants agreed that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 had served as a second "Sputnik moment": our national security requires foreign language education and regional expertise in the United States.

The objective of this *Call to Action* is to describe the thoughts of the conference participants of a vision for the future, a future in which the United States enhances its global leadership through increased proficiency in foreign languages and understanding of and respect for the cultures of the world. While the views expressed in this white paper do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Defense, *A Call to Action* identifies a number of areas in need of national leadership and lays out a series of recommendations to address those urgent needs.

Improving the Nation's foreign language capability requires immediate and long-term engagement. Every sector of our society has a role to play. The publication of this document is meant to spur the necessary effort that will move the country forward. This is *A Call to Action*.



David S. C. Chu



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A CALL TO ACTION AND LEADERSHIP

Vision

Our vision is a world in which the United States is a stronger global leader through proficiency in foreign languages and understanding of the cultures of the world. These abilities are strengths of our public and private sectors and pillars of our educational system. The government, academic, and private sectors contribute to, and mutually benefit from, these national capabilities.

The terrorist attacks of September 11th, the Global War on Terrorism, and the continued threat to our Homeland have defined the critical need to take action to improve the foreign language and cultural capabilities of the Nation. We must act now to improve the gathering and analysis of information, advance international diplomacy, and support military operations. We must act to retain our global market leadership and succeed against increasingly sophisticated competitors whose workforces possess potent combinations of professional skills, knowledge of other cultures, and multiple language proficiencies. Our domestic well-being demands action to provide opportunities for all students to learn foreign languages important for the Nation, develop the capabilities of our heritage communities, and ensure services that are core to our quality of life.

Success in this crucial undertaking will depend on leadership strong enough to:

- Implement policies, programs, and legislation that build the national language and cultural understanding capability;
- Engage Federal, state, and local agencies and the private sector in solutions;
- Develop language and cultural competency across public and private sectors;
- Develop language skills in a wide range of critical languages;
- Strengthen our education system, programs, and tools in foreign languages and cultures; and
- Integrate language training into career fields and increase the number of language professionals, especially in the less commonly taught languages.

Leadership must be comprehensive, as no one sector – government, industry, or academia – has all of the needs for language and cultural competency, or all of the solutions. Some actions must be initiated immediately by specific agencies and Federal Departments should organize to work on proposed recommendations. Other necessary solutions must be long-term, strategic, and involve multiple organizations in all levels. To accomplish this agenda, the Nation needs:

- A National Language Authority appointed by the President to develop and implement a national foreign language strategy; and
- A National Foreign Language Coordination Council to coordinate implementation of the national foreign language strategy.

This is the Call to Action to move the Nation toward a 21st century vision.

A CALL TO ACTION

FOR

NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAPABILITIES

PURPOSE

This White Paper responds to the urgent need for a national strategy on foreign languages and cultural competency. It is the result of an unprecedented gathering of language and policy experts drawn from Federal, state, and local government; elementary, secondary and post-secondary education; heritage language communities; and the private/commercial sector. This White Paper presents recommendations designed to build the ability of Americans to operate more effectively inside and outside the country's borders in languages and cultures that are critical to our Nation's future. The time for deliberation on this subject has passed. Now is the time for action. A new vision must be realized.

Vision

Our vision is a world in which the United States is a stronger global leader through proficiency in foreign languages and understanding of the cultures of the world. These abilities are strengths of our public and private sectors and pillars of our educational system. The government, academic, and private sectors contribute to, and mutually benefit from, these national capabilities.

BACKGROUND

RECALLING A SPUTNIK MOMENT

History changed on October 4, 1957, when the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik I. The United States Congress immediately passed the National Defense Education Act to respond to the threat of Soviet technological superiority. The generation of scientists, engineers, mathematicians, linguists, and area specialists created by this Act put a man on the moon, helped win the Cold War, and today has a spacecraft 746 million miles from Earth soaring amidst the rings of Saturn.

Immediately after September 11, 2001, Americans found themselves again facing a Sputnik moment. They realized that they were caught flat-footed, unprepared to confront Al Qaeda terrorists. We need a national commitment to languages on a scale of the National Defense Education Act commitment to science, including improved curriculum, teaching technology and methods, teacher development, and a systemic cultural commitment.

*Honorable Rush Holt
United States House of Representatives*

The September 11th Sputnik moment, the Global War on Terrorism, and the continued threat to our Homeland drive home the need to take action on the foreign language and cultural capabilities of the Nation.

- *Our national security demands that action be taken – action to improve the gathering and analysis of information, to advance international diplomacy, to sustain military operations, and to protect our Homeland.*
- *Our economic competitiveness demands that action be taken – action to retain our leadership in the global marketplace, to secure entrée into local markets, and to succeed against increasingly sophisticated competitors whose workforces possess potent combinations of professional skills, knowledge of other cultures, and multiple language proficiencies.*
- *Our domestic well-being demands that action be taken – action to provide educational opportunities for all students to learn the foreign languages important for the Nation, to continue to develop the capabilities of our heritage communities, and to ensure equal access to services that are core to American quality of life.*

THE URGENT NEED FOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

We must identify the critical nodes in our culture that can be influenced most effectively and we must identify the means to influence them – to cause a shift, now. We must find where and how we can best concentrate our effort in order to produce significant change.

*Dr. David S. C. Chu
Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness*

The essential task of increasing our Nation's foreign language skills and cultural understanding will be accomplished primarily at the state and local level. Nonetheless, this task requires guidance and incentives from the Federal level. The government, public education, academia, and the private sector must address gaps in our country's foreign language capabilities within the

context of competing priorities. It is urgently recommended that a National Language Authority be appointed by the President to serve as the principal advisor, advocate, and coordinator in the Federal Government and to collaborate with state and local governments, academia, and the private sector for improving our national foreign language and cultural understanding capabilities. This person should be a nationally recognized individual with credentials and abilities across all of the sectors to be involved with creating and implementing long-term solutions to achieving national foreign language and cultural competency.

The National Language Authority should be responsible for:

- Developing and overseeing the implementation of a national foreign language strategy across all sectors;
- Establishing formal relationships among the major stakeholders in meeting the Nation's needs for improved capabilities in foreign languages and cultural understanding, to include Federal, state, and local government agencies, academia, industry, labor, and heritage communities; and
- Coordinating and leading a public information campaign that raises awareness of public and private sector careers requiring foreign language skills and cultural understanding, with the objective of increasing interest in and support for the study of foreign languages among national leaders, the business community, local officials, parents, and individuals.

In addition, a National Foreign Language Coordination Council, chaired by the National Language Authority, should be established to identify crucial priorities, inform the nation's leaders of the seriousness of the foreign language gap, increase public awareness of the need for foreign language skills and career paths in business and in government, advocate maximum use of resources, coordinate cross-sector efforts, monitor the foreign language activities of all Federal government departments and agencies, recommend needed national policies, and allocate designated resources to promising programs and initiatives at any level (federal, state, and local).

The National Foreign Language Coordination Council should:

- Support the development of a national foreign language strategy and coordinate the implementation of that strategy across all sectors;
- Be formed around a core of Federal Executive Branch agencies and representatives from the State and local governments, private/commercial sector, academia, heritage communities, and stakeholder organizations;
- Meet on a routine basis, but at least four times a year in formal session;
- Have their work enabled and funded through legislation proposed by the Administration and approved by Congress.

The National Foreign Language Coordination Council can facilitate top-down coordination and direction, bottom-up innovation, and cross-sector collaboration that will be necessary to reach our common foreign language goals.

The National Foreign Language Coordination Council should be charged to:

- Develop and coordinate a process for identifying, assessing, and distributing a comprehensive list of needs from all sectors for foreign language ability and cultural understanding;
- Recommend policy and legislation to build the national capacity in language ability and cultural understanding;
- Engage in regular consultation with language professionals from all sectors and with leaders in the Nation's heritage communities regarding needed action;
- Help to identify incentives for instructional programs in foreign language and cultural understanding at all education levels and for foreign language teacher training programs;
- Design and oversee – with appropriate government and private sector support – a system that ensures coordinated foreign language and regional studies programs in K-12 and post-secondary training in order to raise the level of understanding of all students and produce highly skilled language professionals;
- Recommend and oversee the implementation of common K-12 and post-secondary foreign language achievement standards;
- Recommend a system for the standardized assessment of achievement and proficiency in foreign languages, especially at higher proficiency levels;
- Recommend a system of assessments to test and certify the knowledge, skills, and/or abilities of language professionals and practitioners, such as instructors, trainers, translators, interpreters, and other language specialists;
- Develop and oversee the implementation of foreign language and English language skill-level certification standards, teacher certifications, and graduation criteria for foreign language majors and for the language component of non-language majors (e.g., international business, national security studies, public administration, and health care);
- Build upon successful model foreign language programs, especially in the less commonly taught languages that are deemed critical for national security and global economic competitiveness;
- Develop a strategic posture for language research and coordinate language research initiatives;

- Advocate funding for applied foreign language research into issues of national concern and provide channels for dissemination of research results;
- Assess baseline capabilities and monitor trends of competency in foreign language to ensure a positive impact of programs and initiatives; and
- Assist in coordinating government and private sector partnerships to fund pilot projects, sustain proven best-practice programs, and identify potential program enhancements.

THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE CONFERENCE: A CALL FOR ACTION

Recognizing the challenges of the *current* Sputnik moment, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, in partnership with the Center for Advanced Study of Language, the Department of State, the Department of Education, and the Intelligence Community, hosted the National Language Conference at the University of Maryland in June 2004. This conference brought together over 300 leaders and practitioners from Federal, state, and local government agencies, academic institutions, business and industry, foreign language interest groups, and foreign nations.

In the course of the conference, the participants discussed the challenges to the United States' leadership that are evident in the following major trends at work in the world:

- Instantaneous and global information systems and media coverage that lead to heightened expectations by a broad spectrum of the world's population and segments of society.
- Transformative changes in post-Cold War international affairs, such as the rise of non-state actors, expanded transnational crime, and environmental awareness and concern.
- A revolution in technology that is providing unexpected opportunities and broad access to ideas and products previously out of reach to most of the world.
- Globalization of the marketplace that has led to an increase in the use of English as a "common" language of government and business, but is also now creating greater demand for more products and services localized for the languages and cultures of thousands of markets around the world.

Participants in the first-ever conference of this scope identified foreign language and cultural understanding needs at multiple levels, highlighted current best practices, and proposed immediate and long-term initiatives to enhance our national capabilities. Participants agreed our country needs a national strategy, plans, and policies that engage the American public. Despite the diverse backgrounds of the conference participants, by the end of the meeting there was a clear consensus that the demand for individuals with foreign language skills and cultural understanding far outweighs the supply and that the time to act is now. This resulting document is the Call to Action.

ACTION: DEVELOP CROSS-SECTOR LANGUAGE & CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Ensuring U.S. security, foreign policy leadership, economic competitiveness, an[d] our ability to solve global problems that affect the nation's well being depend on Americans who have an understanding of and ability [to] function effectively in other cultural, business and value systems, as well as foreign language proficiency.

*Committee on Appropriations, United States
House of Representatives Report 107-229 (2001)*

Gaps in our national language capabilities have undermined cross-cultural communication and understanding at home and abroad. They have restrained social mobility, lessened our commercial competitiveness, limited the effectiveness of public diplomacy, and restricted justice and government services to sectors of our society. And they have threatened national security. The United States needs broader and deeper foreign language capabilities.

- Government agencies, academic institutions, and private sector enterprises must identify foreign language and cultural understanding needs for their organizations and for the Nation.
- Agencies across all sectors need to help develop a national foreign language and cultural understanding strategy that sets the foundation for plans and programs that are comprehensive in scope, coherent in application, and engage government, academic, and private sector partners in fulfilling the Nation's foreign language needs.
- Government agencies, academic institutions, and private enterprises should develop and implement both immediate and long-term programs to:
 - Develop individuals across all professions (e.g., engineers, first responders, soldiers, businessmen, attorneys, medical providers,) who have requisite professional credentials and profession-specific capabilities in a foreign language and awareness of relevant cultures.
 - Produce individuals who are qualified in more languages, including the commonly taught languages and less commonly taught languages that are now – and are likely to continue to be – critical to our national security and economic well-being.
 - Provide opportunities for individuals from our many ethnic heritage communities to maintain, enhance, and use their heritage languages to their own and the Nation's benefit.
 - Significantly increase the number of qualified language professionals who have deep cultural, historical, political, and economic understanding of the countries and regions in which the languages are spoken.

ACTION: ENGAGE FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOLUTIONS

A review of translation and interpretation found that more than 80 federal agencies -- from the State Department to the Patent and Trademark Office -- depend in part on proficiency in more than 100 foreign languages.

*Theodore Crump
Chief Translator
National Institutes of Health*

Federal, state, and local governments, as well as officials who implement language assistance under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, need individuals with bilingual and bicultural capabilities: diplomats, defense and intelligence analysts, military personnel, foreign language instructors, health professionals, medical and social services providers, court interpreters, translators, and law enforcement officers. Though generally unrecognized, there are many language-related career requirements and career opportunities in these fields.

- Political leaders and government administrators should immediately review existing programs that contribute to the foreign language capability of the Nation to determine whether they are achieving the stated objectives of each program individually and whether they are helping attain the broader national foreign language objectives outlined in this White Paper. The review should determine whether new programs are needed and ensure that each program has the funding required to address the national needs.
- Local, state, and Federal government agencies should identify and publicize career opportunities requiring foreign languages and cultural understanding.
- Government agencies should review current personnel positions to ensure that foreign language, cultural understanding, and crisis preparedness needs have been identified and integrated into hiring and career progression criteria.
- State and local courts, law enforcement agencies, and government service agencies should collaborate in identifying common needs, such as translation of basic documents, routine and emergency interpretation services, and language sustainment training for bilingual staff.
- Once common needs have been established, state and local governments should build upon proven model programs for establishing regional foreign language service centers.

ACTION: INTEGRATE LANGUAGE TRAINING ACROSS CAREER FIELDS

Qualified interpreters can't make a living in public service interpreting.

*William E. Hewitt
National Center for State Courts*

All business is global, yet all markets are local. This globalized multicultural world needs leaders with a keen understanding of national cultures. By learning from other countries, these leaders develop the best thinking and best practices from around the world enabling them to leverage culture as a tool for competitive advantage.

*Robert Rosen
Global Literacies (2000)*

Agencies and institutions across all sectors need professionals and leaders with advanced foreign language skills and cultural understanding to ensure national security and economic competitiveness.

- Agencies, institutions, and business enterprises with foreign language needs should build upon existing successful training programs or develop new programs for multiple levels of language skills. These range from basic skills to training in specialized vocabulary and cultural characteristics for leaders and professionals (in the medical, legal, diplomatic, and national security arenas, for example) and advanced proficiency for language professionals (teachers, interpreters, and translators, for example).
- Government agencies, academic institutions, and business enterprises should collaborate to develop training and sustainment programs to help maintain and enhance individual language skills, just as they do for other professional and leadership skills.
- Agencies and institutions with foreign language requirements should develop and implement policies and procedures to ensure that employees are rewarded for their language skills throughout their careers. Particular emphasis should be applied to recognizing and rewarding language professionals for the valuable skills they bring to the organization.
- Best practices across sectors should be shared to expedite progress and enable the most efficient use of resources.

ACTION: DEVELOP CRITICAL LANGUAGE SKILLS

Shortages of translators in languages such as Arabic, Urdu, Farsi, Pashto remain a barrier to ... understanding of the terrorist threat.

*National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States
Staff Statement 12*

The goal of promoting heritage language proficiency will revitalize our entire approach to non-English language instruction. It will not only give us more individuals proficient in these languages, it will also dignify our country's heritage language communities... It will help connect instruction with business and governmental needs for expertise in the languages involved.

*Dr. Joshua Fishman
Distinguished University Research Professor
Yeshiva University*

Resources are not available to develop language and cultural capabilities in all of the world's languages; there must be prioritization. There are insufficient resources to train and employ people with language skills in all of the foreign languages that are needed now, or might be needed at some time in the future. Our heritage communities must be viewed as assets upon which the Nation can draw.

- Local, state, and Federal government agencies should identify and publicize the foreign languages and regional studies that are *critical* to national defense, diplomatic discourse, and public administration – and reach out to academia, businesses, and the heritage communities to ensure governmental language requirements are known.
- Government agencies, academic institutions, and private enterprises should develop plans, reinvigorate existing programs, and provide incentives to build upon the foreign language skills and cultural understanding of America's heritage communities. Such incentive programs should increase our national capability in foreign languages – especially in the less commonly taught languages.
- Current model programs of collaboration amongst state courts, law enforcement agencies, and health care organizations that show how the heritage communities can contribute to continuity of language and cultural learning efforts should be duplicated.
- Government agencies and academic institutions need to implement strategies that ensure a long-term domestic capacity to meet contingencies for critical languages.

ACTION: STRENGTHEN TEACHING CAPABILITIES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

We have nowhere near enough qualified teachers – and very limited prospects for training more than a handful of new ones – in the vast majority of the LCTLs [less commonly taught languages] which learners want and need to learn and in which the Nation needs proficiency.

*Dr. Nina Garrett
Director of Language Study
Yale University*

There is a severe shortage of qualified foreign language professionals, including teachers, translators, and interpreters – especially in less commonly taught languages – across the United States. Given the scope of our potential needs, this shortage will become even more acute in the future.

- Government agencies and academic institutions at all levels, including Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade and two- and four-year colleges and universities, should develop their long-range requirements for professionally certified instructors, teachers, and researchers with foreign language skills.
- Once certified instructor, teacher, and researcher requirements are identified, government agencies and academic institutions should develop strategies, plans, and programs to fill the requirements.
- Educational institutions should maintain and enhance rewarding career opportunities for foreign language professionals in academia.
- Government agencies and academic institutions should implement incentive programs to encourage enrollment in educational programs that lead to careers as language professionals.

ACTION: INTEGRATE LANGUAGE INTO EDUCATION SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

But perhaps the biggest problem we face is a general lack of commitment to foreign language education—particularly on the federal budgetary level.

*Former Congressman Rick Lazio
President and CEO of Financial Services Forum*

It's about time that U.S. educational systems provide the instructional time needed for language learners to acquire meaningful levels of language competence.

*Dr. Ray Clifford
Chancellor, Defense Language Institute*

Experience in some local school districts in the United States reinforces the experience of many other countries: second language instruction needs to begin well before high school and continue throughout the educational pipeline.

- Basic foreign language and cultural understanding classes should be available and encouraged for all students, starting early in the educational process.
- Elementary and secondary schools should provide incentives for students to enroll in and continue taking foreign language instruction throughout their school years.
- Local, state, and Federal agencies and education administrators should coordinate foreign language requirements and resources throughout the educational system, from Kindergarten through advanced degrees.
- Standards-based policies for teaching foreign languages and cultures should be applied throughout the educational pipeline. Implementation of these policies will require in-depth research and wider adoption of proven instructional techniques.
- Foreign language and cultural understanding instruction should be integrated into the professional skills education of those seeking careers in local, state, and Federal government, education, or in national and international commerce.
- Foreign language instruction to professional levels of competency, training in professional language skills (e.g., teaching, translating, interpreting, and researching), and in-depth cultural training should be available for students seeking careers as language professionals.
- Foreign language education in primary schools, secondary schools, and post-secondary institutions should ensure continuity of language and cultural instruction through the advanced levels.
- Government-sponsored research and evaluation programs should be implemented to help identify and support innovative academic approaches to teaching, study abroad, immersion, and other traditional methods used to acquire language and cultural skills.
- Procedures should be developed to identify existing best practices, flagship and immersion programs, and career opportunities and to apply and adapt these model programs and opportunities elsewhere.
- The maintenance and development of heritage language capabilities should be supported at the local and state level by offering assistance with teachers, teaching materials, and access to broadcasts from foreign media providing current and authentic materials for both teachers and students.

ACTION: DEVELOP AND PROVIDE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS

Our challenge – now and in the future – is to improve not just the content of our language training programs, but also to find new, more accommodating ways to deliver training...

*Karen Zens
Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Operations
Department of Commerce*

Many school districts need access to currently available foreign language instructional materials, distance learning resources, and technologies to expand foreign language and cultural learning opportunities.

- Academic institutions at all levels should update instructional materials, applying advances in technology where possible, and expand them to include a fuller spectrum of languages, cultures, and professional specialties.
- The government and private sectors should collaborate to develop and field technological tools and capabilities that are appropriate to address the needs for foreign language and cultural understanding. They should promote and foster the distribution of language instructional materials on translation, interpretation, research, and language skill maintenance.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

No one sector – government, industry, or academia – has all of the needs for language and cultural competency, or all of the solutions. Several of the Nation’s needs and associated challenges are similar, as are some of the remedies. All sectors call for increased emphasis on the study of foreign languages and cultures throughout the educational experience. It will take a combination of Federal-level guidance and incentives, innovative academic approaches, and entrepreneurial know-how to fill our foreign language shortfalls. We must recognize the Nation’s heritage communities as integral to increasing our national language capabilities.

Further, some of the Nation’s needs – notably in the area of national security – demand immediate steps be taken to make use of the limited language resources that exist right now. Other solutions must be long-term and strategic, focusing on a national commitment to expand and deepen the pool of truly competent foreign language users.

While dedicated professionals with language skills will be required in many occupations, technology has a role to play in increasing our foreign language capabilities. All Americans need a more universal understanding of the complex world we live in; technology can help us achieve this goal.

Existing programs, even if appropriately funded and coordinated, are not sufficient to achieve all of the objectives outlined in this paper. National-level leadership, coordination, cross-sector collaboration and leveraging of available national resources will be critical to the development of national language and cultural capabilities. Recent legislative proposals in Congress to address language-related issues are welcome signs of the emergence of that leadership. The work of the more than 300 National Language Conference participants from all sectors demonstrated unequivocally that there is a shared commitment to making this high level of collaboration a reality.

America can build upon the “Year of Languages” in 2005 to establish a public and private commitment to increase national language capabilities. This is the Call to Action to create that consensus, establish national level leadership, and move the Nation forward. Proficiency in foreign languages and cultural understanding must become strengths of our public and private sectors and pillars of our education system.

We have a critical national need to know other cultures and to be competent in communicating with other people. These are not new needs. We have heard many calls to action to address these needs... We have made so little progress and have prepared so many globally illiterate [citizens] because universities, states, businesses, and the federal government have been inconsistent in their priorities... So it is past time for a renewed focus on our role as members of the world community. Last call; it is time for action.

*Dr. Robert A. Scott
President, Adelphi University*