

Written Comments
To the
Committee to Review the Title VI and Fulbright Hays International Education Programs
National Research Council
Submitted by
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Joint National Committee for Languages/
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The Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL/NCLIS) are coalitions that include 63 associations and institutions representing approximately 250,000 international studies and language educators and professionals. They include the classics, the commonly taught, and the less commonly-taught languages, as well as English as a Second Language, American Sign Language, and bilingual education. Our members are concerned with language acquisition, language teaching, translation and interpretation, research, study abroad, and technology. Through JNCL/NCLIS, the language community speaks with one voice in our commitment to sustain and intensify our national efforts to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to study and develop the highest possible degree of language competence and international awareness.

Beginning as provisions in the National Defense Education Act of the late fifties, over the years Title VI and Fulbright-Hays102(b)(6) have evolved and grown into one of the most dynamic and successful efforts of the United States government to support education. In the post-9/11 era, the nation's commitment to learn other languages and understand other cultures is now even more important than it was at the time of the 1957 launch of Sputnik. Over the years, JNCL/NCLIS has worked with Congress and the Department of Education to improve and adapt these programs to the changing global environment and our national needs in areas such as language competence, increased opportunities to study abroad, outreach to the profession and the schools, better use of technology, and more and better research.

JNCL/NCLIS consider Title VI and Fulbright-Hays to be highly successful and very important programs. For almost five decades, first NDEA and now Title VI/F-H have been the only or primary national programs dealing with foreign languages and international education. As such, these programs have had to balance a number of concerns. Two primary concerns are creating relatively high-level language and international expertise and research while at the same time providing higher education opportunities in foreign languages, area studies, international education, and international business. All things considered, the present programs have been able to achieve both the specialist and the generalist functions remarkably well. The specialist need for expertise has been addressed by the National Resource Centers, the Foreign Languages and Areas Studies Fellowships, the Centers for International Business Education, and the Institute for International Public Policy, all the while recognizing the generalist need. Also, Fulbright-Hays addresses this responsibility through seminars, faculty study abroad, and

doctoral dissertations. Groups Projects may satisfy either responsibility. The Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language Program, the Business and International Education Program, and the Technological Innovation for Foreign Information Access Program do an exceptional job of addressing the generalist need. The Language Resource Centers and the International Research and Studies Program have been highly successful in addressing both responsibilities.

There are a number of programs in Title VI that are of specific importance to the language community. First, the National Language Resource Centers have increased from the original three centers to the current fourteen centers and in doing so have become invaluable resources for language educators and professionals. These Centers were created to serve as “resources to improve the capacity to teach and learn foreign languages effectively.” All of the current resource centers are actively and effectively engaged in furthering and researching this “improvement”. Equally important is that each of the Language Resource Centers is engaged in addressing specific aspects of foreign languages such as language acquisition, testing and measurement, language teacher education, use of new technologies, proficiency, and the less-commonly taught languages. All are engaged in developing instructional materials and advanced research. Moreover, over the short span of their existence the LRCs have become exceptionally good at outreach and information sharing. They are all present at the major conferences with display booths and presentations. They have developed extensive networks with the language associations, other institutions of higher education, and, of great significance, with school districts and systems. There is now an association of Language Resource Centers Directors that meets regularly and shares information, activities, accomplishments, and research.

A second great strength of Title VI dating from its beginnings as NDEA is Summer Language Institutes. There is considerable research and documentation that demonstrate that such institutes are very effective and successful ways for individuals to acquire useful language skills and proficiency. For foreign language teachers, the institutes provide in-service skills in pedagogy as well as proficiency training. Again, a number of studies have concluded that over the years, summer language institutes have produced many of the nation’s best language teachers and they have made a major contribution to the career development of teachers. Other seminars and institutes supported by Title VI in research, professional development, international business, area studies, and outreach have provided dividends and accomplishments as well.

Next, one of the most important programs in Title VI is International Research and Studies. The IRS program single greatest difficulty is that the language and international studies community’s need for research is so great, the competition so fierce, and the funding so small, that IRS only begins to scratch the surface. Nevertheless, the IRS program has been a tremendous resource for our field providing support and funding for applied research, materials development and dissemination, needs assessment surveys, enrollment surveys, creation of instructional materials, development and dissemination of appropriate tests, proficiency research and information. Some of the projects supported by IRS such as the higher education, secondary, and elementary

enrollment surveys have not only been of value to the language and international studies communities, but are always of great interest and service to the media and policy makers. Without IRS, research and studies in the less-commonly taught languages would be severely constricted. Since September 11, 2001 the need for research, instructional materials, material development, assessment tools in the less-commonly taught languages has increased exponentially. This program is perhaps the greatest single resource for the language field to increase our knowledge base and gain information about foreign language acquisition and teaching, particularly regarding the “difficult” languages.

The Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships and the Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language Programs are key components around which much the rest Title VI and even Fulbright-Hays revolve. The FLAS Fellowships quite simply provide the support necessary for students to become involved in languages to the degree needed by our nation right now. They afford students the opportunities necessary to learn languages and understand other cultures at a highly professional level. They are the portion of Title VI that enables the education of scholars, diplomats, international businesspersons, intelligence gatherers, providers of humanitarian assistance, trade experts, and others vital to national interest on a global scale.

Finally, the Undergraduate Programs are the foundation upon which Title VI’s other programs build. While they address the generalist aspect of NDEA and Title VI, they also produce the raw material to develop expertise and high-level competence. These programs produce college graduates with a basic or even meaningful knowledge of other languages and cultures. They are creating an internationally literate citizenry who can continue to study with a view to developing a greater level of understanding and expertise. The term that has been used for some time is that they provide the “pipeline” that can result in “superior” language usage and “comprehensive” understanding of other cultures.

In conclusion, with the announcement of President George W. Bush’s National Security Language Initiative in January, the nation has recognized the importance of national language needs and capabilities and begun to address them. Title VI and Fulbright-Hays are not and cannot be the solution to our national language inadequacies. The program is too small to address the greatest difficulties: articulation and the language teacher shortage. The pipeline must be developed well before college with well-articulated entrance and exit points. The less-commonly taught languages must build upon the commonly taught languages. Language teachers must be recruited and provided professional development opportunities to get to the superior level. While Title VI is not the solution, it occupies a central position to be an important part of the solution. As key components in addressing our nation’s need to learn other languages and understand other cultures, Title VI and Fulbright-Hays are well positioned to provide the general knowledge and expertise necessary to the future.

