

Building a Full-Service Foreign Language Department: Some Strategies and Interdisciplinary Initiatives

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BEFORE inserting the *full-service* into the title of this article, I turned to a colleague to find out what the adjective meant to him. "What is the very first thing that comes to mind when someone uses the expression *full-service*?" I asked, without hinting at my reason for posing the question. After but a short pause, the professor's reply came: "My bank." "And why your bank?" "Well, my bank offers me many services, not just savings and checking accounts. I can borrow money to buy a car, take out a mortgage on my house, and keep valuables in a safe-deposit box; I could buy a CD, if only I had the money, and they also give me credit cards, so I'll spend more and help us recover from this recession." After digesting all that, I put the same question to my wife. This time I got a different response: "A gas station." "A gas station?" I asked. "Yes, you know our gas station has a full-service lane. If you stop there, they'll pump the gas for you, check the oil, wash the windshield, and even put air in the tires if you want—they'll do the nice things all gas stations used to do for free." Encouraged by both answers, I decided that the term *full-service* would vividly convey the theme of this article.

Since my arrival at the University of Delaware five years ago, I have been trying to redefine the concept of a service department and, in the process, to build what might be characterized as a full-service foreign language department. Before I expand on this project, let me explain my understanding of the old, familiar service department. What do we mean by a service department, especially when we are referring to foreign languages? I think we mean a department that provides, in addition to any BA, MA, and PhD programs it offers, a basic service to its institution by teaching elementary and intermediate language courses to students who may or may not be interested in learning a second language (may, if there is no foreign language requirement; may not, if there is one). The performance of this essential service puts bread and butter on many

faculty plates. Still, even if faculty members know that this job is their *raison d'être*, many of them are resentful because they feel overtrained for such work and wish they could be doing something "more important"—like teaching literature courses or doing their own research. They typically feel unappreciated as well as underused, they begin to view themselves as second-class faculty citizens (because of the "lowly" duties they must perform in order to survive), and eventually they become demoralized. External faculty members and administrators viewing such a service department might arrive at the same conclusions. This perception frequently leads to the department's isolation within the academic community, to a poor image across the campus, and—inevitably—to diminished resources. What is the answer to this all too familiar problem? I believe that the only satisfactory way around this situation, apart from early retirement, is to make the transition from a service to a full-service department.

In its worst conceivable form, the foreign language service department does not actually provide a service to an identifiable segment of the campus community; it exists merely because the institution is committed to offering a smattering of foreign language courses. (I could liken such a department to the discount gas station whose attendants have just one job to perform—pumping gas day after day into car after car, which must be boring work.) In its most prevalent form, the department provides certain students with fairly traditional, no-frills services—elementary

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to advanced courses in commonly taught languages, literature courses taught in the foreign language, perhaps some culture and civilization courses, and maybe even a literature-in-translation course or two. But even here, a stigma is attached to the word *service*. In its most desirable form today, the service department is on its way to becoming a full-service department. And during the 1990s, as the nations of the world grow increasingly interdependent, our goal must be to become full-service foreign language departments.

The full-service foreign language department provides all the basic services and many more. It offers, as its equivalent to bank credit cards and CDs, a wide variety of courses and programs; it reaches out to a broad segment of the academic community; and it tries to develop collaborative programs with other departments, serious programs that are mutually beneficial. Such a department is not parochial, but truly oriented toward the needs of others and fully integrated into the programmatic fabric of its institution. Its members feel appreciated and respected—anything but marginalized and demoralized—for they know they are doing important work.

What sorts of courses and programs should a foreign language department develop and implement—beyond the traditional ones—if it aspires to become a full-service department? Since I am most comfortable drawing on my own experience, I outline here some recent departmental initiatives at the University of Delaware and discuss a few of them in detail.

Let's start with curricular offerings. Beyond providing the usual courses in language, literature, culture and civilization, one can develop special-interest courses. Business courses, such as Introduction to Business French/German/Spanish (which may be followed by more advanced courses in the same languages), are probably the most common type, but there are many additional possibilities that will appeal to students majoring in other departments. Some examples from the Delaware campus include French/German/Spanish Politics in the Press (primarily for students majoring in political science and international relations); Spanish for students planning to enter the health-care professions or for social workers; mini-courses in various languages for students in the hospitality industry (e.g., hotel and restaurant management); Japanese Technical Translation for businesspersons; and German Culture and Technology for engineering students.

We also have a modest portfolio of comparative literature, literature-in-translation, and literature-and-film courses, which reach out to new audiences. The English department, with which we coadminister the program in comparative literature, permits its students to apply one of our literature-in-translation courses toward the English major. Some of these courses—for example, Antiquity through Modern Eyes; The Culture of Glasnost; Science, Technology, and Literature; and Classical Mythology—are designed to appeal not just to students interested in literature but to those who might otherwise not take our

courses. These courses complement such offerings as German Women Writers, Contemporary Latin American Literature by Women, Nineteenth-Century French Literature through Film, The Don Juan Theme in World Literature, and *Don Quixote* in Translation.

In addition, in a joint venture with the Office of International Programs, we offer a series of language courses for faculty and staff members who are eager to begin studying a new language or to revive knowledge of one learned long ago. These popular courses meet once a week, after working hours, and emphasize improving conversational skills. In several languages, we teach three levels each year: beginning, intermediate, and advanced. I assign some of our best instructors to these courses, so that the faculty members enrolled will form a good impression of our department; International Programs pays the salaries. Also in collaboration with that office, we sponsor a foreign language conversant program, which brings together English-speaking students from this country with students from countries where English is not the official language. The conversant partners are interested in learning and practicing each other's native language. Once paired by us, they are expected to meet at least once a week throughout the academic year. This program and the special courses for faculty members do more than provide another service; they heighten our department's visibility and help bolster its reputation on campus.

Let's now proceed to what I call the Travel and Foreign Currency Division. Here our department sponsors several kinds of study-abroad programs designed to attract students from various disciplines who are at different stages in the language-learning process. During our five-week winter session (3 Jan. to 6 Feb., approximately) we offer short-term programs in France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, the Soviet Union, Costa Rica, and Mexico. Five of these programs are aimed at providing intermediate students with an opportunity to continue their language and culture study in native surroundings (see app. 1 for more details). A welcome side benefit of these programs is that many participants move on to advanced language study after they have satisfied the basic requirement. Our program in Mexico enables students to begin learning Spanish while abroad and to combine that study with a social science course (anthropology, economics, or political science) or an art history course. One of our new programs abroad—we call it The Classical World—has no language component whatever. All students take two fifteen-day intensive courses, the first a literature course in and on Rome, the second an art history course taught at several locations in Greece. We cosponsor three of our eight winter session programs abroad with the Departments of Art History, Political Science and International Relations, and Educational Studies. Enrollments have increased each year in the five programs involving foreign language study: in January 1991, we sent 150 students abroad—despite the Gulf War.

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In addition to conducting these short-term programs for nonmajors at the 100 and 200 levels, we offer more advanced students fall-semester programs in France (Caen), Germany (Bayreuth), and Spain (Granada). These students must be prepared to take 300- and 400-level courses in language, culture and civilization, literature, history, political science, and art history. All instruction is given in the foreign language. These programs are open not only to foreign language majors but to students majoring in other disciplines as well.

Our Investment Division is always on the lookout for friendly mergers—not takeovers. Currently, our department offers a joint major with the history department (see app. 2 for a description). We are also developing joint majors with the linguistics department and with our natural allies in the political science and international relations department, as well as an interdisciplinary major in classical studies with the art history, philosophy, and history departments. The joint major with the political science and international relations department is particularly interesting because it will require students to spend an entire semester abroad in one of our fall programs in France, Germany, or Spain. While our department is a junior partner in its joint major with the history department (students must take 24 credits in history but only 18 from us), we are a full partner in our venture with the political science and international relations department (students must take 18 credits in each department) and the senior partner in the major we are developing with the linguistics department (students will take 21 credits in that department and 24 credits from us).

Perhaps our most exciting new initiatives are three foreign language certificate programs we developed recently for students in the College of Business and Economics, the College of Engineering, and the Department of Political Science and International Relations. These programs offer undergraduates the opportunity to achieve honors recognition by taking a special sequence of four courses at the 200 and 300 levels, two of which are offered only in our winter session programs abroad. In other words, these certificate programs require students to study abroad. Our goal is to induce students from other disciplines, students who are highly motivated and eager for honors recognition (but who do not necessarily wish to pursue an honors degree), to participate in our winter session programs abroad and then to take two more advanced foreign language courses from us on their return. For each of the three certificate programs, we have developed a special-interest course: Introduction to Business French/German/Spanish, for the business and economics students; German Culture and Technology, for engineering students; and French/German/Spanish/Latin American Politics in the Press, for political science and international relations students. We are especially enthusiastic about this last program (described in app. 3), since some 700 students are majoring in political science and about 350 in international relations.

Our department is involved not only in the comparative literature program at Delaware but in the women's studies program and in the Center for Science and Culture as well. We also participate actively in two of the area studies programs on campus, Latin American Studies and East Asian Studies, and our involvement in these programs should grow in future years. Several faculty members from other departments and administrative units (English, linguistics, the university's honors program, the Office of International Programs, and Academic Computing and Instructional Technology) either have secondary appointments in our department or teach for us regularly. And some members of our department teach courses cross-listed in the educational studies, English, and linguistics departments, in the women's studies and comparative literature programs, and with the Center for Science and Culture.

The Mortgage and Loan Division, otherwise known as graduate study, is another vital part of our operation. In this area we offer MA programs in French, German, and Spanish, and we have also established a summer institute for foreign language teachers. The institute gives teachers an opportunity to renew their speaking and writing skills in the language they teach, to deepen their appreciation of the cultural content of a foreign language, and to sharpen their pedagogical tools. The Delaware Department of Public Instruction has enthusiastically embraced this initiative, which provides teachers with a needed and appreciated service.

Our department also sponsors the Distinguished Scholars Lecture Series that brings eminent literary scholars in French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, classics, and comparative literature from around the country to the Delaware campus. The series provides the entire faculty with opportunities not only to hear a renowned speaker every semester but to interact with one another and with colleagues from other departments who have been invited to the talk and the reception. Sponsorship of this series has greatly enhanced our image and reputation among faculty members in other departments and colleges.

Clearly, making the transition from a traditional-service to a full-service foreign language department involves a lot of work for faculty members. It demands that they view themselves as full-service members of the department and of the larger academic community, that they perceive their teaching assignments and committee responsibilities as part of a team effort, that they be willing to make occasional sacrifices for the good of the department—in other words, to put the interests of the department and its clientele before their own. Among the benefits of becoming a full-service foreign language department—and here again I speak from experience—are (1) an increase in enrollments at all levels (ours have risen from 4,350 in 1986–87 to 8,100 in 1989–90, and we witnessed a 23% increase between 1988–89 and 1990–91); (2) internal harmony and, as a corollary, greater faculty productivity; (3) institutional support, in the form of increased resources, for the department, its programs, and its faculty; (4) steady growth

in the department's size and influence; and (5) a positive image on campus, which helps keep faculty morale high.

In conclusion, I want to urge you not to fall into the trap of complaining about your department's inadequate resources and support, its isolation, the injustice of being unappreciated and viewed as "only" a service department. I encourage you instead to take a positive approach that can and will lead to positive results: Ask not what your administration and fellow department chairs can do for you—ask what you and your faculty can do for them. Ask how your expertise and special knowledge can make other departments and programs stronger and more attractive to students; ask how you and your faculty can help others within your institution achieve their individual and departmental goals. When you have the answer to these questions—and the answer is not the same for every college and university—take positive action and begin developing programs for others. You and your faculty are now on the way to becoming a full-service department. As for resources, support for your new initiatives and programs, and improvements in departmental image and faculty morale—these will all follow naturally as you reach out across campus, moving from isolation to full integration and achieving success after success. In short, don't be afraid to collaborate. Be involved with as many other departments and programs as possible, but only in serious and useful ways. And be careful not to confuse full-service with self-service. The people working at banks and gas stations all know the difference, and so will everyone on your campus.

Appendix 1

During the 1992 winter session the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures will sponsor five-week study-abroad programs in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Costa Rica for students who are learning a foreign language at the University of Delaware.

The Program in France (Caen)

- FREN 106—Elementary/Intermediate French (4 credits)
Completion of basic French. Increasing mastery of the basic skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Prereq: FREN 105 or two to three years of high school French.
- FREN 107—Intermediate French (4 credits)
Review of grammar, continued practice in speaking and writing, reading texts of average difficulty. Completion of FREN 107 satisfies the Arts and Sciences foreign language requirement. Prereq: FREN 106 or four years of high school French.
- FREN 206—Culture through Conversation (3 credits)
Discussion of topics drawn from contemporary French life. Designed for students who wish to broaden their knowledge of French culture while improving their oral and aural knowledge skills. Prereq: FREN 107.
- FREN 208—Contemporary France I (3 credits)
An introduction to contemporary France, its culture, its people, their way of life, and the issues confronting them. The course,

which is only taught abroad, is designed for the nonmajor and will be conducted in English. Not for major credit.

The Program in Germany (Bayreuth)

- GERM 106—Elementary/Intermediate German
- GERM 107—Intermediate German
- GERM 206—Culture through Conversation
- GERM 208—Contemporary Germany I

The Program in Spain (Granada)

- SPAN 106—Elementary/Intermediate Spanish
- SPAN 107—Intermediate Spanish
- SPAN 206—Culture through Conversation
- SPAN 208—Contemporary Spain I

The Program in Costa Rica (San Juan)

- SPAN 106—Elementary/Intermediate Spanish
- SPAN 107—Intermediate Spanish
- SPAN 206—Culture through Conversation
- SPAN 207—Contemporary Latin America I

The Program in Italy (Siena)

- ITAL 106—Elementary/Intermediate Italian
- ITAL 107—Intermediate Italian
- ITAL 206—Culture through Conversation
- ITAL 208—Contemporary Italy I

Who is eligible?

If you are currently enrolled in a 100- or 200-level French, German, Italian, or Spanish course, you are eligible to apply. Students are encouraged to participate during their first year at the University.

What is the cost?

Each of the programs in Europe will cost \$1,700, plus winter session tuition; the program in Costa Rica will cost approximately \$1,500, plus winter session tuition. Overseas flight, room, board, and most group activities and excursions are included.

How many credits can I take abroad?

Students will be expected to take 6 to 7 credits, one of the language courses (106, 107, or 206) and the culture course (207 or 208).

Appendix 2

Major in History and Foreign Languages

This new major is intended to accommodate students who wish to combine the study of history with that of classics, French, German, Russian, or Spanish. They may major in history/classics, history/French, history/German, history/Russian, or history/Spanish. Each major calls for 42 credits, 24 in history and 18 at the 200 level or above in the chosen foreign language. Specific requirements are as follows:

- History (for all combinations; 24 credits)
 1. Western Civilization (History 101 and 102; 6 credits)
 2. Five 300-level courses (15 credits). At least two of these must deal with countries that use the chosen foreign language.
 3. Senior seminar (one 400-level course; 3 credits)

French (18 credits)

1. Civilization (French 310, 311, or 312; 3 credits)
2. Literature (French 301 and 302, plus one 400-level literature course; 9 credits)
3. Electives (two courses at the 200 level or above; 6 credits)

German (18 credits)

1. Civilization (German 325; 3 credits)
2. Literature (German 311 and 312, plus one 400-level course; 9 credits)
3. Electives (two courses at the 200 level or above; 6 credits)

Russian (18 credits)

1. Civilization (Russian 325; 3 credits)
2. Literature (Russian 310 and 312; 6 credits)
3. Electives (two courses at the 200 level or above, plus one 400-level course; 9 credits)

Spanish (either Peninsular or Latin American; 18 credits)

1. Civilization (Spanish 211 or 212; 3 credits)
2. Literature (Spanish 301 and 302 or Spanish 303 and 304, plus one 400-level course; 9 credits)
3. Electives (two courses at the 200 level or above; 6 credits)

Classics (18 credits)

1. Civilization (two classical civilization courses: e.g., FLL 202: Biblical and Classical Literature, and FLL 316: Mythology; 6 credits)
2. Literature (either three Latin courses at the 200 level or above and one Latin course at the 300 level or above or Greek 213 and 214 and two Latin courses at the 200 level or above; 12 credits)

Appendix 3

Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures Foreign Language Certificate Program for International Relations and Political Science Students

The success of our students in their future careers and the effectiveness of their contribution to a vigorous economy will be significantly affected by the appropriateness of the skills and the background that they acquire in their university studies. Faced with the dynamics of the global marketplace, students in international relations and political science especially have a need to understand the social ways and professional practices in other countries, particularly those of the European community, the Pacific Rim, and Latin America. The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures proposes to offer, in collaboration with the Department of Political Science and International Relations and University Honors, a program of integrated courses and activities directed toward increasing the foreign language proficiency and cultural awareness of international relations and political science students and preparing them to function better at the international level.

The new Foreign Language Certificate Program, with its coherent sequence of 200- and 300-level courses and related extracurricular activities, is intended to enhance the international dimension of the political science or international relations degrees awarded by the College of Arts and Sciences. It could be recognized on the diploma either as a Bachelor's Degree with a Foreign Language Certificate (e.g., in German) or as a Bachelor's Degree with an Honors Foreign Language Certificate (e.g., in German).

It would be desirable to have this program accessible to all students (including freshmen) majoring in political science and international

relations, regardless of their background in foreign languages. And at least in principle, it should be possible to complete the special requirements for the Bachelor's Degree with a Foreign Language Concentration within four years and within the framework of the suggested curriculum of the College of Arts and Sciences. In order to make effective use of expertise within the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, the pilot project would initially include programs in German, French, and Spanish; eventually, it would be expanded to include Japanese and possibly Russian, Italian, and Chinese.

For international relations and political science students particularly, familiarity with the cultural infrastructure and some direct exposure to the political and economic system abroad are crucial. The winter session programs offered by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures can provide such an opportunity. The formal agreement that the University of Delaware has with the University of Bayreuth in Germany provides for collaboration in research and teaching through faculty and student exchange at all levels and in many disciplines. The procedures and contacts for creating a lively program of German language study and cultural immersion (study trips, weekend excursions, cultural and other public events) have proved highly successful during the initial winter sessions. The addition of some professional enrichment activities tailored to our international relations and political science students will rely on these same proven mechanisms.

For the Bachelor's Degree in International Relations and Political Science with a regular or an Honors Foreign Language Certificate in German, a basis for collaboration would be provided by the following program. It would include a language course focusing on German Politics in the Press (GER 255) and a course in German Civilization and Culture (GER 325), as well as participation in the winter session in Bayreuth, where two other required German courses (GER 206 and GER 208) would be offered.

1. Participation in a winter session in Bayreuth, Germany (first group in January 1992), which would include:

GER 206: Culture through Conversation (3 credits). Discussion of topics drawn from contemporary German life. Designed for students who wish to broaden their knowledge of German culture while improving their oral and aural language skills.

GER 208: Contemporary Germany I (3 credits). An introduction to contemporary Germany, its culture, its people, their way of life, and the issues confronting them. (The Honors section would include some exposure to the political system in Germany: it would involve guest speakers from the community and relevant departments at the University of Bayreuth.)

2. *GER 255: German Politics in the Press (3 credits).* Students will explore topics in contemporary German politics as expressed in the news media. The emphasis of the course will be on current events related to the internal and external politics of Germany. Focus of the study will be the German press: newspapers and magazines printed in the German language.
3. *GER 325: German Civilization and Culture (3 credits).* A survey of the major cultural, social, and political developments in Germany from the mid-18th century to the present.

The proposed certificate programs in French and Spanish would introduce identical sequences making use of our winter session programs in Caen (France) and Granada (Spain). The intention is to add similar concentrations in Italian and Japanese as soon as this is feasible.

To earn a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations or Political Science with a Foreign Language Certificate in German, a student would be required to complete the designated sequence of four 200- and 300-level German courses with no grade below a C.

To earn a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations or Political Science with an Honors Foreign Language Certificate in German, a student would be required:

- to complete the designated sequence of four 200- and 300-level German courses with no grade below a B

- to take all four of these courses for Honors credits
- to achieve a 3.0 cumulative grade index by the time of graduation

Honors recognition would come in the form of the *Honors Foreign Language Certificate*, which would generally be awarded during an appropriate Honors ceremony (e.g., on Honors Day) and recorded on the recipient's official transcript. The Honors Foreign Language Certificate could be earned in addition to the General Honors Certificate. Honors courses taken in the sequence leading to the Honors Foreign Language Certificate could also be applied toward those required for the General Honors Certificate.



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