

Summary of Nina Garret's Keynote on the Language Center of the 21st Century April 2006 NERALLT Meeting

Introduction – Language centers have come a long way, and while there are many different structures (Hierarchical, highly regulated by other branches VS. Autonomous, loosely associated centers), we all need to work towards the same goal: **Spreading awareness about what the Language Center (LC) has to offer beyond lab sessions.**

- Problem: We think of ourselves as beacons of internationalization, but we are often overlooked in discussions.
- Solution: Increased connectivity and communications with other departments.

Section I. Greater Connectivity with Campus Infrastructure

- The Tech Office.
 - The relationship between LCs and Technical Services (ITS) – Past
 - Historically, Language Centers have been largely autonomous from both campus Tech Offices and Other multimedia services. 3 impacts:
 - i. This has led to disparities/differences in technology that can be frustrating for students and faculty.
 - ii. This has made the tech. offices less willing to cooperate with us when we are in need of assistance.
 - iii. Foreign Language teachers are uncertain who to report to when they want to tape lectures, etc.
 - The need for greater connectivity –
 - In general, LCs need to start promoting themselves as large players in an integrated network.
 - This starts with streamlining our technology with the Tech office – a stronger relationship will ensure their help if we reach a crisis
 - At the same time, if we feel better able to provide certain services, we should provide them (without stepping on the tech peoples' toes)
 - This can be achieved through expanded dialogue with students, foreign language teachers, and importantly, the people working in the tech office.
- Classroom Design
 - Problem – Many classrooms being constructed without foreign language teachers in mind.
 - 'Smart' classrooms often make it so the teacher has to remain in the same place in order to operate the machinery, which isn't helpful for language teachers who enjoy moving around and getting students involved.
 - Many rooms have large tables/insufficient furnishings to allow for the smaller groups that are critical for language education.
 - Solution – LCs need to become more vocal in the discussions about room design to help foreign language teachers get the rooms they need to teach.
 - Example, if the LC had more clout with the registrar, it could help influence where section leader's classes get put.
 - Increased interaction in Faculty Support Networks boosts this objective by promoting the relevance of the LC to teachers.

Section II. The Importance of Technology/Our Technological Knowledge.

- Technology and Foreign Languages
 - o Technology is more relevant for teaching foreign languages than for other disciplines. 2 reasons.
 - i. Technology has theoretical substance – There is recognition that the method in which a language is taught has direct implications on student retentiveness. We need to speak out on the importance of how the message is delivered in relation to how the brain works.
 - ii. Multimedia is essential to learning foreign language – Unlike some fields, consistent access to both audio (the way the language is spoken) and visual (what the cultural looks like) aides are necessary for students to fully grasp a foreign language.
 - o By becoming more active in the debate over technology's role in the educational process from a pedagogical perspective, we can gain more authority on teaching departments/administrators how to start utilizing it.
 - o **Goal: To promote LC technology, not as a supplement, but as a necessary part of the learning process. 4 advantages.**
 - i. This will help us become more active with the Curriculum board.
 - ii. Spreads teacher awareness about the program, helps to increase connectivity between both Foreign Languages and the LC AND Foreign **Literatures** and the LC. Also allows greater responsiveness to teacher's needs.
 - o She provides an example of a teacher being convinced to teach his class on Dante with a high reliance on multimedia technology.
 - iii. Helps research professors and students – Awareness of benefits of our technology help research professors organize their work and present to students in a fun and more tangible manner.
 - iv. Allows the LC to take the lead in spreading faculty/student awareness of Intellectual Property Law, where campus administrations have often fell behind.

Section III. What about the Students?

- Student Groups
 - o The LC needs to make a greater effort to reach out to student groups and organizations like Study Abroad and **Career Services** in order to spread the message that a strong knowledge of both (at least) one foreign language and modern computer technology will be necessary to sustain employment in the 21 century.
 - o How can we do this?
 - i. Going to introductory meetings for student groups and expressing how language studies fits in with that group's activities.
 - ii. Teaching students how to use basic new technologies (e-mail, instant message, streaming video) in various other languages.
- Advising Structure
 - o Q: How can the LC get involved with the advising process to encourage language study and study abroad?
 - o A: Online integration of classes/services, etc for each area of language study.

- At Yale, a program called E-Assisted Planning allows students to click any region of Asia and immediately have access to all of the classes, internships, extracurricular clubs, and faculty contact addresses relevant to that area.
- Such a program should be instituted on a larger scale at other universities with the help of the LC.

Conclusion: There are an infinite number of ways we can improve and expand the services that we as Language Centers are providing, but none of this will be possible without **GREATER CAMPUSWIDE AWARENESS OF THE LC and GREATER COMMUNICATION/CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN THE LC AND OTHER PARTS OF THE COLLEGE.**

Summary Submitted by Thomas Hammond,