



Teaching uncommon languages for the common good.

How a university is using federal funding to give voice to languages less spoken.



A UMES student using the Sony digital language lab technology.

The Foreign Language Instructional Center (FLIC) at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) is both a place and a program. At its core is a 20-seat, state-of-the-art computer lab; at its heart is an inspirational program that, according to Tammy Gharbi, M.Ed, Acting Program Coordinator, is “changing the landscape of the foreign language offering that UMES is able to give its students, faculty, staff and community.” UMES is a four-year, Historically Black College and University (HBCU) located about three hours from the Baltimore/Washington metropolis in the small community of Princess Anne, Maryland. It is part of the University System of Maryland, which consists

of 11 universities and two research institutions.

Just a few years ago, the UMES foreign language program consisted of only Spanish and French. Today, thanks to a Title III, Part B Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, FLIC has the capacity to enhance teaching in over 100 languages, some of which were targeted and outlined in the Title III grant proposal.

Funding from Title III, Part B made the program possible.

The Title III Institutional Aid Program was created as part of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) to equalize educational opportunities for disadvantaged students by assisting eligible colleges and universities. Eligible institutions are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Historically Black Graduate Institutions (HBGIs), and other institutions with limited financial resources that serve a high percentage of students receiving need-based federal financial assistance. UMES was awarded the Title III grant for the purpose of creating a program that would address less commonly taught languages, especially those that are

deemed critical needs languages.

Based on the exact languages written into the fabric of the proposal, FLIC at UMES now teaches credit-bearing classes in Arabic, Chinese and Haitian Creole as well as the Spanish and French which were already in place at UMES. Several more languages are in development including Russian, Akan-Twi and Yoruba.

“This is really answering the call that’s been put out by the government that says folks in education need to produce more speakers of foreign languages, and they have identified these languages in the less commonly taught language pool, which are critical need,” said Gharbi. “And we are ‘plain and simple,’ answering that call to produce more graduates with foreign language skills.”

The grant proposal was written to create a program, and within the program was to be a space – an actual physical lab – devoted to teaching the less commonly taught languages. So they built the language lab from the ground up. For the technology to run it, they chose the Sony Virtuoso™ and Soloist® digital language learning software acquired through their local SANS authorized reseller, Chester Technical Services, Inc. Two years later the language lab was up and running.

"It's all about language proficiency, and we are seeing with real numbers that the students are receiving better test scores in the lab versus a traditional classroom."

VIRTUOSO™
Instructional Control Software

SOLOIST®
Digital PC Comparative Recorder

Answering an unmet need in the community.

In their mission to teach less commonly taught languages, FLIC serves UMES students, the campus community, which includes faculty and staff, and the business community at large, which is currently mostly law enforcement and healthcare. "And we're also working with the K-12 community," said Gharbi. "Our goal is to bring less commonly taught languages to all these groups. What we believe we're able to do by marrying the technology with qualified instruction is to make every day, every semester, every course more valuable for every single learner, whatever group they fall in."

Although not every language class at UMES is taught in the FLIC lab, several instructors teach Spanish, French, Haitian Creole and Arabic classes, which meet two to three times a week; the 20-seat lab is often fully booked. In addition to the for-credit classes, they also use the lab for non-credit classes, which are determined by local community needs. These classes include Spanish for healthcare personnel and law enforcement and Haitian Creole for social work, health professions and mission travel. They also offer personal enrichment classes, such as a 10-week session in Arabic. Moreover, the campus community is served in other ways that include training faculty engaged in overseas projects.

Achieving the mission through digital language lab technology.

The Sony Virtuoso and Soloist digital language lab proved its value in helping meet the FLIC mission, when the FL instructors started realizing the software's many features and benefits. Dr. Nydia V. Gregory, a lecturer in the Department of



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English & Modern Languages, utilizes the lab every day in her Spanish classes. She feels there are some class management activities that could not be realized before the digital lab technology was implemented, such as pairing students without having to move around the classroom and giving students more "one on one" interaction for their practice.

In addition, the lab aids instructors with assessment because they get instant feedback either by a student's completion of a scored exercise or by the instructor listening to pronunciation "station by station." Without the lab, the instructor would need a great deal more time to check pronunciation via one-on-one conversation, whereas the technology allows the instructor to listen in while the student completes a task.

Dr. Gregory also believes that the technology provides efficiencies in preparing students for "real-world" communication in the target language. "Students are not just getting classroom instruction and interaction, because they are able to use the language program to practice listening, speaking, reading, and conversational skills on a one-to-one basis. This has tremendously assisted our more shy students," she said.

As Dr. Gregory has integrated the Sony Virtuoso and Soloist technology into her everyday curriculum, she has discovered ways in which the system enhances the learning as well as the teaching experience:

- **Because students log in to the Sony Soloist software with their first names, she can learn their names faster without taking up class time.**
- **Students are more independent in their vocabulary acquisitions.**
- **The system allows her to accurately divide the class time to maintain students' interest and focus in the class.**
- **Students who may be running late do not hinder the class progress with interruptions.**
- **The system allows students to work in pairs or small groups for their activities.**

It's all about language proficiency.

"I can say that all of the instructors who have used the lab, whether it's Dr. Gregory who uses it the most, semester after semester, or the instructor who has just started bringing in a section of French class, for example... they're very excited about using the technology," said Gharbi. "And most importantly, we're finding that in every case where an instructor has moved their class from a traditional classroom to the FLIC lab, they are seeing improved scores, semester by semester. So it's all about language proficiency, and we are seeing with real numbers that the students are receiving better test scores in the lab versus a traditional classroom," she added.

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Are there major plans for FLIC?



UMES currently does not offer a foreign language major, but their progress in that direction is truly impressive. "To me, it's huge that until only recently, UMES students only had languages like Spanish and French. In a very short time, as a result of the focus that has been put on FL learning, UMES students have more than double the number of foreign languages

they can choose from by adding Arabic, Chinese and Haitian Creole."

So what's in the future for FLIC? "It would be nice to think that something like a world language minor might be in our future, but even our present offerings are benefitting students. In return we are hoping to improve the language competency of the students who graduate from the university and go out into the workforce. That includes military service, volunteer work, and graduate school."

And then Gharbi added, "Wherever the UMES graduate is going, we want them to take foreign language with them." And if any university has a program in place to make that happen, it's UMES.

For more information on Title III, Part B grants applications or eligibility, go to www2.ed.gov/programs/ldquestitle3b/index.html.

What students like about the Sony Virtuoso/Soloist digital language lab:

- **How comfortable they feel using the software once they have familiarized themselves with it and how it makes them more independent and in charge of their own "learning time."**
- **How they appreciate the self-pace, not feeling left behind or inadequate because it might take them a little longer to learn to pronounce a word, etc.**
- **How glad they are because they cannot afford this type of technology at home or in their dorm.**

Language advocacy efforts need your support.

The language field has responded to cuts in federal programs but there is still much work that needs to be done. Title VI programs for the postsecondary level suffered a \$50 million dollar cut and efforts have been underway to restore these programs to their original level of funding.

In addition, the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP), the only source of federal funding for K-12 foreign language programs, has been zeroed out in congressional budget proposals as of September 23, 2011. As you know, FLAP supports high-quality language programs across the country. Despite the value of FLAP in so many communities and schools, Congress may

choose to discontinue the program's funding for the next school year. The plan may be to add languages to the "well-rounded education" funding source but then language programs would have to compete for the money against other subject areas, such as social studies, civics and the arts. Please call your member of Congress in the House and Senate and tell them how important this program is to you and your community and urge them to restore funding.

Additional Questions?

For more information about how to contact your members of Congress please visit: actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=5280

ACTFL has also been active at the local level writing letters in support of language programs that are threatened with cuts or elimination. These programs range from elementary through postsecondary. There is an advocacy section on the ACTFL website with sample letters and other suggestions for language advocacy.



ACTFL
www.actfl.org

FEBRUARY 2012 Discover Languages Month

February is designated as Discover Languages month in which language educators make a special effort to highlight their programs in their communities.

What are you doing to promote your language program?

Make the move to maximize student productivity.

Are you taking advantage of all the quick and easy features of the Sony Virtuoso™ Digital Language Lab Software?

SANS is on the move with more “ease-of-use” functionality for the Sony Virtuoso Digital Language Lab software. SANS understands that with limited class time, it is especially important to have language lab technology that is intuitive and easy-to-use without having to go through multiple steps to engage students in an activity. Now with a simple “click,” a teacher can send a short text note to one or a group of students --- such as brief instructions for a group or a word of encouragement to an individual student who is having some difficulty.

Another great feature is the ability to monitor individuals or pairs of students. When a teacher clicks on a student icon,

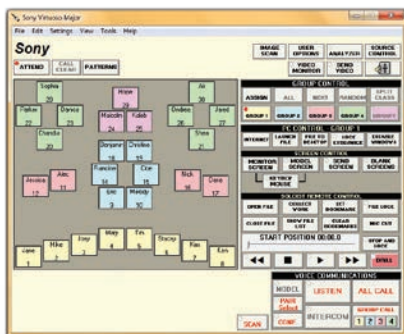
the teacher sees the video and hears the audio at exactly the same spot and time as the selected student does. Once monitored, a “check mark” appears on the student icon(s) to visually alert the teacher that he/she has monitored the particular student or pair and can now move on to monitor and assist other students.

A big timesaver is the “drag-and-drop” feature. This allows a teacher to “drag-and-drop” content files to an individual student folder so that he or she can begin working immediately and allows students to complete a make-up test or activity without interrupting other students in the class. Since our technology supports a wide range of file types, you can use Microsoft Word® documents, Adobe® PDF files, Adobe Flash® video files, JPEG, BMP, TIFF Images, MP3 and WAV audio files, as well as a host of other media files.

What do you do when a student arrives late? Or when one needs to leave class early right after you have started a pairing activity? With the Virtuoso software, those situations pose no problems at all. Without interrupting the existing pairs, a teacher can easily add the late student by turning one pair into a triplet.

This is just a peek at a few of the quick and easy features that are available to help you and your students get more done in less time. New features are continually being incorporated into the Sony Virtuoso and Soloist digital language lab technology. And the product development takes place right here in the U.S.A. with input from language teachers like you.

Discover more benefits and features of the Sony Virtuoso technology at sansinc.com.



Classroom, Blended or Virtual Learning



SANSSpace Virtual Language Learning Environment
Learn more at sanspace.com

