

Business Language in Focus

Good News for Language Teachers: A New Grant Cycle for Centers for International Business Education and Research

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This fall marks the start of a new four-year grant cycle for the Centers for International Business Education and Research, and the George Washington University was among the 17 institutions of higher education awarded funding. Our Business Language in Focus column this month will feature a sneak peek at the exciting programs that the “GW-CIBER” will offer foreign language educators over these four years to help them prepare “career-ready” students.

The New Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBERs) are Announced

In October of this year, the Department of Education announced the new [CIBER grant](#) awardees. The CIBERs account for one portion (approximately \$4.5 million) of the larger funding amount (\$63.3 million) allocated to more than 250 grants “to strengthen the capacity and performance of American education in foreign languages, international and area studies, teacher preparation, and international business education” ([U.S. Dept. of Ed. Press Office, 2014](#)). The lion’s share of this grant funding is committed to the [Foreign Language and Area Studies \(FLAS\) Fellowships](#) (\$30.3 million) and the [National Resource Centers](#) (\$22.7 million) associated with specific institutions of higher education.

Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan emphasized the importance of these programs for helping teachers and students “gain global competencies that equip them with an understanding and openness to cultures and languages around the globe, as well as the 21st century skills needed to preserve a rich, multicultural society and thriving democracy right here at home”([U.S. Dept. of Ed. Press Office, 2014](#)).

For foreign language and culture educators, the renewed funding specifically to establish or continue CIBERs is good news, because a top priority for CIBERs is to “provide instruction in critical foreign languages and international fields needed to provide an understanding of the cultures and customs of U.S. trading partners.”([Dept. of Ed. 2014](#)) This is crucial to supporting learners to become the future workers who will help our nation address global problems not *independent of* but *collaboratively with* other countries. Or as Secretary Duncan stated it directly: “we need professionals with solid cultural knowledge and language skills that cover all parts of the globe”([U.S. Dept. of Ed. Press Office, 2014](#)).

While each of the 17 CIBERs has its specific focal areas, they all have in common the mandate to work on curriculum development, research, and training on issues of importance to U.S. trade and competitiveness. The “[CIBERWeb](#),” hosted by the Michigan State University CIBER, provides a plethora of information about all CIBERs and their upcoming activities, searchable under categories such as Research, Curriculum, and Business Outreach. Foreign language teachers will find programming particularly relevant for their own professional development or opportunities for their students under the tabs “Language” and “Study Abroad.”

GW-CIBER's Upcoming Business Language Programming

GW-CIBER Director Reid Click (Associate Professor of International Business and International



Affairs at GW) views GW-CIBER's business language programming as an especially strong component of GW-CIBER activities: "Over the past eight years, the business language programming has gained substantial recognition both within the national CIBER network and beyond, and the past programming provided a strong foundation for even bigger and better things in the new grant cycle." He noted that the business language programming was "absolutely instrumental in securing the CIBER grant for GW amid significant competition for funds."

GW-CIBER facilitates active cross-disciplinary involvement from across several schools within GW, including its 'home', the School of Business, but also the Elliott School of International Affairs and the Columbian College of Arts & Sciences, where the language programs are housed. This cross-disciplinarity is at the very heart of GW-CIBER's Business Language Programs, run by this article's author (Margaret Gonglewski, Associate Professor from the Department of Romance, German, and Slavic Languages and Literatures), and Anna Helm, Assistant Teaching Professor of International Business. Director Reid Click emphasizes the value of this cross-disciplinary team: "GW-CIBER is fortunate to have two incredibly talented Business Language Coordinators, dedicated to bridging the fields of language and business for the benefit of students at GW, as well as playing an active role pushing the agenda for business languages nationally."

Click is particularly excited about two of the most ambitious goals for this grant cycle: first, developing short-term study-abroad courses with a business language focus. These courses will provide an immersion experience for students through a study tour and projects with businesses in a country speaking the language being studied. The second program will develop minors in business languages designed to bolster the language skills of business students and the business skills of language students. According to Click, "These minors will enable our students to acquire new skills and give them a competitive advantage in their careers."

Aside from the short-term study abroad courses and the business language minor development, GW-CIBER, supported by the first-rate administrative staff Alexis Gaul (Administrative Director) and Nevena Yakova (Program Manager), will take on projects that language teachers will benefit from—either immediately or down the road. Here are several highlights:

Professional Development Workshops and Targeted Trainings for Business Language Instructors. Delivered by the GW-CIBER Business Language Coordinators, these annual workshops will address topics of interest to business language instructors, such as designing assignments related to specific business issues and implementing business-focused simulation exercises. GW-CIBER will also offer on-site, individualized training at regional schools interested in starting or enhancing their business language programs.

Webinar Series on Business Content and Skills Training to Language Instructors. This twice-yearly online series for language teachers will offer instruction in subjects such as international marketing, finance, and management. The goal is to equip foreign language educators with appropriate knowledge and skills to integrate business topics into their courses.

Business Language Immersion Workshops. Each year GW-CIBER's program will feature an immersion workshop in the less-commonly taught languages of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian. These workshops give participants the chance to learn about methods for teaching the business context of their respective language, exchange ideas and materials, and observe demonstrations and hear presentations from GW professors, students, and guest speakers. Workshops will transpire in the selected language(s) and will include visits to an embassy, cultural institution, or other relevant organization in Washington, DC.

Expansion of the Business Languages Case Clearinghouse. Building on previous success, GW-CIBER will grow its Case Clearinghouse, currently featuring multimedia cases for Arabic, Chinese, German, Japanese, Korean, and Russian. We will increase our case collection by supporting GW language faculty to research and write more business cases and by recruiting potential case authors.

Perhaps most relevant in the immediate context, GW-CIBER is committed to continue the **Regular Contribution of the "Business Language in Focus" Column to The Language Resource**, this bi-monthly online newsletter of the *NCLRC @ GW*, which reaches language professionals, like you, dear reader, nationwide.

References:

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