

# FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING ENHANCEMENTS



West Point  
**READY** 

READY TO SERVE. READY TO LEAD.



Cadets studying Portuguese visited the Brazilian Mission and Portuguese Mission to the United Nations, where they engaged with Ambassador Ronaldo Costa Filho, Brigadier Aguiar, LTC Rui Rebordão Brito, and Consul Maria de Fátima Mendes. After these engagements, they experienced a Brazilian meal at Emporium Brazil.



As a pre-eminent institution for language, culture, and regional studies, USMA's Department of Foreign Languages continues to bring language and culture to Cadets through meaningful engagements and experiences in the language of study. These engagements include not only our more traditional means of immersion, such as semesters abroad, but really open the aperture for Cadets to participate in a wide array of language and culture-based learning opportunities, both at home and abroad. FLTEs take advantage of our proximity to New York City, support cadets in academic competitions, facilitate engagement with native speakers, offer advanced research opportunities, and partner with the local community for service learning.

### EVENTS AND ENGAGEMENTS IN NYC

Given USMA's proximity to New York City, cadets can engage with civilian and military partners at the United Nations, diplomatic missions, and other international entities. Furthermore, Cadets are able to participate in cultural exhibitions, experience theatrical productions in the target language, and partake in authentic meals.

### ACADEMIC COMPETITIONS

Various language competitions allow DFL and cadets to build partnerships with other prestigious language programs while demonstrating their linguistic skills and political, social, historical, and culture understanding of the regions where their language of study is spoken. DFL language sections have participated in BYU's annual business language competition. Arabic language learners demonstrate their mettle in the Model Arab League and the Russian program participates in the Olympiads.

In 2020, our Model Arab League team represented the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and participated in numerous councils (Joint Defense, Economic Affairs, Palestinian Affairs, etc.). The

event provided cadets the opportunity to engage with multiple disciplines while honing their diplomatic and negotiating skills as they competed with students from other universities.

The New York Undergraduate Spoken Russian Competition (Olympiads) is an excellent opportunity for our Russian language learners to demonstrate their skills. Participants recite poetry, demonstrate their speaking skills, and discuss an unfamiliar text in front of judges. This competition allows cadets to engage with other cadets in the region who share their passion for learning the Russian language.

### LANGUAGE PARTNERS

DFL is always seeking innovative ways to bring immersion-like and interactive opportunities to cadets. The COVID environment led many of our languages to find "language partner" programs. These native-speaker partners offer short conversations (15 to 30 minutes) and other content-focused engagement in the target language. These conversations, along with the activities cadets complete as they reflect on what they have learned, allow them to demonstrate and hone their skills at all levels of study.

Many cadets participants provided feedback similar to Cadet Pier Bos, Class of 2023: "My NaTakallam conversations have increased my awareness of other cultures more than any other program I've gone through at West Point. My conversation partner had been directly impacted by both the Taliban and U.S. soldiers when he was living in Afghanistan. While I've been at West Point, I've heard many perspectives of U.S. soldiers on what Afghans/Afghanistan is like but this my first time hearing the perspective of an Afghan on what U.S. soldiers are like. Without NaTakallam, I would not have been able to see the GWOT through the eyes of an Afghan."

## FULBRIGHT LANGUAGE TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Over the last five years, DFL has had the great fortune to host Fulbright Language Teaching Assistants (FLTA) in Chinese and Portuguese. These native speakers provide daily engagement with novice language learners and supplement our language instruction with knowledgeable instructors who grew up in the region of study. Many of these teachers continue to engage with and teach out cadets during semester abroad after the FLTA's return to their home countries. The FLTA program not only provides West Point with excellent, culturally aware language teachers and immersion partners, but also helps build and strengthen partnerships with renowned international universities.

## CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

FLTE gift funds allow DFL to bring the classroom and cultural engagement to life. Experiential learning allows cadets to physically connect with the material they are learning in the classroom in a less formal environment.

In conjunction with their chapter dedicated to food and table settings, LF203 (Basic French) conducts an annual etiquette lesson with the Cadet Hostess. Cadets broaden their understanding of dining etiquette and have the opportunity to practice their language skills and experience French cheeses, bread, and accompaniments.

In the Basic Persian course, Cadets experienced the Persian New Year (Nowruz) by learning about the historical and cultural importance of the holiday, as well as how Iranians, Tajiks, Kurds, and other nationalities and cultures celebrate the occasion. A major component of Nowruz is the creation of the "Seven S's" table, or sofreh-ye haft sin. Every Persian family creates a "Seven S's" table to usher in the new year. Cadets grew sabzeh (mung bean sprouts), a symbol of rejuvenation and new life, and released them into the Hudson River. Sabzeh is staple in every Persian family's Nowruz festivities, which represents prosperity and wellness for the new year.



## SERVICE LEARNING

Many DFL language sections seek outreach opportunities with the local communities. In French and Spanish, we have created partnerships with the middle and high schools to share the West Point story and to encourage students to continue their language studies. Persian and Spanish have worked with elementary schools to inspire students to future language study. Our Russian section connects with the YMCA in Brighton Beach as part of their endeavors with the USMA Center for Oral History. The connection between Cadets and the community offers an excellent opportunity to develop language and cultural expertise while strengthening ties between USMA and the surrounding communities.

## CAPSTONE RESEARCH

Cadet capstone projects allow DFL majors to leverage their language, regional, and cultural knowledge to bring insight to a real-world security challenge and to be part of the innovation necessary to bring the problem to resolution. In effort to make these experiences more meaningful to cadets and to provide intellectual capital back to the Army, DFL majors have begun partnering with Combatant Commands, other DoD elements, regional partners, and various agencies. Some of these projects require cadets to travel in order to access archival material, engage with partners, and conduct research, such as observing real-time events of cultural, social, and political significance related to their topic.

*"The opportunity to travel for my capstone project was incredible and I will forever cherish the memories and experiences. It was incredibly meaningful to see firsthand how principles of my research factored into everyday French culture. I conducted months of research ahead of time and the opportunity to travel acted as the perfect culminating event. Discussing my extensive research with French government officials and military personnel made my experience unique and memorable."*

*— 1LT Maddie Miller, Class of 2020*

Cadets meeting with the Cadet Hostess and experiencing different varieties of French cheese.



Photo: Lee Ross '73

# FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

## *Funding & Recognition Opportunities*

Foreign Language Teaching Enhancements Endowment .....	<b>\$2.8 million</b>
NYC Engagement & Events .....	\$140,000 endowment/\$6,000 annual
Service Learning .....	\$140,000 endowment/\$6,000 annual
Cultural Immersion Beyond the Classroom .....	\$140,000 endowment/\$6,000 annual
Capstone Research	
1 group (4 cadets) .....	\$400,000 endowment/\$16,000 annual
4 groups (16 cadets) .....	\$1.6 million endowment/\$64,000 annual
Academy Competitions .....	\$100,000 endowment/\$4,000 annual
Fulbright Language Teaching Assistants .....	\$900,000 endowment/\$36,000 annual
Language Partners .....	\$835,000 endowment/\$35,000 annual

MARGIN OF EXCELLENCE



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