

What innovative new approaches can help Language Houses serve as more dynamic, purposeful, meaningful, and sustainable corridors of cross-cultural learning on campus? How can we increase their visibility on campus and beyond?

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Session based on results of a year-long working group and faculty-led “May Seminar.” The W&M Foreign Language Houses Faculty Advisors and other interested parties (Learning Studio, representatives of Residence Life, Department Modern Languages administrative staff, etc.) reassessed the following aspects of W&M LHs:

- ❖ Shortcomings.
- ❖ Strengths.
- ❖ Mission.
- ❖ Effectiveness.
- ❖ Accessibility.
- ❖ Viability.
- ❖ Curricular relevance
- ❖ Community dynamic of W&M Language Houses.
- ❖ Role of the Language House native speaker tutors.

This Session’s goal is to share and exchange information about:

- ❖ Strategies and the tools designed to help Language Houses on campus sustain and improve on their current mode of operation, which promotes the knowledge and awareness of foreign languages and cultures and enriches the academic offerings of both Modern Languages and Global/International Studies majors and minors.
- ❖ Reconceptualizing the role of the LH Tutors (now called International Fellows) in our Department and on campus.
- ❖ Exploring additional mentoring opportunities for IFs in order to increase their impact on our Foreign Language Proficiency Requirement courses and the campus as a whole.
- ❖ Exchanging suggestions and sources in a network of colleagues to establish strategies that enhance the role of the Language Houses on campus as key units of globalization.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON OUR LHs

William & Mary has eight Language Houses that are clustered in one of the dormitory complexes on campus and each LH traditionally occupies one floor or living area of a given dorm and houses 22-24 students including the RA. Additionally, each LH hosts a graduate exchange student tutor from a country where the target language of the LH is spoken. These tutors live in the LHs, organize activities for the residents and the broader campus community and ideally adhere to a target language only usage policy to enhance meaningful language practice among the students. This setup has been in place for approximately 30 years. The native speaker-led LHs make a number of significant contributions to foreign language and cross-cultural learning on campus and enhance the academic programs in Modern Languages & Literatures and in Global Studies. Moreover, certain language courses require students to participate in a certain number of LH activities per semester. In spite of their track record of success, the LH now face a number of challenges that have led the academic programs, faculty advisors and college administrative units (Residence Life) responsible for them to reconsider their operation, effectiveness and campus-wide relevance.

KEY CONCEPTS IN COLLEGE DOCUMENTATION PERTAINING TO LANGUAGE HOUSES

- ❖ Cross-Cultural learning on campus.
- ❖ Cultural microcosm.
- ❖ Exchange ideas and learn from each other.
- ❖ Experience a piece of the world inside the W&M campus.
- ❖ Preparation for total immersion when travelling abroad OR might serve as the only “immersion experience” students will have at W&M.
- ❖ A community where people of all backgrounds feel at home, where diversity is actively embraced, and where each individual takes responsibility for upholding the dignity of all members of the community.

KEY CONCEPTS IN COLLEGE DOCUMENTATION PERTAINING TO INTERNATIONAL FELLOWS

- ❖ Align with W&M’s goal of globalization and inclusive excellence.
- ❖ Emphasize the role foreign language learning plays in diversity and inclusion matters
- ❖ Outside the House, the Fellow works with faculty members teaching the target foreign language AT ALL LEVELS (not just language but also advanced “content courses”) and with groups on or off campus that have an interest in the target language and culture.
- ❖ IFs develop and maintain contacts with foreign embassies and consulates in the United States and with other organizations that provide educational and cultural material useful in the programming of the LHs.
- ❖ The IFs are offered the opportunity to take Graduate courses: GRAD 501—English Conversation and Pronunciation and GRAD 503—Listening, Speaking & Pronunciation Skills in the Fall; and GRAD 502—Strategies for Effective Conversation in English in the Spring. These courses allow them to feel connected to people closer to them in age and closer to them in the “culture shock” experience here in the US. They also need informal

gathering opportunities where they can meet international graduate students such as trips out of town, conversation partners, Q&A opportunities.

SUGGESTIONS TO INCREASE VISIBILITY OF THE LHs ON CAMPUS AND BEYOND

CONNECTIONS AND NETWORK

1. Increase visibility by strengthening crucial connections and network:

MLL Department is seeking stronger support from the Dean's Office, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Center for Student Diversity, the Reves Center (esp. the Office of International Students and Scholars), the Office of Residence Life, Global Studies, and Office of the Vice Provost for International Affairs and from University Advancement.

LOCATION

2. Increase visibility via choice of location in relationship to available budget:

Secure additional funds for centrally located, newly renovated, and ADA compliant housing spaces so that LHs can truly benefit the entire campus community. The current residences are physically isolated and relatively far from both the center of campus and the academic programs most closely connected to the LHs. Visible, clear, and appealing signage regarding the LH community within is needed.

COLLABORATION WITH STUDIO FOR TEACHING & LEARNING

3. Increase visibility by working with the newly created Studio for Teaching and Learning Innovations:

The Studio's mission:

- ❖ Combine teaching excellence with research innovation.
- ❖ Coordinate existing initiatives devoted to teaching effectiveness while creating new opportunities to incubate innovative ideas and approaches and showcase these at our institution and beyond.

Goals of LH Collaboration with the Studio:

- ❖ Create an instructional repository.
- ❖ Facilitate face-to-face conversation (ex: Zoom Conferences used by IFs to invite friends and guest speakers to interact with LH residents).
- ❖ Create a community of practice.
- ❖ Create a hub where innovation is central (ex: "Kitchen Labs" for cooking demonstrations)

- ❖ Create co-working and cross-departmentally shared spaces such as an amphitheatre for performances, poetry reading...).
- ❖ Use as an innovation incubator: interdisciplinary synergies for learning partnerships and resources to create pedagogical partnerships between faculty, students, and the broader community (e.g., “Ellucian” is a good example for co-working space partnerships between schools.
- ❖ Create digital textbooks.
- ❖ Collaborate to organize study abroad experiences/programs.
- ❖ Create a network with the School of Education and local cultural organizations.
- ❖ Create interdisciplinary courses.
- ❖ Create workshops for graduate students so that the IFs enrolled in GRAD Courses can build connections with peers on campus. A good example is “Box Center Harvard,” which strives to integrate grad students and undergrads within the teaching and learning community and to create a “home” beyond departments and where students take coursework beyond the classroom.

Our collaboration with this new entity located in the heart of campus will bring additional visibility to the LH International Fellows. IFs would:

- ❖ Attend seminars and pedagogical conversations.
- ❖ Lead some of the activities and create some of the programming for the Studio. Such activities could feature workshops on how to include cultural activities into a lesson plan, practical communications skills for students going abroad, strategies to deal with the culture shock that often accompanies the experience of living abroad.

LHs AS COLL 300 CREDIT BEARING EXPERIENCE

4. Increase visibility by transforming the LHs into COLL 300 credit bearing experience:

The LHs will further serve the College’s curricular needs pursuant to the faculty decision that one year of residence might constitute an alternative COLL 300 “On Campus” experience.

Description of COLL 300 requirement in the framework William & Mary’s “College Curriculum” (interdisciplinary general curriculum spanning all four years of the undergraduate experience):

*The purpose of COLL 300 is to connect you with people, places, and ideas that take you out of familiar surroundings and deepen the way you see yourself in the world. To introduce you to people and ideas that are outside your sphere of direct experience. To challenge your ways of thinking. To make you a little uncomfortable. COLL 300 experiences ask you to use your knowledge, your emerging expertise in framing questions, and your communication skills to engage the world in a self-reflective, cross-cultural way. Typically, COLL 300 happens in your third year. There are many ways to complete COLL 300. [1] **You can experience COLL 300 on campus, through designated courses that address global or cross-cultural issues and are organized around a special series of lectures by W&M faculty, visiting scholars, artists, and public intellectuals.** [2] Study abroad in a program sponsored by William & Mary and offered through the Reves Center. [3] Study away, with an off-campus component that involves encounters with different environments and cultures. [4] You could take courses through the DC Program that are designated as COLL 300.*

The array of LH activities offered and the regularity of LH resident-IF interactions in the target language certainly mean that students “connect with people, places, and ideas that take [them] out of familiar surroundings and expand the way [they see themselves] in the world.” To bring this experience in alignment with College-wide expectations for a COLL 300 course, we will establish starting in Fall 2020 a requirement that residents seeking COLL 300 credit enroll in a newly created 2-credit MDLL 300 course carrying the COLL 300 attribute (students would take MDLL 300A in the Fall, and MDLL 300B in the Spring, for a total of 4 credits).

These courses might require that students:

- ❖ Participate regularly in LH activities.
- ❖ Take responsibility for organizing or co-organizing one event per semester
- ❖ Write a few short reflection papers on these events and their residential experience in general.
- ❖ Have their written work evaluated and graded by one of the MLL Department’s Associate Chairs.

This “On Campus” option would be an interesting opportunity for students who need to fulfill the COLL 300 requirement but cannot study abroad for some reason (e.g. financial burden, heavily scheduled major requirements, or personal issues). Not all LH residents would have to be enrolled in the COLL 300 variant. It is true that many of the current residents of the Language Houses already have plans to study abroad at some point during their four years on campus (they will therefore satisfy the COLL 300 requirement that way). As a result, this COLL 300 “On Campus” option might not assuage the University’s immediate need for additional COLL 300 courses or seats. However, this new option might attract a new population of students to the LHs — thereby reenergizing the latter and the campus community as a whole while also fulfilling potentially unrecognized interests and needs on campus. In order to attract more juniors and seniors needing to fulfill the COLL 300 requirement, it was recommend that the LHs be located in a more desirable and central place on campus.

OUTREACH, CAMPUS PRESENCE, COMMUNITY

5. Increase visibility through outreach, campus presence, and community involvement:

In the future, LH residents and International Fellows might initiate a variety of community partnerships. For example, they might:

- ❖ Collaborate with recognized student organizations (e.g. the Latin American Student Union, Black Student Organization, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, and Muslim Student Association).
- ❖ Contact organizations in Williamsburg such as Culture.fix to cosponsor international cultural events (e.g. outdoor screenings of foreign movies in Merchant’s Square).
- ❖ Organize a big community event to raise money for a charity or an organization such as Relay for Life.

- ❖ Explore the possibility of partnering with Colonial Williamsburg.
- ❖ Organize a reading club and/or cooking events for people in the larger Williamsburg community.
- ❖ Contact local cultural associations (Italian, Greek, etc.) to propose a collaboration on their festivals and/or to invite their local community members as guest speakers.
- ❖ Partnership with K-12 schools to collaborate on their international events and programs (e.g. Honor Society events, Global Ambassador Program, and Language in Motion Program”.

Participation in The Reves Center’s and College’s Special Programs:

- ❖ **Global Friends Program and International Family Network:** The Global Friends Program matches international students with local families, giving both a chance to learn about a different culture. IFN provides a support network for the spouses and family members of international students and scholars as well as an avenue to connect with the broader university community.
- ❖ **Foreign Lands Ambassador Group:** FLAG gives international students the opportunity to share their knowledge of international countries and cultures with local elementary and pre-schools.
- ❖ **Homecoming & Reunion Weekend**
- ❖ **Journal Club,** a weekly gathering for sharing research with W&M Arts & Sciences and VIMS graduate students.
- ❖ **Alma Mater Productions:** (AMP), the primary campus-wide programming body at William & Mary, strives to provide diverse, high-quality entertainment in a safe, inclusive environment at a low cost to the college community. AMP serves as a resource for the programming, social, leadership and educational needs of all individuals that make up the student body. Goals are:
- ❖ **Dining Services: “Global Chef Event”:** cooking demonstrations could be a good way to collaborate with the Houses. Dining Services are trying to diversify their offerings and the LHouses would be a great resource.

THE FUTURE OF LANGUAGE HOUSES

LHs have great potential to become:

- ❖ Central to internationalization, curricular enrichment, and diversity at W&M.
- ❖ Portals to global societies beyond the campus.
- ❖ Unique Living Learning Communities on our campus
- ❖ Means to bring together W&M students of different skill levels in foreign languages with young professionals from abroad allowing the students to experience a living foreign

language beyond something that we can recreate in the classroom; to interact informally with a young professional from a foreign country and thereby to be exposed to many cultural nuances, current cultural trends, and major political and cultural upheavals — all that is happening right now around the globe and that affects both the IFs and our students in real time.

- ❖ Play a major role in the internationalization efforts at the university, contribute to linguistic and cultural diversity on campus, and build stronger communities of students and faculty in a variety of programs (e.g., majors/minors in MLL and Global Studies).
- ❖ Prominent Living Learning Communities at the College; they should be in the center of campus and in the best ADA compliant facilities; they should have prominent signage and be visible to all visitors to campus.

Questions for participants:

- ❖ How do you use the space of your LHs?
- ❖ How do you advertise events?
- ❖ How are LHs integrated in your foreign language departments?
- ❖ How can we better integrate LHs and International Fellows upper-level classes?
- ❖ How are LHs on your campuses connected to content courses of the relevant departments?
- ❖ How have LHs evolved at your institution since their foundation?
- ❖ How are LHs connected to the broader community?
- ❖ How are IFs involved in graduate programs and organizations on campus?
- ❖ What type of events offered? When and how often?
- ❖ How are LHs funded at your institution?
- ❖ How do you recruit your International Fellow equivalents? What is their role in the department? Do they teach? Other responsibilities? Compensation? Selection process details? How do you advertise your LH programs in the IF's home countries? Duration of contract? How many hours per week are they expected to work?
- ❖ What are the living arrangement for the IFs?
- ❖ What courses are available for IFs at your institution?
- ❖ How are their IFs trained?