Hispania Guest Editorial:
Parallel Lines Should Cross

Lt. Col. Richard Dabrowski

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There are physical barriers to reaching the Department of Foreign Languages at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA): security guards at the entrance to the base, additional security at the entrance to the Cadet Area, and badges to enter Fairchild Hall, etc. Then, there are the cultural barriers: an ethos for foreign languages usually associated with secretive military intelligence, an understanding of fluency as a war-fighting skill, and more. Similar barriers exist at all US government-sponsored institutions where foreign languages are taught, which discourages interaction between military and other agency professional educators and their civilian counterparts in academia.

These barriers mark a pedagogical world apart, which during the Cold War was not only rigidly separate from university language training, but also effectively isolated the various US government-sponsored bureaucracies involved with language education, making cooperation among them difficult. The Department of Education did have some responsibility for encouraging the study of foreign languages, but it had nowhere near the funding and scope of the Department of Defense and other agencies. After 9/11, there was growing recognition of the need for the US government to streamline its foreign language training efforts and to reach out to civilian universities. The result was the 2006 National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), which looked to integrate the efforts of the Departments of State, Education, and Defense, as well as the Intelligence Community.

The NSLI became the mandate of the Foreign Language Program Office of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and it resulted in increased funding particularly for the less-commonly taught languages. Of special interest to *Hispania* readers may be the K–16 STARTALK program (http://startalk.umd.edu), which funds student and teacher workshops for: ten languages, including Portuguese; the Flagship program (http://thelanguageflagship.org/), which funds best practices for reaching high levels of proficiency in various languages, also including Portuguese (at the University of Georgia at Athens); and the Center for the Advanced Study of Language at the University of Maryland (http://www.casl.umd.edu/), which sponsors basic and applied research in many areas of language study—including the use of neuroimaging to scientifically explore how the brain learns.

While the bureaucratic mandate to improve cooperation in foreign language education between government and academia continues, true success depends on dedicated individuals willing to work through the barriers. For example, AATSP President Christine Campbell has made numerous presentations at the AATSP, ACTFL, and other national conventions to promote awareness of the foreign language and culture products available from the Defense Language Institute / Foreign Language Center (http://www.dliflc.edu/products.html) that could be useful to civilian educators. And, it is not just government reaching out to academia—sometimes academics find their way past the guard shacks into government institutions, such as *Hispania* Editor Sheri Spaine Long, who is the current Distinguished Visiting Professor at the USAFA from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. We have also had Eileen Glisan (Indiana University of Pennsylvania), Jean LeLoup (formerly of SUNY College at Cortland and now at USAFA), Carmen Ferrero (Moravian College), and Kendra Douglas (Western Washington University) as visiting professors of Spanish or Portuguese. It is thanks to such individuals who see the value of cooperation that the parallel pedagogical worlds can intersect—to the betterment of both.

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