



CIEL Virtual Language Learning Project:

Connecting People, Programs and Places for a Global Perspective

The **Consortium for Innovative Environments in Learning**¹ brings together leading national institutions of higher education that share a willingness to work together for the CIEL mission to:

- *Explore the nature, origins, and sustainability of innovation in higher education and advocate for innovative, alternative practices*
- *Continuously innovate and renew our own practices in order to serve as models to other institutions*
- *Foster collaborations among faculty, technical specialists, administrators, and students in a variety of modes for mutual support, sharing of best practices, and outreach and advocacy to the higher education community*
- *Support traditional institutions in becoming newly innovative through membership in the consortium or through partnerships for the purposes of instituting change and strengthening innovations.*

At the 2008 CIEL annual meeting at Prescott College for “Collaborative Curricula, Pedagogy and Scholarly Action: Embracing the Challenges of Globalization,” faculty and administrators from CIEL schools developed and prioritized several collaborative curricular and research projects that would employ technology to enable sharing of local faculty, curricula, field sites, and community learning resources across the consortium.

Participants gave highest priority to the sharing of language learning resources and the sharing of “global perspective” learning outcomes across CIEL schools. The CIEL Virtual Language Learning project connects the mission of CIEL for innovative collaborations in higher education not only to the real technological and language curricula capacity challenges faced on individual campuses, but also to the pressing societal needs to address the U.S. “language deficit” and extend learning for a global perspective. The combination of virtual language learning and immersive community-based learning opportunities towards shared learning outcomes enables the expansion of skill-based language learning as the integrative core to connect diverse curricula that build students’ translingual and transcultural competencies.

Through the CIEL Virtual Language Learning project, participating schools will develop the administrative and technological capacity for students from each campus to participate in language courses and programs offered at other CIEL schools. Grant funding will be sought to build physical learning spaces equipped with the necessary video-conferencing technology to connect both to similar learning spaces at other campuses and field stations as well as to individual learners’ computers over the internet. Initially, the project will bring together technical support staff, assessment coordinators and language faculty to align the infrastructure and curricula to pilot the sharing of language courses. Eventually, the increased capacity for collaboration across campuses and field stations will enable faculty members and students to work together on other curricular and research projects that they have identified and prioritized at earlier CIEL meetings (e.g., comparative watershed studies; food justice; border studies, etc.).

¹ www.cielearn.org

Virtual Language Learning

At the fall 2008 and spring 2009 CIEL meetings, Marlboro College Second Language Acquisition faculty member Tom Means demonstrated how web-based videoconferencing can bring distant students and faculty together in real-time, face-to-face language learning courses. While the typical CIEL school might offer full curricula in one to three languages, if CIEL language programs were shared approximately 20 full curricula in distinct languages would be available to CIEL students. With relatively inexpensive technological infrastructure and administrative coordination, CIEL schools can make their language faculty and curricula available to students from other CIEL schools. In July 2009, CIEL schools sent teams of language faculty, administrators and technical specialists to the Network for Effective Language Learning² offered by the Council for Independent Colleges in order to identify best practices in language learning³ and to further develop the CIEL Virtual Language Learning project design. Face-to-face videoconferencing in conjunction with asynchronous course management and e-portfolio systems enable effective learning between distant students, faculty and native speakers in a way that blends “high touch” pedagogy with high tech learning support and assessment.

Shared Local and International Field Stations

Each CIEL school offers one or more study away or study abroad field stations including opportunities for formal and informal immersive language learning in specific languages. Greater sharing of these community-based learning environments across CIEL schools would expand the range of immersive learning opportunities in a variety of different languages available to students from any one school. Faculty from CIEL schools would benefit from opportunities for curricular development and comparative research in additional locales. For the particular field station and surrounding community, increased use will bring additional resources and capacity.

Global Perspectives Learning and Assessment

Since the fall 2008 CIEL meetings, CIEL has created an inventory of mission elements, learning outcomes, and curricula relevant to a “global perspective” at each CIEL school. Simultaneously, many CIEL schools have been pilot participants in the AAC&U Valid Assessment of Student Learning (VALUE) project to create shared meta-rubrics to enable e-portfolio assessment and comparative study of common liberal learning outcomes across institutions.⁴ Relevant CIEL outcomes have been mapped across the VALUE outcomes and areas identified for additional outcome development (e.g., global environmental literacy). The focus on shared learning outcomes for intercultural competence and global perspectives facilitates curricular connections, assessment, and sharing of best practices.

Project Goals

The CIEL Virtual Language Learning project is a multiyear collaboration of CIEL schools in order to:

- *Enrich the language learning opportunities for students from all CIEL schools*

² http://www.cic.edu/projects_services/grants/nell.asp

³ Report of the Modern Languages Association Committee on Foreign Languages and Higher Education, 2007: <http://www.mla.org/flreport>

⁴ <http://www.aacu.org/value/metarubrics.cfm>

- *Enable faculty to connect expanded virtual and immersive place-based language learning into existing disciplinary and interdisciplinary curricula that develop a global perspective*
- *Increase CIEL school capacity for aligned technological infrastructure, e-learning platforms, learning spaces, and staff and faculty abilities to support video-conferencing between all campuses and international field-site locations*
- *Build upon existing semester exchange agreements between CIEL schools to create administrative systems for scheduling, enrolling, and transcribing shared language courses and programs*
- *Create curricular pathways between specific shared language courses and the local and international community-based study abroad programs offered through each participating CIEL school*
- *Create more general curricular connections around “global perspectives” learning outcomes that feed into local and international community-based learning environments*
- *Use e-portfolios for shared assessment of learning outcomes both for language skills as well as the global perspectives learning outcome*
- *Extend increased collaborative capacity to other curricular and research areas identified by CIEL faculty*
- *Disseminate models, assessment data and lessons learned*

For more information or to get connected to the CIEL Virtual Language Learning project, contact CIEL Director Gret Antilla at gantilla@prescott.edu .