I am pleased to share with you, the inaugural volume of our newsletter, *The Key Connection*. It is particularly exciting because the Center for Language Excellence (CLE), undeterred by its recent inception in the 2014-2015 academic year, has achieved its set targets and proudly presents you with its accomplishments within the last two years.

I would therefore like to express my profound gratitude to you all for helping the Center realize its goals. We are especially thankful to the Indiana University College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Global and International studies, and all IU Language Centers, Departments and language-related outfits, for their encouragement and valued partnership.

The years under review have seen CLE fulfill its objectives of establishing a thriving network of relationships and resources that cultivate and advance only the best practices in foreign language pedagogy primarily within the IU community and the region as a whole, as our strategic and innovative activities will demonstrate.

CLE has assumed responsibility for Indiana University’s annual Fall semester orientation to prepare new and continuing language instructors since the Fall 2015 academic year.

The Center, with support from the IU College of Arts and Sciences; and other IU language initiated the *Online Language Course Development Workshop* for which participating language instructors for Portuguese, Modern Greek, Norwegian and Hungarian, each received a monetary award to develop and mount an online course for their respectively languages. The Center’s annual four-day workshop to train instructor for the Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI) according to ACTFL standards has seen a lot of growth and continued interest among instructors.

Additionally, CLE currently oversees the Big Ten Academic Alliance which administered the “CourseShare” Program activities under its former name, Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC)).

Finally, the Center embarked on a project in its first year, to publish and disseminate brochures for all the languages IU offers, with the view of giving each language equal visibility, and thus enhancing a wider variety of student choices in language enrollment. There are now over 40 language brochures including the American Sign Language, and we continue to design brochures for the remaining languages.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the CLE staff, our dedicated Local Advisory Board, and all those invested in making CLE a supportive network for all language departments at Indiana University.
**CLE Year in Review**

**Goals**

The Center for Language Excellence (CLE), takes a holistic approach to language instruction. Therefore, proficiency-based and standards-based instruction, professional development and research, assessment of language learning outcomes and online language education constitute the major underpinnings of all the Center’s activities which are highlighted below.

**Workshops and Presentations**

CLE organized workshops, presentations, seminars, that brought together seasoned language pedagogues with instructors of foreign languages as part of its proficiency and standard-based goals. The CLE inaugural workshop held in Fall 2014 semester was entitled “Peer Observation of Foreign Language Classrooms” and led by Dr. Antonia Schleicher. She has subsequently run several workshops on a variety of topics for specific training purposes. “Understanding by Design Framework”, commonly called the “Backward Curriculum Design” and “Developing Learning Plans” focused on developing a language curriculum. “Teaching Interpretive, Interpersonal and Presentational Communication”, and “Using Authentic Materials in Foreign Language Classrooms” were organized as part of our ongoing workshops promoting standards-based and proficiency-based instruction.

CLE Inaugural Workshop led by Dr. Antonia Schleicher

Esther Ham leads a workshop on Motivation in (Online) Language Courses.

Maria Shardakova leads the workshop: “Developing an Online Foreign Language Placement Test: Sharing Experiences/ Setting Your Own Goals”

Dr. Antonia Schleicher leads “Using SCOLA Authentic Videos for teaching Foreign Languages at any Level of Instruction”
In the area of assessment, Maria Shardakova, Director of Language Assessment for the Center for Language Excellence, organized a series of workshops that underscored the connection between classroom practices, including various forms of assessment, and research. One of the highlights of the series was a workshop “Classroom Research Showcase” (Dec. 2015) which presented classroom studies undertaken by IU faculty and graduate students and used data from three target languages – Chinese, German, and Russian.

The presented studies problematized the current understanding of “good classroom practices” and “best assessment techniques” (“Effects of the Corrective Written Feedback on the L2 Acquisition of Russian” by Elena Doluddenko), arguing for a more complex understanding of foreign language learning, stressing the social nature of learning experience and the necessity to engage learners in all stages of learning process, including assessment (“Effects of Peer Learning on Students’ Linguistic Development in Russian” by Maria Shardakova). Alternative methods of teaching and assessment were proposed through the incorporation of elements of performative arts (“Performative Approach to Language Teaching: The Effects of a Drama Focus on Speaking Anxiety and Motivation” by Silja Verona Weber). The importance of shifting the focus from the generic language learner to a particular individual with her unique sensibilities was also discussed (“Language Socialization: The Attitudinal Change Toward Writing Practices among Advanced Chinese L2 Learners” by Yingling Bao).

Fall Orientation

CLE assumed responsibility for Indiana University’s annual Fall semester orientation to prepare new and continuing language instructors in the 2015/2016 academic year and will continue to do so every year. This first week of orientation is crucial for new instructors especially, many of whom have never taught a language and/or have not been trained to teach a language using the best practices. Many of them therefore get the valued opportunity to micro teach to help them put into practice, the theory of language teaching that they have learned as well as place them in a network of other language instructors. Fall 2015 orientation was supported by many language programs and departments/units on the IU campus.

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Grant Opportunities and Online Language Education Workshops

CLE fulfilled its mission of training language instructors to develop and teach online courses. Examples of such workshops are: Online Language Course Design 101/102; Speaking Activities and Tools in the Online Language Class; Best Practices Distance Education; Motivation in (Online) Language Courses. Esther Ham of the CLE, who has successfully mounted an online Dutch language course is very instrumental in designing workshops that encourage and offer specialized training to language instructors to enable them teach languages online.

Esther Ham leads workshop: “Hands-on Workshop Using Canvas to Create Weekly Online Activities.”

For the first time this summer, CLE with support from the IU College of Arts and Sciences; Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR); Inner Asian Uralic National Resource Center (IAUC); and the Russian and East European Institute (REEI), the Center was able to launch and implement the Online Language Course Development Workshop. The Center awarded a grant of $5,000 to each participating language instructor for Portuguese, Modern Greek, Norwegian and Hungarian respectively for to develop an online course for each of their languages and mount them online. The workshop was led by Esther Ham, director of online language education. There was a one week face-to-face workshop after which the language instructors developed the actual online language course during the subsequent eight weeks. Each instructor at the end of the workshop presented their online project to many interested foreign language instructors who are also interested in developing similar online courses.

CLE Oversees Big Ten Academic Alliance

CLE now oversees the Big Ten Academic Alliance (formerly the CIC “CourseShare” Program) in the Fall of 2016. This program capitalizes on distance-learning technology and allows CIC member universities to increase student access to specialized courses. Faculty enjoy the CourseShare program for the chance to collaborate with respected peers at CIC universities, expand course enrollments with talented students, employ new technologies, fill curricular gaps, preserve specialized courses, and strengthen student recruitment efforts. Students enjoy the opportunity to take specialized courses offered at other CIC institutions from a distance, eliminating the need to temporarily relocate.

CLE Outreach

CLE hosted a resource exhibit table at the Wells Library during the New Student Orientation from June 9 through July 19, 2016. The Center recruited 22 volunteers from ten departments and centers representing 13 languages. Departmental and CLE brochures were shared with students and parents to promote all languages and language learning at IU. The Center also exhibited at the Groups Scholars Resource Fair to promote all IU languages.
OPI Assessment Enhanced Familiarization Workshop

CLE hosted a session of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) titled “OPI Assessment Enhanced Familiarization Workshop” at the IU Bloomington campus. The Center now organizes an annual four-day workshop to train instructors for Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI). This year’s workshop was organized in two concurrent sessions – one for only Russian instructors, and the other for instructors of any other languages. The Russian OPI was funded by the Russian and East European Institute but CLE coordinated the workshop for the institute. It was solely conducted in Russian for Russian language instructors across the United States and conducted by a non-IU faculty and member of ACTFL.

CLE collaborated with NALRC to hold a two-day workshop for African language instructors which offered them training on how to develop standards for learning Swahili, Yoruba and Zulu.

CLE was duly represented at the Indiana Foreign Language Teachers Association (IFLTA) Conference in November 2015 through the exhibition of its programs.

Xiaojing Kou and Laura McClellan oversee the CLE exhibit table at IFLTA

CLE Brochures

Future Plans

The Center for Language Excellence will strive to continue with its programs to ensure that its workshops for the Fall Orientation for Language Instructors, the Oral Proficiency Interviews and OPI and Online Language Instruction continue in order to promote professional development, student interest and enrolment as well as best practices, so long as funds are available.