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# French Language and Cultures for the Professions: A Case Study for the Twenty-First Century

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# French Language and Cultures for the Professions: A Case Study for the Twenty-First Century

## **Abstract**

Taking up the May 2013 special issue theme concerning the future of French Programs in the United States, their “orientation” and “survival,” the author sets out to maintain a positive tone and productive perspective on this polemic via a working case study of her home institution’s “French Language and Cultures for Professions” program. The author first reviews existing scholarship concerning the teaching and learning of “Business French” and then presents a course “blueprint” for a twenty-first century update to this traditional curricular and programmatic model, re-titled “French for Business and Professions.”

## **Disciplines**

Cultural History | European Languages and Societies | French and Francophone Language and Literature | Higher Education

## **Comments**

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# French Language and Cultures for Professions: A Case Study for the Twenty-First Century

by Stacey Weber-Fève

UPON READING some time ago the title for the May 2013 special issue of the *French Review* (“Le français a-t-il un avenir aux États-Unis?”), this author’s pulse quickened, anxiety level rose, and heart pumped a bit harder. This question keeps us up at night, occupies our thoughts when brushing teeth or driving to work, dominates staff meeting discussions, and is even sometimes heard (although formulated a bit differently) emanating from the mouths of our students. To this author, this question seemed like a new one. More commonly or frequently heard questions consisted of “How do we make French and Francophone programs more relevant to this new generation of students?” or “How do we attract and retain students and build our program’s future (often with fewer resources)?” The question of whether or not our French program’s future was in jeopardy was unimagined, or at least unspoken. What proved surprising when undertaking the background research for this article was discovering that, in fact, we have been asking this same question in published scholarship—in one form or another but ultimately always with the same intent—since at least the 1980s.

Seeking to maintain a positive tone and productive perspective, and attempting to shed a ray of light onto the concern for our future, the author will pursue three objectives. First, she will throw a cursory glance at the existing scholarship in which many have offered responses to questions concerning the future orientation of French and Francophone programs in the United States. Second, stemming from the author’s personal experience directing a relatively newer undergraduate curricular initiative, she will layout a “case study” of sorts for (a) a programmatic design focusing on French “Language and Cultures for Professions” (LCP) and (b) an advanced-level course design for “French for Business and Professions.” Third, drawing from existing literature in the field as well as from the adjacent fields of engineering and business education, the author will suggest new directions to consider for the development of French for professional purposes, which may in turn help to “orient” and strengthen our chances of institutional “survival.” Let us

begin with a brief overview of key “professional French” programmatic models and pedagogical approaches shaping the scholarship of French language, literature, and culture instruction in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The landscape of scholarship addressing the infusion of pedagogical approaches and programmatic models for the development of foreign or second languages for professional purposes proves quite vast, even dating back in some instances to the early 1970s. What dominates over the decades, it would seem, are the intellectual and institutional connections established between French and (International) Business Programs as well as the following concerns: “Are we leaving the Ivory Tower” (Morris); the seemingly contradiction-in-terms existence of commercial French in a Liberal Arts setting or curriculum (Abrate; Sell et al.); and a variety of curricular objectives or learning outcomes foregrounding notions such as cultural competence (Petropoulou), problem solving (Sell et al.), critical thinking skills (Walsh), and active learning (Meyer).

More recently, attention has increasingly turned to the topics of professional communication and achieving “communicational proficiency” (Boufoy-Bastick) and to cross-disciplinary approaches to the instruction of the target language and other disciplinary content such as the teaching of international business concepts in French Business courses (Paulson). One enduring constant that has underscored and continues to underscore the literature centers on the notions of “practical (or technical or scientific) French” or “career French” insofar as articles and studies speak to what one gains and loses in the curriculum with such an approach. Many of the publications along this line also seek to address different profiles of students and their linguistic needs and expectations via this specific “French for special purposes” language approach. A second enduring constant in the existing scholarship includes a focus on integrating technology in the “Business French” curriculum and learning experience, which is often accompanied by a proliferation of activity, project, and assessment suggestions and models involving everything from the *Minitel* to today’s cutting-edge technology.

What appears at least most frequently, if not in every instance, are essentially two key principles: (1) the application of student knowledge and target-language abilities through simulations of “real-world” business products, practices, and cross-cultural workplace interactions and (2) the association between French (language, culture, etc.) and the notion of “added value,” as in the sense that pursuing coursework (or a major or minor) in French leads to the gain or development of “skill[s] useful in today’s world” (Morris 3). Whether characterized as “professional,” “integrated,” “soft,” or “applied,” indeed, the scholarship in the field of French for professional purposes routinely links its curriculum to the pedagogical objective of skill (or professional competencies or practical abilities) development.

Speaking from experience, this author can attest that this connection or association between *French* (or any foreign language) and *added value* continues to

reverberate strongly in her department and among their university partners (i.e., the Colleges of Engineering, Business, and Agriculture—although certainly not everyone in each college supports this claim). Again based on personal experience, as well as what the scholarship overwhelmingly indicates, the emphasis on applied “practical abilities” or “professional competencies” has become (and perhaps has always been) the gold standard (in terms of curricular design and learning outcomes) for today’s Business French courses.

While this brief summary of the existing literature is not as extensive as is warranted by the profession and field, one hopes that it manages to shed some insight into the topic and supports the earlier notion that we have been asking ourselves about—and answering—the “future orientation” or “survival” of French instruction and French and Francophone programs in the United States for quite some time. Let us now move on to the author’s “case study” of sorts for (a) a programmatic design focusing on French LCP and (b) an advanced-level course design for French for Business and Professions. Many of the themes, talking points, and ideas shared in the brief literature review above will resurface in the next section.

When this author began her appointment in 2006, the Department of World Languages and Cultures’ initiative, Language and Cultures for Professions (LCP), was already up and running. A secondary-major option open only to students whose primary major is in the Colleges of Engineering, Business, or Agriculture and with concentrations in French, German, Spanish, or a minor option in Chinese Studies or Russian, LCP’s main objective is “to provide learning environments within which students can achieve global literacy, linguistic proficiency, and intercultural competence” (Catalog). Within the LCP curriculum, students learn “how professions are shaped by social and cultural forces and, alternatively, how professions shape society” (Catalog). LCP courses typically foreground contemporary culture and society and ask students to “identify and analyze issues dealing with the complex interrelationships of languages and cultures and consider how they may affect their chosen profession” (Catalog).

At the department level, LCP requires a degree of compliancy across language sections. Among these compliances we count: the number of credits, a study or internship abroad requirement, the general make-up of the identified core courses, and the subscription to certain curricular foci such as “entrepreneurship” and “sustainability.” However, there is considerable room for individualization within each language section’s LCP option and, of course, within the content and teaching approaches of individual LCP courses. Thus, we maintain a successful balance of autonomy and compliance, which in turn allows individual language programs and LCP faculty to meet programmatic and student needs within their own language section as well as to put their own stamp and individuality on their own LCP version. Yet, all the while, common learning outcomes, course objectives, and some curricular topics cut across individual LCP versions.

Two French Major options exist at this author's institution. "French Studies" is the traditional track emphasizing literature, culture, and language and remains the only option available to all students in all colleges excepting Engineering, Business, and Agriculture. "French LCP" is broken down into three options: International Business Secondary Major and French LCP Major, French LCP without International Business Secondary Major, and French LCP for Engineering or Agriculture. The French LCP track emphasizes professions, culture, and language, but importantly still includes literature and other 'traditional' aspects of French and Francophone programs.

The credit requirements are identical for all major options, and the required courses are relatively the same across both major options (French LCP, whether Business, Engineering, or Agriculture, is identical). Students, regardless of French LCP or French Studies option, must more or less take the same courses. However, the courses "count" differently in each major option, and one track emphasizes one type of course over the other. For example, in the French Studies track, students are required to take "French Writing and Grammar," "Reading and Writing French," *two* "Studies in French or Francophone Literature," "French Civilization Seminar," *four* additional electives (any advanced-level courses instructed in the target language, including but not requiring "French for Business and Professions"), and either "French Film Studies in English" or "French Studies in English."

In the French LCP track, students are required to take "French Writing and Grammar," "Reading and Writing French," "French for Business and Professions," "French Conversation," "France Today," *one* "Studies in French or Francophone Literature," "French Civilization Seminar," an "Internship in France or Francophone Region," *one* additional elective (any advanced-level course instructed in the target language), and either "French Film Studies in English" or "French Studies in English."

Thus, the French LCP track emphasizes more contemporary French/Francophone culture and society and requires the "professions" and "skills-oriented" courses ("French for Business and Professions," "France Today," and "French Conversation"). Yet, the track also firmly grounds students in the study of target-language literature and with the practice of L2 reading ("Reading and Writing French" and "Studies in French or Francophone Literature"). Moreover, the required LCP core courses exist as cultural elective options for the French Studies track. As a result, courses always contain "mixed audiences" constituted by "traditional, Liberal Arts students" and "LCP students." In any particular course, enrollment numbers may sway more in one direction than the other, but this has not become a problem—in fact, it often presents the instructor and students with a refreshing and welcomed variety of perspectives as well as varied strengths, weaknesses, and background experiences.

It is generally accepted that the LCP program has been beneficial to the French Program and the Department as a whole. In French, the number of majors between

French Studies and French LCP is relatively even—some years favoring LCP by a few numbers, other years favoring French Studies—but always quite close. More importantly, though, for an institution claiming “Science and Technology” in its very name, the LCP initiative has partnered us with “powerhouse players” on campus and the university’s “all-stars,” i.e., the Colleges of Engineering and Agriculture. Moreover, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences administrators routinely champion our cause and often hold us up to our LAS colleagues as flagship examples of inter-college collaboration.

While language, engineering, and agriculture faculty share no common research grounds on which to collaborate, we share many collaborative teaching and service opportunities. From team-taught courses such as “Technology, Globalization, and Culture” to study abroad programs and short-term travel courses, faculty work together on many department- and college-wide joint ventures that emphasize themes such as “curricular internationalization,” “global engineering,” or “global resource systems management.” This in turn helps raise the visibility of academic programs and strengthen student recruitment and retention on both sides, not to mention better prepares students for twenty-first century careers and their globalized realities.

The French LCP option has also been popular with students. Granted that it does take a certain kind of student—one who is committed to a double major, accepts the requirement of study and/or internship abroad, and is open to the possibility of devoting an additional semester or year to finish both majors—most students in the program find that the French LCP track helps them balance their engineering, agriculture, or business studies. They often report in our French courses enjoying using “the other side of their brains,” having smaller-sized classes, and making good friends and strong connections with their peers; all of this in addition to learning the French program content and improving their language skills. Furthermore, the French LCP option allows them to combine their two “loves,” so to speak, and many have personal goals, desires, or dreams to work overseas or in international corporations and research centers which may send them abroad or receive international visitors in the United States. Let us now turn to our discussion of an advanced-level course design for French for Business and Professions and glean a concrete sense of what makes this major option popular to students and “gold star-worthy” to administrators.

When assigned to teach this course for the first time, the author inherited teaching materials from her predecessor, who had only taught the course once or twice before as it was a newer course at the time. These materials consisted mostly of traditional approaches to teaching Business French (economy, stock market, banking systems and institution, and so on). While grateful to have this information and adopting much of it in her teaching the first time, she quickly discovered that her students were not largely interested in this content. In a class in which

only two students were in International Business and French LCP and who already knew most of this information (and, incidentally, more soundly than the instructor whose area of research specialization is Film Studies), she vowed to revamp the approach and overhaul course design the following year.

Realizing that what drew the students to the course in the first place was the promise of studying “culture” and not “business,” per se, the author added the following year a secondary title to the course, “Working Across French-American Cultures,” and adopted a (cross-) cultural studies perspective through which students are able to learn just as much about themselves and the culture of the United States as they do about French and Francophone cultures. To keep the scope of the course in check, she limits course content to manifestations of French, *Québécois*, and Francophone (mostly West African and European) “professional cultures” (see course description below). The cross-cultural, Franco-American thematic also has the added benefit of attracting to the course native and advanced-level French-speaking international students who are interested in learning more about United States culture in a formal classroom setting. Thus, this comparative cross-cultural studies addition has boosted enrollment, but more importantly has offered deeper intercultural exchanges and enriched learning (and language) opportunities more immediately within the classroom.

Although the four language skills are addressed in this course (reading, writing, speaking, listening), “French for Business and Professions” targets oral proficiency development. This becomes another draw among L2 students, for many perceive speaking as their weakest ability that they want to improve. The author capitalizes on this premise (as we will see below) when structuring class lessons and course assessment (i.e., student projects and exams). During the second and all subsequent years, the traditional Business French unit on *le dossier d’emploi* (internship/job search, *lettre de motivation*, and CV) was retained as well as job interviewing strategies and practices; but, as we shall see below, the “applied humanities approach” was pushed to a maximum. Let us now take a look at the breakdown of the course, which has been refined and retuned over five separate offerings.

“French for Business and Professions” is a general introduction to the cultures of contemporary French-speaking business environments and their professional practices and behaviors. Students explore cultural topics (e.g., business etiquettes, managerial styles, education, professional relations, professional and intercultural communication, etc.) through a variety of readings and case studies that focus on diverse Francophone communities and different aspects of their professional cultures and practices. We attempt to identify and analyze the cultural, social, professional, and behavior differences that bring French, French-speaking individuals, and Americans together in a variety of professional settings.

“French for Business and Professions” stresses the “real-professional-world” application of course content through a series of student projects, including: an



employment portfolio, an internship search, a marketing French Program Open House event, and a French LCP Poster Session. The course blends both traditional areas and approaches of academic curricula as well as “twenty-first-century” content areas and applied pedagogical approaches. Some course work also focuses on more traditional “Business French” language learning.

Although the course involves practice with the four language skills, emphasis is placed on improving speaking proficiency through class discussion, debates, practice interviews (individual face-to-face, telephone or Skype, and group exit interviews), and oral presentations (in-class and poster). “French for Business and Professions” provides *complementary* or supplementary *cultural* information to “official” content taught in traditional business courses. Thus, this course resembles more a French and Francophone culture course than an ‘international business’ course taught in French.

The author prepares a copyrights permissions-compliant course packet of the following reading materials: chapters 1–2, 4–10, 13, and 16–18 of *Français-Américains: ces différences qui nous rapprochent* (Asselin et Mastron); the “Intercultural,” “Marketing,” “Publicité,” and “Management” readings from *Cas pratiques pour le français des affaires* (Federico and Moore); *Radishes & Butter: Doing Business with the French* (Hinshaw); chapter 4—the content on the film *Ressources humaines*—from *Cinema for French Conversation* (Rice); and “Le Marketing” from *Commerce et Marketing* (Schmitt and Lutz). We also use chapters 3–7 from *À la recherche d’un emploi* (Hubbell) and open-source “Espace candidat” pdf downloads from the French national employment agency ([pole-emploi.fr](http://pole-emploi.fr)).

Several course objectives cover both substantive and procedural learning goals. For example, students will develop a working knowledge of the cultures of contemporary French and Francophone business environments and their professional practices and behaviors. They will also challenge engrained American cultural ways of seeing French and Francophone professionals and business transactions and develop a working knowledge of some key concepts in LCP (e.g., intercultural communication, cultural intelligence, cultural metaphors, etc.) Finally, students will strengthen target-language speaking skills, professional rhetorical writing abilities and knowledge, critical thinking abilities, and cultural awareness. They will enhance their knowledge of and facility with multimedia technology, research skills, and Web and print resources and improve their oral presentation performance talents and other French-language abilities.

Here is the category breakdown of the course: Quizzes (5%); Engagement/Participation (10%); Practice: *Compte rendu*, *Dossier d’emploi*, *Réflexions* (10%); *Exposé oral* (15%); *Journée portes ouvertes* and Brochure Project (15%); Cultural Analysis Poster Presentation Project (20%); Exams (25%). Let us now explore each component in more detail.

Students participate in “Daily Review Quizzes,” or multiple-choice or true/false questions that review the important highlights from the previous class content as well as underline critical pieces of information or vocabulary from the assigned homework readings. These quizzes, conducted on students’ own time in *Blackboard* double as scaffolding activities that assist students as they read and comprehend the assigned readings on their own. They also hold students accountable for reviewing essential course content outside of class, which in turn also helps them to make connections between individual pieces of course content.

Given that the course is largely discussion-based, student preparation and participation are essential. Therefore, students are assessed (and rewarded) for their engagement. As expressed in the syllabus, participation does not mean “talking in class,” or “contributing personal experiences or opinions” to class discussion, but that students will, in part, be assessed on the quality of their contributions to class. Participation is defined as the students’ ability to demonstrate that they have been paying attention in class, have been doing the homework assignments and readings in a responsible way, and (most importantly) can make connections between course content and their personal reflections, interpretations, analyses, and so on. Furthermore, students are told that to earn an “A” for participation in the course, they must be able to use confidently course vocabulary and speak with a degree of authority about the information we are covering together.

The author likes to use the metaphor of ‘practice’ in her teaching to communicate to students how she expects them to perform and prepare for the course. In the syllabus, she explains that athletes cannot expect to win the game or perform well if they do not practice their sport and that this analogy holds true for this course as well. In the spirit of ‘practicing course content and French-language skills’ outside of class, the author requires a few small homework practice assignments. For *Réflexions* (150–200 words in French), students keep a semester-long blog in Blackboard and periodically, in response to an instructor-generated writing prompt, record their thoughts on and reactions to particular course readings or other content shared in class or by their classmates.

For the *Compte rendu* (or set of minutes), each class is run (somewhat) like a business meeting for which there must be a complete set of minutes. Working in pairs or a small group of three, students assigned to take the *compte rendu* for that particular “class meeting” divide up the parts of the class as they wish. At home, individually and then collectively, they prepare their written minutes of the day’s class. At the beginning of the following class, the students present their minutes (typically a word document projected through the classroom computer onto the classroom screen), the class and/or instructor make(s) any corrections by typing the corrections directly into the original document projected on the classroom screen, and the class votes on whether they approve the minutes or not. To ensure that students engage with the lesson’s *content* and not just present a blow-by-blow

account of the lesson's activities, the instructor provides a model by composing and presenting herself the first *compte rendu* early in the semester.

The third major component of this "practice" category consists of an employment dossier that includes a *Lettre de motivation* and CV centered around a simulated internship or job search they conduct and incorporating their own personal information. In theory, the intention of these assignments is to provide students with the opportunity to learn and gain first-hand experience with internship/job searching on the Internet and job search documentation preparation so that when the time comes that they want to intern or work abroad, they will be able to pursue this course of action on their own or with only minimal faculty support. In this author's experience, this *Dossier d'emploi* continuously remains one of the favorite units in the course, mostly because students view this unit as the most "practical" and "real-world-applicable" section of the course. Furthermore, students find it culturally interesting to compare the similarities and differences between these documents in North America and Europe and hypothesize/interpret the reasons behind these observations.

For the *Exposé oral*, students work in pairs. Due to the lack of quality instructional materials on the market addressing French for professions throughout the Francophone world (with the exception of *Québec*), this is the place in the course where the topic of Francophone professional cultures mostly enters. Each pair of students chooses a French-speaking country (other than France) and researches the cultures of its contemporary business environments and its professional practices and behaviors. Students design an interactive oral presentation (that must include some class discussion in some way and give their classmates something to do *during* the oral presentation) and engage their peers in a follow-up activity (e.g., they conduct a game or execute some other kind of activity) as an extension of their presentation content.

The *Journée portes ouvertes* and Brochure Project is a project-based exam closing our unit on "Marketing in France." As an applied exercise in marketing, students in pairs create two versions of a brochure (one in French, one in English) advertizing a French Program component or extracurricular activity offered through the Department (e.g., French Club). We subsequently use students' brochures in real departmental advertising and recruiting efforts. One class day is set aside for the Open House. Student pairs set up "booths" in the hallway from which they greet guests, present their topics, and distribute their brochures. We invite all students across campus interested in French to attend, but we target those enrolled in first- and second-year French courses. Colleagues in French whose class times overlap with ours bring their class for ten minutes or so to the Open House.

The *Cultural Analysis Poster Presentation* replaces the traditional comprehensive final exam or final paper typical to most advanced-level target language courses.

In lieu, students individually create and present a poster for a Poster Presentation Session (mimicking poster presentation sessions at professional conferences). Students select and research a topic of personal interest from their first major, along the course theme of “French for Business and Professions” or “Working Across French-American Cultures.” For example, a former student whose first major was Food Science and second major was French was interested in food hygiene and public safety. She chose to research the safety/health standards and compliant product packaging in the United States and France. After comparing the similarities and differences between the two countries’ approaches and standards (the ‘research part’), she engaged in an interpretive task (the ‘cultural analysis part’) in which she analyzed these similarities and differences and traced them back to varying (broad-based) French and American cultural views on hygiene and consumer safety.

In addition to capturing the cultural studies perspective of the course via the cross-cultural analysis requirement, this final project allows students to extend the cultural content we have been learning together in the course to a topic of special importance and particular relevancy in their own way. Most students, especially those in their final year of study, find this assignment quite exciting and have several topics in mind. For some other students, especially those in their first year or two of study or those who have not yet figured out their major, finding a topic can present some challenges. For those students, the instructor encourages them to reflect on any particular reading or discussion topic that piqued their interest during the semester and then to explore that topic in-depth.

For example, one student from Paris was intrigued that American women heading to the office might be dressed in a suit or a dress and tennis shoes, which was reported in one of the case studies. This student explored this observation, along with others she made herself on campus, in the form of a cross-cultural study and analysis of work attire and image consciousness for both cultures. As previously with the French Open House, again we invite the students in the first- and second-year French courses to attend and see for themselves the connections between French Studies/French LCP and other disciplines. Many language faculty colleagues also attend the poster session in support, and students are prepared to present their content in either French or English.

With regard to exams, the author took inspiration from (a) the fact that “French for Business and Professions” in her program is designated as a course emphasizing oral proficiency development and (b) the previously described “applied humanities” approach. Thus, in designing the four exams for the course, two exams mimic professional means of assessment (i.e., job interviews) and two exams maintain the traditional academic approach of timed essay exams. The timed essay exams are conducted during class time and follow an *explication de texte* format. Students see a selection of citations from course readings that we have spent time analyzing, interpreting, and discussing in class. They have approximately forty-five minutes

to compose their essay response on their selected citation by typing their responses directly into Blackboard.

The “midterm” and “final” exams take the form of oral interview exams. We conduct the midterm as a telephone or Skype interview (15–20 minutes per student). Questions are modeled after Hubbell’s presentation of “l’entretien d’embauche” (chapter 6) but feature content related to the first half of the course. We conduct the final as a Group Exit Interview. Again, modeled after Hubbell’s question types but featuring content related to the second half of the course, the instructor spends 20–30 minutes with groups of three or four students conducting a group interview (the last 5–10 minutes of the Group Exit Interview involve a small group activity). In all written or oral exams, students are asked to summarize key concepts, respond personally to cultural notions discussed in class, and analyze critically particular theories encountered in the readings and class discussions.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, what has most generated favorable student responses and reactions overall, in this author’s experience, has been the revised cultural studies approach she has adopted and the cultural metaphors she has integrated throughout the course. Asselin et Mastron have provided cultural metaphors (iceberg, *lunettes de soleil*, *la pêche et la noix de coco*, etc.) that generate immediate internalization of the cultural content and elicit strong reaction in the students. Drawing inspiration from their approach to culture, we have found a way to make the study of “Business French” much more meaningful and interesting to *all* students enrolled in the course (and even to the instructor). Taking up and emphasizing the notion of *professional culture*, or how North American and French everyday cultures (cultural behaviors, practices, beliefs, values, ideals, etc.) manifest themselves in the global workplace, have proven overwhelmingly effective. Everyone finds this information interesting and beneficial; but more importantly, it provides a fascinating mirror reflecting back on themselves that allows them to see and comprehend American or their own personal culture in a new enlightened perspective.

This author would like to end this article with some suggestions for the continued development of French for professional purposes, which may in turn help to “orient” and strengthen our chances of institutional “survival.” First, the revised approach to “Business French”—the previously-described cultural studies approach—may put us on the path to updating successfully these types of courses for the twenty-first century (especially in terms of the increasingly globalized or transnational workplace environments in which even “Main Street USA” finds itself working now). It may also make the content feel more “relevant,” “applicable,” and “useful” to students, especially to mixed audiences.

Second, for those of us teaching in institutions with strong engineering programs, collaborations with the College of Engineering provide an important trampoline for “second-wave” answers to questions regarding the future of French programs (College of Business having provided “first-wave” answers). Both *Québec*

and France are renowned internationally in all fields of engineering but especially in automotive, civil, and aerospace; and our students must be made aware of this. Moreover, many engineering colleagues may already have contacts with researchers or institutions in Francophone countries that we can exploit. If our institutions have agricultural programs, seek out collaborations there as well, for France and Québec are world leaders in agricultural research, and farming is critical to Western and Central Africa (as well as in Guyana and throughout the Caribbean), places where French still generally exists as the *lingua franca*.

Third, creating service-learning opportunities as extensions to course work may also help. The international non-profit organization *Teachers Without Borders* needs volunteers to help translate into French a variety of teacher professional development resources for schools and teachers in Haiti and Francophone Africa. Similar organizations like *Engineers Without Borders* involve engineering and language faculty and students in civil projects that improve everyday situations of communities of people in Francophone areas. Local civic engagement may also exist as a possibility, as hospitals and other health services around the United States need French translators and interpreters.

Finally, investing in short-term study abroad programs or travel study courses may make a difference. With students and institutions “strapped for cash” and under pressure to minimize the years spent earning a degree, the traditional year- or even semester-long study abroad program may no longer remain an option for the majority of French majors and minors in our programs across the nation. Summer study abroad programs, especially those multi-college programs (programs that offer a mix of courses: L2 language, literature, and culture courses at all levels, but also engineering or business courses instructed in English or available online through the home institution) might be a solution. Certainly not an equal substitute to a semester- or year-long study abroad experience, of course, the goals here with travel courses and short-term study abroad are to give students a “taste” of the professional and academic possibilities that open up when one has international experiences and second (or third, fourth, etc.) language abilities and to orient them toward (continued) French language study at the home institution.

While more suggestions to help orient and sustain our future and many more “Business French” programmatic and course models and ideas certainly exist, this author humbly hopes that this small contribution will help maintain and advance this very important conversation; which again, we have been carrying for more than twenty-five years. The author is happy to share any specific course materials (project guidelines, syllabus, grading rubrics, etc.) from her “French for Business and Professions” course upon personal request by email. Information regarding the French LCP program is available to the public through the author’s institutional website.<sup>3</sup>

## Appendix: Suggested Readings

- [*EMU*: Proceedings, Eastern Michigan University Conference on Languages and Communication for World Business and the Professions, Ypsilanti]
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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Although not specifically discussed or named within the body of this article, the Appendix contains suggested readings that present a chronological history of these key "professional French" issues. This may appeal to some readers looking to develop such a "French for Professions" course or program or who would like to trace the highlights of this discussion across its history.

<sup>2</sup>It is this author's experience that trying to strike a balance between 'progressive' and 'traditional' approaches, forms of assessments, and course assignments proves most successful. For example, one year, the author experimented with eliminating all exams, opting instead for exclusively project-based assessment. The students did not respond favorably, preferring traditional exams over projects (or a balance between the two types) because they felt that projects required too much effort and time.

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