

## **Plus Ça Change: Challenges to Graduate Education under HEA Title VI**

Gilbert W. Merx

University of New Mexico

### **Abstract**

The history of graduate training as a central component of Title VI legislation is reviewed, following which a number of challenges posed by the graduate training function are considered. Graduate education in Title VI-funded centers is largely disciplinary in character, not interdisciplinary, with language and area training as an additional requirement. The demand for persons with such training in government, business, and education is examined in detail using the best available manpower projections. This review suggests that the supply of area-trained specialists produced by Title VI centers is inadequate to meet the projected demand. Intellectual challenges to language and area training are evaluated and found to be lacking in substance.

### **Introduction**

Title VI of the Higher Education Act (HEA), formerly the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), is the only significant instrument through which the federal government provides direct support to institutions of higher education for international education. It is somewhat startling to realize how little has changed in this respect: some sixteen years ago a major study of Title VI conducted by the Rand Corporation for the U.S. Department of Education observed that for international education, “Title VI remained the only game in town” (cited in McDonnell et al. 1981, 11).

Given the issues confronting international education, Title VI means many things to many people. In the beginning, however, Title VI meant one thing to those who framed the NDEA legislation: graduate and professional education. The rationale for NDEA as a whole was narrow and clearly articulated: “To insure trained man-

power of sufficient quality and quantity to meet the national defense needs of the United States” (cited in McDonnell et al. 1981, v).

In the post-Sputnik atmosphere of concern about Soviet achievements in science and technology, the NDEA legislation focused primarily on training in the physical sciences and engineering. However, *prior* to Sputnik the U.S. Office of Education had prepared draft legislation on foreign language and area training. This legislation, according to one contemporary official, had been drafted because

By the mid-1950s responsible people in the Government were beginning to realize that university resources in non-Western studies were wholly inadequate to meet present and anticipated national needs. Some measure of Government assistance to language and area studies seemed essential. (Mildenberger 1966, 26–29<sup>1</sup>)

---

1. Mildenberger organized and headed Title VI programs following passage of NDEA.

The Office of Education's foreign language and area studies draft was incorporated in the NDEA bill as the result of negotiations between Assistant Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Eliot L. Richardson on behalf of the Eisenhower Administration and the sponsors of the legislation, Senator Lister Hill and Representative Carl Elliott (Clowse 1981).

Like all sections of NDEA, the original Title VI emphasized training, in this case of individuals in modern foreign languages "needed by the Federal Government or by business, industry, or education" and "not readily available in the United States." Such individuals were also to be trained "in other fields needed to provide a full understanding of the areas, regions, and countries in which such language is commonly used," including "fields such as history, political science, linguistics, economics, sociology, geography, and anthropology."<sup>2</sup>

In 1966 President Lyndon B. Johnson proposed to the Congress the International Education Act, which called for broad-based programs to internationalize U.S. education in general and promote education exchanges with other nations. The act was passed but never funded, a victim of the rising cost of the Vietnam War and its political consequences. Nevertheless, some of the ideas and assumptions of the International Education Act were to be influential in subsequent reauthorizations of Title VI that expanded the Title VI mandate from its original limited mission (of training specialists to meet national needs) to take on new goals such as outreach, citizen education, internationalizing the undergraduate curriculum, minority recruitment, language research, and support for overseas research centers and library acquisitions of foreign materials.

Unfortunately, proponents of the general education mission have never succeeded in ratcheting international education high enough up the list of national priorities to obtain significant funding. This failure is not for want of trying: efforts have included various attempts at coalition building (such as NCFLIS and CAFLIS), presidential commissions (the Perkins Commission and the Gardner Commission), and special reports (the AAU "Yellow Paper" of 1986). One

major breakthrough in funding a new authorization was obtained by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business for Part B international business education programs. This success relied heavily, however, on the manpower training rationale rather than on the general education rationale. The failure to win large-scale funding for international education as a general component of higher education reflects in part the weakness of higher education vis-à-vis primary and secondary education in the overall context of federal education policy, and in part the vested interest of higher education institutions in protecting larger programs such as the billions of dollars of student aid appropriated through Title IV programs.

The long-term appropriations history of Title VI has been a roller-coaster. The high point in Title VI appropriations, controlling for inflation, was reached under the Johnson Administration. Both the Nixon and Reagan administrations sought to zero-budget Title VI. In both cases, proponents of the specialist training mission were able to rescue Title VI from oblivion, with significant support from the defense and intelligence communities. Reagan's secretary of defense, Caspar Weinberger, actually broke with the White House's Office of Management and the Budget by writing a personal letter to Secretary of Education Ted Bell calling for continuation of Title VI funding to meet the nation's need for language and area specialists.

The rescue effort was inadequate, however, to stem losses in the real value of Title VI appropriations, which fell sharply during the Nixon and Ford administrations, partially recovered toward the end of the Carter Administration, and eroded further during the Reagan Administration. With the advent of the Bush Administration a renewed effort to rally the international education community took place in the form of the Coalition for the Advancement of Foreign Languages and International Studies (CAFLIS). When CAFLIS presented its recommendations after two years of work, however, the result was disagreement within the education community and a lack of interest in both the Administration and the Congress.

The failure of CAFLIS created an incentive for renewed efforts to bolster the programs that were already in place. This led to a "bottom-up" mobilizing effort by groups supporting the existing Title VI legislation. With support from the Dupont Circle higher education presidential

---

2. National Defense Education Act of 1958, as Amended, reproduced in Bigelow and Legters 1964, inside front cover.

associations, representatives of such groups came together to establish the Coalition for International Education (CIE), which now numbers twenty-three organizations.<sup>3</sup>

Since this mobilization effort began in 1990, Title VI appropriations have increased some sixty percent, although remaining below the levels of the mid-1960s in real value.

Among the conclusions that may be drawn from this legislative history, two stand out. First, given the failure of previous attempts in more favorable circumstances to obtain significant funding for a broad effort to internationalize general education, a major expansion of current Title VI authorizations is unlikely to succeed. Second, the graduate and professional training component, or specialist training mission, of Title VI, has been and will continue to be one of the most effective arguments for reauthorization of the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays 102(b)(6) programs that are currently funded.

## Challenges

The specialist training mission as defined by Title VI legislation, is, however, under attack. Indeed the original legislation raised a number of issues that have been the subject of debate during every reauthorization. If the debate is currently more acrimonious it is not that the issues are new, but rather that international education has become the latest battleground in a theoretical struggle that is polarizing the social sciences, particularly economics and political science.

The original legislation called for “training” in foreign languages and other fields contributing to understanding of the areas where the languages were used. What kind of training resulted? Moreover, the legislation was to train individuals needed by the federal government, business, industry, or education. How was this need defined? What are current projections of need and their implications for graduate and professional training? Finally, given changes in

the international context, such as the end of the cold war, and changes in the academic disciplines, such as the rise of rational-choice and game-theoretic modeling, what intellectual challenges are posed for graduate and professional study in international education?

## Training in Practice

Following the language of the authorizing legislation, graduate training under Title VI from the very beginning has consisted of foreign language instruction combined with training in one or more academic disciplines. The standard organizational model adopted by Title VI-funded foreign language and area centers consists of a coordinating center or institute that offers the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), while the more commonly taught languages and courses in the academic disciplines are offered by other departments. The area and international studies faculty are normally employed by other departments and judged by them for tenure and promotion. Graduate degrees, especially Ph.D.s, are normally conferred in a discipline. Department of Education data for all graduate degrees produced by Title VI National Resource Centers in the 1991–94 period show that 91.5% received disciplinary or professional degrees, while only 8.5% received area studies degrees, largely at the M.A. level (Schneider 1995a, 9, Table C). Even those programs that award a graduate degree in study of a foreign area do so through a curriculum based on disciplinary courses offered by departments, usually with a disciplinary major.

Viewing area and international studies in the United States from an international perspective, this organization model is unique. In most other nations with a tradition of foreign-area research and training, as in Russia, France, and China, the model is one of the national academy, or government-funded think tank, a nonuniversity operation with its own staff and students devoted entirely to language training and empirical research. A less common alternative, as in Great Britain, is the free-standing research institute devoted to philology and historical studies of a foreign civilization. In both cases, the distinguishing feature is their nondisciplinary or multidisciplinary character, as opposed to the discipline-centered U.S. system.

3. Among these groups were the Council of Title VI National Resource Center Directors, the Association of International Education Administrators, the Association for International Business Education and Research, and the National Council for the Less Commonly Taught Languages.

The salient feature of graduate training as established under Title VI is that students must meet all the requirements for a disciplinary degree, while in addition mastering a foreign language or languages and obtaining a base of area-specific knowledge. The language component of the training is a technical skill required for research, comparable to statistical training. The area or international studies training provides a base of factual information, a form of empirical knowledge or data. The training components that draw on disciplines other than the major field for the purpose of meeting the language and area requirements are not a substitute for disciplinary requirements, but add-ons. Graduate students emerging from Title VI FLAS and NRC programs are not undertrained in some nondisciplinary or multidisciplinary program, but if anything are extratrained as compared with their disciplinary peers who lack foreign language and area requirements.

Professional training has taken two paths. The training of international management students under Part B of Title VI is precisely analogous to graduate training under Part A. Management students must complete all the standard requirements for the M.B.A. or other terminal degree while developing foreign language skills and empirical knowledge of foreign-area and business practices in those areas. They, too, are extratrained, not undertrained. The second track has been the development of dual degree or parallel track programs in which students simultaneously complete requirements for a professional degree and for a separate area studies degree or certificate. In such cases, again, the professional degree requirements are maintained while the language and area studies are an add-on.

## National Needs

National needs, defined as covering government, business, industry, or education, are broad indeed. Moreover they constitute a moving target. Government needs change from fiscal year to fiscal year, from war to war, from crisis to crisis (e.g., the Cuban missile crisis, the petroleum crisis, the Central American crisis, the debt crisis, the Japanese trade crisis, the Haitian migration crisis, the various Middle Eastern crises). Business and industrial needs can evolve quite

rapidly as well, depending on market forces and changes in the international business environment. Educational needs evolve more gradually, but changes in secular trends for higher education have confounded some past projections of manpower needs.

## Government Needs in Practice

Despite the variability of government demand, there is a surprising consistency over time in estimates of government manpower needs for foreign language and area trained personnel. The most cited and thorough study is that of James R. Ruchti of the U.S. Department of State, prepared in 1979 for the Perkins Commission, which surveyed more than twenty-five agencies and concluded that the federal government employed between 30,000 and 40,000 individuals whose jobs required competence in a foreign language, and that of these persons between 14,000 and 19,000 were in positions that required skills in the analysis of foreign countries and international issues.<sup>4</sup> Although estimates of declining government employment have been assumed to reduce the need for foreign language skills in the federal government, this was not evident in the mid-1990s. The most recent survey of foreign language needs at thirty-three federal agencies, undertaken by Stuart P. Lay in 1995, concludes that these agencies have over 34,000 positions that require foreign language proficiency, of which an estimated 60 percent are found in the defense and intelligence community (Lay 1995). Anecdotal evidence suggests that reductions in force since 1995 may have lowered these figures in the non-defense government sectors, but the preponderance of defense and intelligence employment would reduce the effect of such reductions. If 30,000 positions is taken as a possible lower-end estimate to account for reductions, and it is assumed that because of the relatively high turnover of military personnel, 20 percent of the federal positions will require replacement in any

---

4. James R. Ruchti, "The U.S. Government Employment of Foreign-area and International Specialists," paper prepared for the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, cited at length in Berryman et al. 1979, 75-114.

given year, a replacement need of 6,000 government positions per year can be estimated.

## **Business Needs in Practice**

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the U.S. business climate has altered with respect to the need for language and area skills. In the 1970s, U.S. business was widely seen as uncompetitive on world markets and lagging in productivity. A survey from this period indicates that less than one percent of jobs at 1,266 U.S. firms, which accounted for the great majority of industrial exports, required foreign language skills. Nevertheless, there were 57,000 jobs at these firms that required or benefited from foreign language skills (Wilkins and Arnett 1976). Given the predominance of employment in small firms as opposed to large industrial firms, this was clearly an underestimation of private sector demand at that time. Adding an equal-sized small-firm component leads to an estimate of about 100,000 positions, which with a 10 percent turnover would have required replacement of 10,000 positions per year. Since the 1970s, the share of the U.S. gross national product resulting from international trade has quadrupled. It is therefore reasonable to assume that employment in the private sector of personnel with foreign language and area skills has increased by several magnitudes. Even if such employment has only doubled since the 1970s, the business sector would need to fill 20,000 positions per year involving foreign language and area competence.

## **Educational Needs in Practice**

The 1970s recession in higher education employment, combined with the Nixon-inspired drop in Title VI funding, led to gloomy projections about the future academic demand for language, international, and area-trained personnel (see, for example, the extended discussion in Berryman et al. 1979, 30–74). There was also a concomitant reduction in the production of international and area studies Ph.D.s as compared with the 1960s. However, the optimistic projections of the Barber and Ilchman study of 1979 proved more accurate: they noted that tenured area studies faculty were significantly older than the general

tenured faculty population, and predicted a surge of retirements over the next ten years (Barber and Ilchman 1979). The academic employment market for language and foreign-area specialists was indeed strong during the 1980s.

Another dimension of change in higher education created additional need for foreign language, international, and area studies faculty, namely the expansion of public sector undergraduate teaching institutions, most notably community colleges and branch campuses. The growth of this sector included a substantial and largely unforeseen growth in international education activities, including the teaching of language, international, and to a lesser extent, foreign-area content courses. By the end of the 1980s a sizable proportion of members of the foreign-area studies associations were located at undergraduate teaching institutions.

The present juncture resembles the 1970s as a time of recession in higher education funding, leading to recent pessimism about the future demand for Ph.D.s in all fields. This has contributed to a sense of crisis in the Title VI community. There are, however, signs that the faculty job market is strengthening. Unemployment among Ph.D.s dropped by more than one-third in 1995–96 as compared with the previous year, and all major professional associations report increased postings of job announcements. Some 868 foreign language positions were listed by the MLA alone in 1996 (Magner 1997, A9–A10). Because the 1960s were a period of great expansion in American higher education, a substantial proportion of faculty hired then are now nearing retirement. In addition, foreign language and area studies grew even more rapidly than higher education as a whole in the 1960s, suggesting that massive retirements will take place during the next decade. The numbers can be estimated with some degree of confidence.

The total membership of the five major area studies associations, which cover Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, was approximately 16,000 in 1990 (NCASA 1991). This compares with a 1979 membership in all area studies associations of about 18,000. If the 1990 memberships of the smaller area studies associations such as Brazilian, Canadian, European, and Caribbean studies are added to those of the five major associations, the total remains approximately 18,000, about the same as in 1979

(Barber and Ilchman 1979, 15). Although only about two-thirds of the area studies associations' membership are faculty, not all foreign-area studies faculty belong to these associations. Past studies have therefore estimated that total membership in the area studies association provide a good approximation of faculty employment in foreign-area studies (Lambert et al. 1984, 13). These figures do not include the sizable cohort of faculty members in international studies or international relations programs who belong to other professional associations such as the International Studies Association.

Detailed projections of retirement patterns based on the age cohorts of the area studies associations' membership were prepared in 1991 by the National Council of Area Studies Associations, which represents the five major area studies associations. Exit rates of present humanities and social science faculty were based on respondents' plans to retire, estimated at 16.9% for 1997 through 2001 and at 16.8% for 2002 through 2007, for a total of 33.7%, or one-third of current faculty. These estimations do not include projections of exits due to morbidity or mortality based on the age structure of the cohorts, which would, if included, lead to an overall exit rate of approximately 40%. Using the latter figure and assuming that exiting faculty are replaced but there is no growth in academic demand, 40% or 7,000 of the current 18,000 area studies faculty will need to be replaced in the next ten years, or 700 positions per year.

Estimating the need for foreign language teachers, as opposed to area studies faculty, is more difficult. Two sources of information exist—membership in professional organizations and surveys of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education. Comparing the estimates resulting from each source can be useful in assessing their validity.

Some 9,000 members of the Modern Language Association list their major field as involving a foreign language, a figure that includes a high proportion of foreign literature faculty. Applied linguists or language teachers are more likely to belong to one of the six major associations of foreign language teachers. Combined membership in the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP), the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG), the American Association of

Teachers of Russian (AATR), the American Association of Teachers of Italian (AATI), and the Association of Teachers of Japanese (ATJ) totals 35,000 persons.<sup>5</sup> The largest group, the AATSP, has 13,000 members, of which 3,000 are institutional or student members and 10,000 are teachers. Seventy percent of the teachers are at the K-12 level and 30% are postsecondary. The executive director of AATSP estimates that the total number of Spanish and Portuguese teachers is 45,000, which means that only 22% of these teachers are AATSP members.

The AATF membership is 10,500, of which 60% are K-12 teachers and 40% are postsecondary faculty.

The executive director of the AATF estimates that 50% of French teachers are AATF members, but other estimates are as low as 25%, suggesting a total population of French teachers ranging from 21,000 to 42,000 persons. Using a midrange estimate of 33%, there would be about 32,000 French teachers.

The next four associations of German, Italian, Russian, and Japanese teachers have about 12,000 members combined, and the ratio of postsecondary faculty is probably higher. If the ratio of members to nonmembers is in the midrange of the two estimates for French teachers, or 33%, there should be an estimated total of 36,000 teachers in these four languages combined.

Adding the figures for Spanish, French, and the other four major languages together provides a figure of 113,000 teachers of the six most commonly taught foreign languages. Assuming that the AATF division of 60% K-12 teachers and 40% postsecondary is representative of these six languages as a whole, since Spanish has a higher percentage of K-12 teachers and the remaining four languages have a lower percentage, these findings suggest a total of 80,000 K-12 language teachers and 33,000 postsecondary language teachers, for a total of 113,000 persons, not including teachers of the least-commonly taught languages (LCTLs).

The National Center for Education Statistics survey found that in 1993 there were about 7,000 foreign language teachers at the elementary level and about 74,000 teachers at the secondary level, for a total of 81,000 teachers. This

---

5. Data provided by Richard Brod, Office of Special Projects, Modern Language Association, January 1997.

is almost identical to the estimate described above.<sup>6</sup> The same study found that there were an estimated 21,000 postsecondary language faculty. The combined NCES totals indicate that there were a total of 102,000 foreign language teachers in the United States in 1993.

Accepting the 80,000 figure for K-12 teachers and assuming a 10% turnover rate, which seems reasonable given the relatively high turnover rates for K-12 teachers, the annual K-12 demand for foreign language teachers is about 8,000 positions. Moreover, the data suggest a shortage of properly trained teachers. Twenty-five percent of those teaching foreign languages had neither a college major nor minor in the language taught. One-half of the private schools and one-third of the public schools reported vacant foreign language positions in the 1993–94 academic year. Twenty percent of the private schools and 26% of the public schools reported that it was very difficult or impossible to fill foreign language posts.<sup>7</sup> Thus effective demand is probably higher than 8,000 positions annually in the K-12 sector.

If the estimate for postsecondary language teachers is based on a midrange figure between the NCES survey figure of 21,000 and the calculation of 33,000 based on association memberships, the resulting number of higher education language teachers is 27,000. To this figure can be added the 9,000 MLA members who work in a foreign language, as a modest proxy for the foreign literature faculty. No adjustment is made for the foreign literature faculty who are not MLA members, in compensation for the language teachers who might hold MLA membership. The combined foreign language and literature faculty in higher education can thus be estimated at 36,000 persons. If the exit projection of 40 percent for area studies faculty over the next decade is applied to the estimated total of 36,000 postsecondary language and literature faculty, an additional 14,000 positions would need to be filled in the next decade, or 1,400 positions annually.

Combining the language and literature estimate of 1,400 annual positions with the area studies estimate of 700 annual positions leads to a higher education demand of 2,100 positions

annually over the next decade. Adding the previous estimate of 8,000 foreign language vacancies annually in the K-12 system to the higher education figures results in an overall demand from the education sector for 10,100 foreign language or area trained personnel annually.

## Overall Demand and Supply

In short, the national need in federal government, business, and higher education for personnel who have foreign language skills and international and foreign-area knowledge will be substantial in the decade ahead. Additional demand from state and local government and from secondary education may also be expected. Overseas employment offers another, as yet unexplored, source of demand. Annual demand over the decade is estimated at 20,000 business jobs, 6,000 government jobs, and 10,000 education jobs, or an annual demand for 36,000 language or area-trained personnel.

The supply side of the equation is far simpler to estimate, as are the implications for Title VI legislation. The number of FLAS awards currently funded does not come close to meeting even the academic demand, although it is an obvious stimulus for attracting superior students. The overall annual production of Ph.D.s by Title VI centers was about 1,400 per year in the early 1990s. Beginning in 1993 there was a substantial increase in the number of universities receiving NRC or FLAS funding, leading to a jump of Ph.D. production to about 1,900 language and area-trained personnel (Schneider 1995b). This number is still less than the estimated annual higher education demand for 2,100 foreign language or area studies faculty over the next decade.

The production of M.A. degrees by Title VI centers is far higher, reaching about 6,000 per year from 1991 to 1994 (Schneider 1995b). This number is far below the annual combined demand of about 14,000 persons coming from the K-12 education sector and the federal government.

Production of B.A.s by Title VI centers approximated 27,000 students annually by the early 1980s. These students provide the major pool of recruits for later graduate and professional study involving foreign languages and areas, although most enter the job market. If the

6. Data provided by Jeffery Rodamar, Office of Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Education, personal communication, January 1997.

7. Data provided by Rodamar.

annual number of M.A. graduates—6,000 persons—is used as a proxy for the number of B.A. graduates entering graduate school, then presumably 21,000 of the B.A. graduates enter the job market. Likewise, the annual number of Ph.D.s produced—1,900 persons—can be used as a proxy for the number of M.A.s entering doctoral programs, leaving 4,000 to enter the job market. Thus a combined total of 25,000 B.A. and M.A. graduates with foreign language or area training enter the job market, compared with an overall demand in business, government, and K-12 education estimated above at 34,000 positions.

*These data suggest that even without further growth in patterns of government, business, and educational employment, the production by Title VI Centers of personnel with foreign language training or foreign-area skills remains insufficient to meet the nation's needs.*

As a consequence, the federal government spends considerable sums of money on in-house government training programs, such as the Department of Defense's Defense Language Institute (DLI), the National Security Agency's National Cryptologic School (NCS), and the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI). The DLI and the NCS together train about 4,600 students annually. The Department of Defense alone spent over \$78 million to train linguists to meet its need, considerably more than the cost of all Title VI programs (Lay 1995, ch. 1, p. 1). In-house foreign language training at the FSI cost an additional \$10 million. These figures do not include the salaries of the personnel who are being trained.

It should be noted in passing, however, that at least two Department of Defense programs draw on institutions of higher education to meet future needs for foreign language and area competence. The U.S. Army Foreign-area Officer (FAO) Program annually sends approximately 100 midcareer officers to Title VI centers to obtain graduate degrees in preparation for overseas assignments in embassies, foreign war colleges, or military aid missions. The National Security Education Program provides on a competitive basis portable scholarships and fellowships to students undertaking foreign language and area training, as well as grants to enhance the institutional capacity for such training.

## Intellectual Challenges

The intellectual content of graduate and professional training under Title VI has been grounded in one basic assumption, namely that the combination of language learning, area knowledge, and disciplinary training will result in individuals capable of meeting national needs. Conceptually, this model of training differs from standard graduate and professional training only in that the language of investigation is not English and the locus of empirical information is not the United States. The usefulness of foreign language skills and knowledge of foreign areas to government agencies, corporations, and others engaged in international activities is not in question. However, some academicians are questioning the usefulness of language skills and area knowledge in higher education, while some in the government and the corporate sectors are challenging the usefulness of disciplinary training. The two challenges are diametrically opposed, and lead to opposite prescriptions for Title VI graduate and professional education.

The origin of these challenges does not stem from changes in the global system but from theoretical trends in the social sciences. These changes began with what is now known as neo-classical economics, based on the assumption that all economics can be reduced to rational choices by individuals, and therefore treated mathematically as the maximization of functions. With true revolutionary zeal, adherents of this reductionist and deductive approach to theorizing have transformed the discipline of economics as practiced in higher education. New applications of the rational-choice assumption have become highly influential, such as rational-expectation monetarism, general equilibrium theory, and game theory. Because these theories are derived from the articulation of mathematical models rather than from empirical generalizations based on the collection of data about the real world, graduate training in economics has been transformed. Economic history, the history of economic thought, and development economics have been largely dropped from the graduate curriculum and replaced by courses in mathematics and modeling. One of the consequences has been a sharp decline in both undergraduate and graduate economics enrollments. Twenty years ago more than three-quarters of graduate

students in economics were U.S. citizens; today more than half are foreigners (Cassidy 1996).

From economics, the rational-choice approach traveled to political science, where a similar transformation of the discipline is underway. Again, the approach is essentially deductive and driven by the elaboration of mathematical models. Rational-choice proponents dismiss empirically based political science, however quantitative, as behaviorism, useful in its day but now passé. One of the major battlegrounds in the struggle over the future of political science is comparative politics, a field of key importance in foreign-area studies. A leading rational-choice advocate, Robert Bates, has recently written that “area programs are a problem for political science,” characterized by “resistance to rigorous methods for evaluating arguments,” and “have failed to generate scientific knowledge” (cited in Shea 1997).

The definition of scientific knowledge is key to this debate. The philosophy of science, derived from the epistemological issues faced by the natural sciences, argues that science proceeds through a process of interaction between theory and research, between models and empirical data derived from the real world. Inductive or deductive rigor in the development of theory and methodological rigor in the collection of data are essential, but the validity of scientific theory is ultimately determined not by the coherence of the theoretical model, but rather by the correspondence between the theoretical model and the real world.

Thus from a scientific perspective, the issue posed by the rise of rational-choice models in economics and political science is not whether such models are rigorous, for indeed they are, but whether they correspond to the real world. Criticisms of area studies for being insufficiently mathematical or deductive are also beside the point, since foreign areas are simply the source of information about the real world.

A growing, and in some views, overwhelming body of evidence suggests that neoclassical economics fails to correspond to the real world. John Cassidy’s recent *New Yorker* essay (1996) on “The Decline of Economics” notes that game theory simply can’t predict what will happen in any real-world situation, and that rational-expectations monetarism has been largely discredited. Joseph Stiglitz, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, states that “It’s very clear that the new classical economics is irrele-

vant.” The chairman of the National Association of Business Economists is quoted as saying that “Academic economics has taken a very bad turn in the road. It’s very academic, very mathematical, and nothing like as useful to the business community as it could be.” The head of the global economics group at Morgan Stanley adds that his company will not hire economics Ph.D.s unless they also have substantial experience outside academia, and says “We insist on at least a three-to-four-year cleansing experience to neutralize the brainwashing experience that takes place in these graduate programs.” In 1991 the Commission on Graduate Education in Economics issued a report saying it feared that universities were turning out a generation of “*idiots savant*, skilled in techniques but innocent of real economic issues.”<sup>8</sup>

Similar questions are being raised by employers of students trained in schools that have adopted the rational-choice approach to political science. A senior international-relations specialist in the Department of Defense commented recently about changes in the graduate curriculum and the impact on recent graduates: “They have taken no courses in diplomatic history or world history, they know nothing about international law, they speak no foreign languages, they have no knowledge of foreign countries or areas. All they can do is mathematical models. They are useless until they are retrained.”<sup>9</sup>

Thus, while some academicians such as Bates are asking what foreign-area studies have contributed to rational-choice theory, those in government and the private sector appear to be asking what rational-choice theory has contributed to understanding the world, including foreign areas. From the standpoint of graduate and professional training as part of the Title VI mission, the implications are fairly straightforward. Language skills and area knowledge cannot be abandoned as irrelevant or useless, since these components of training are those most valued by government, business, and other nonacademic employers. At the same time, disciplinary training is required for students to remain competitive on the academic market. Rational-choice approaches represent a deductive technique that has proven useful in the elaboration of sophisti-

8. All quotes drawn from Cassidy 1996.

9. Confidential interview with the author, October 27, 1996.

cated heuristic models. It will be necessary that foreign-area students in economics or political science master the theoretical and methodological tools of their fields, including, as appropriate, the calculus of rational-choice theorizing.

The problem for graduate and professional training in Title VI centers and, for that matter, in the social sciences at large, is not rational-choice theory itself but rather the imperialistic vision of some rational-choice advocates. The promotion of social science as an activity limited to deductive and reductionist theorizing that is not grounded in real-world observation will inevitably lead to failure. The common-sense middle ground that combines rigorous modeling and vigorous empirical research to produce theoretical generalizations that predict real-world events must be recaptured. Foreign language as a research tool and foreign-area studies as a source of empirical knowledge are part of the solution, not part of the problem.

## Conclusion

Title VI is a small program in the context of the federal education budget, but it is relatively large for a categorical program in higher education. It has also been extraordinarily effective on many campuses in leveraging additional resources for graduate and professional training, among other mandated activities. Given the invidious character of academic culture, jealousy is inevitable. Nearly twenty-five years ago, Richard Lambert remarked upon “the force of negative feelings towards area studies of some non-area oriented American scholars” (Lambert 1973, 2). The players may be different, and the lyrics may be rational choice rather than functionalism, but the melody lingers on.

The graduate and professional training function of Title VI will survive the sniping from colleagues in the academy. Title VI will remain a federal priority for the same reason that it was introduced, namely the sense that knowledge is preferable to ignorance when dealing with a hazardous environment. The congressional testimony of Admiral Bobby Inman, former director of the National Security Agency and former deputy director of the CIA, remains relevant as well as eloquent:

My concern has grown as I have watched us become subject to surprise time and again. We

have become very good at counting things and very poor at projecting the challenges that we are likely to face. I believe increasingly that is a result of the lack of deep understanding of those societies, what motivates them, and how they are changing. (Inman 1983, 2)

## References

- Barber, Elinore G., and Warren Ilchman. 1979. *International Studies Review*. New York: The Ford Foundation.
- Berryman, Sue E., et al. 1979. *Foreign Language and International Studies Specialists: The Marketplace and National Policy*. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation (September).
- Bigelow, Donald N., and Lyman H. Legters. 1964. *NDEA Language and Area Centers: A Report on the First Five Years*. Prepared for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Cassidy, John. 1996. “The Decline of Economics.” *New Yorker* (December 2): 30–40.
- Clowse, Barbara Barksdale. 1981. *Brainpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and the National Defense Education Act of 1958*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Inman, Bobby. 1983. “Defense Intelligence: Foreign-Area/Language Needs and Academia.” Paper prepared for the Association of American Universities, SRI International (October).
- Lambert, Richard D. 1973. *Language and Area Studies Review*. Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, Monograph 17 (October).
- Lambert, Richard D., et al. 1984. *Beyond Growth: The Next Stage in Language and Area Studies*. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Universities.
- Lay, Stuart P. 1995. “Foreign Language and the Federal Government: Interagency Coordination and Policy.” University of Maryland, M.A. Thesis.
- Magner, Denise K. 1997. “Job Market for Ph.D.s Shows First Signs of Improvement, But Uncertainty Remains.” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (January 31): A9–A10.
- McDonnell, Lorraine M., et al. 1981. *Federal Support for International Studies: The Role of NDEA Title VI*. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation.
- Mildenberger, Kenneth W. 1966. “The Federal Government and the Universities.” In *International Education: Past, Present, Problems and Pros*. Prepared for the Task Force on International Education, John Brademas, chairman, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- National Council of Area Studies Associations

- (NCASA). 1991. *Prospects for Faculty in Area Studies*. Stanford, CA: National Council of Area Studies Associations.
- Schneider, Ann Imlah. 1995a. "Title VI FLAS Fellowship Awards, 1991–1994." Memorandum to directors of Title VI centers and fellowship programs. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Center for International Education (September 15).
- . 1995b. "1991–94 Center Graduates: Their Disciplines and Career Choices." Memorandum to directors of Title VI centers and fellowship programs. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Center for International Education (September 26).
- Shea, Christopher. 1997. "Political Scientists Clash Over Value of Area Studies." *Chronicle of Higher Education* (January 10): A13–A14.
- Wilkins, Earnest J., and M. Rex Arnett. 1976. *Languages for the World of Work*. Salt Lake City: Olympus Research Corporation.