

**Project LINC (Learning in INclusive Classrooms)**, a three-year federal grant (2008-2011) funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education, is developing a professional training curriculum to support new, part-time, and temporary foreign language instructors in teaching college students with disabilities. The Standards of Foreign Language Learning (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Inc) and Universal Design for Instruction (Scott, McGuire, & Shaw, 2001) serve as the framework for promoting inclusive classroom techniques that benefit students with disabilities as well as other diverse learners.

**Listed below are some of our current data collection and research activities. Please feel free to contact us for more information.**

**Student Focus Groups:** Student focus groups were conducted to gather initial information about learning experiences and perceived classroom climate in foreign language courses. One focus group consisted of students with a variety of disclosed disabilities who were registered with the Office of Disability Services. A second focus group was comprised of students without disclosed disabilities. In describing effective foreign language classrooms, both groups emphasized the importance of instructional strategies such as engaging learning activities, multi-sensory presentation of material, use of humor, and use of a variety of media. Students with disabilities placed greater emphasis on the qualities of the instructor, including willingness to work with individuals, being organized, allowing for small errors, providing clear expectations, and promoting student confidence.

Outcomes of the student focus groups have guided the project's Leadership and Development Team in identifying workshop topics and strategies for faculty training.

## Research and Evaluation

### Project LINC team:

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**Student Interviews:** Individual student interviews were conducted with seven students with diverse disabilities. Using a structured interview format, students were asked about learning foreign languages both at college and in other environments. The interview protocol was constructed around the following topics: perceptions of learning foreign languages, differences between studying foreign language in high school and college, classroom atmosphere and community, connection with faculty, group work, and advice for new foreign language instructors. Qualitative data analysis is underway. Emerging research themes include professor characteristics, group work, use of accommodations in a foreign language course, classroom settings, and target language use.

**Faculty Participant Feedback and Reflections:** A core group of new, part time, and temporary foreign language instructors at Longwood University have been actively engaged in the development and piloting of the Foundation Workshop and six Topical Workshops that will comprise the core Project LINC training curriculum. Faculty have evaluated and provided feedback on workshop content and delivery. Participants have provided ongoing input on information needs and topics of interest to support enhancing inclusive practices in the classroom.

One-to-one interviews were conducted at mid-year to encourage participant reflection and provide additional feedback on workshop content and impact. Participant feedback has been positive overall. In addition to increased knowledge about and comfort with teaching students with disabilities, many of the participants reported that their perceptions of students with disabilities had changed in a positive way since beginning the project. They report designing and teaching their foreign language courses with greater awareness of potential barriers to students and specific efforts to promote a more inclusive learning environment for all students.

**Inclusive Instructional Strategies:** A research study is currently underway, using Delphi methodology, to identify those inclusive instructional practices most recommended by experts in the field of foreign language learning and students with disabilities. An extensive review of current, peer reviewed studies concerning foreign language learning and students with disabilities has been completed and the survey instrument is under development. Through a series of feedback opportunities, experts in the field will assist in developing and prioritizing a list of inclusive instructional strategies recommended for foreign language classrooms. These findings will be incorporated into the final LINC curriculum. Outcomes of the study are anticipated in winter 2011.