AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF ARTS & SCIENCES

AMERICA'S LANGUAGES

Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century

COMMISSION ON LANGUAGE LEARNING

Acknowledgments

America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century is the American Academy's response to a bipartisan request from four members of the United States Senate and four members of the House of Representatives to examine the following questions:

How does language learning influence economic growth, cultural diplomacy, the productivity of future generations, and the fulfillment of all Americans? What actions should the nation take to ensure excellence in all languages as well as international education and research, including how we may more effectively use current resources to advance language learning?

This request followed, and was inspired by, the important work of the Academy's Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences and its 2013 report, *The Heart of the Matter: The Humanities and Social Sciences for a Vibrant, Competitive, and Secure Nation. The Heart of the Matter* included a strong endorsement for the development of intercultural skills, including language learning. The bipartisan request asked the Academy to expand upon and elaborate that recommendation.

The Academy created its Commission on Language Learning in 2015 to gather data, collect testimony, and discuss opportunities for improving the nation's capacity in non-English languages. In late 2016, the Commission, in collaboration with the Academy's Humanities Indicators project, published *The State of Languages in the U.S.: A Statistical Portrait,* which offers a quantitative analysis of our language capacity, focusing on the U.S. education system. *America's Languages* draws from this data to offer a series of concrete recommendations for schools, two- and four-year colleges, universities, community organizations, businesses, government agencies, philanthropists, students, and parents—all of whom have a role to play in preparing citizens to thrive in the twenty-first century. As the Commission writes in this report's introduction: "It is critical that we work together at this moment in history, when there is so much to gain by participating in a multilingual world, and so much to lose if we remain stubbornly monolingual."

The Academy is grateful to the members of Congress who requested this study: Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin), Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah), Mark Kirk (R-Illinois), and Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii); and Representatives Rush Holt (D-New Jersey), Leonard Lance (R-New Jersey), David E. Price (D-North Carolina), and Don Young (R-Alaska).

We offer special thanks to Commission chair, Paul LeClerc, director of Columbia Global Centers-Paris and former president of the New York Public Library, whose active engagement and steady leadership made this work possible. Thanks as well goes to all the Commission members, whose expertise, creativity, and dedication are evident in the pages that follow. (See page 43 for the biographies of all Commission members.)

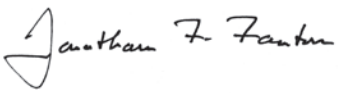
The Commission sought advice from a wide range of experts over the past two years. We are grateful to all of them for their insights and their suggestions for improving this report, including Douglas Massey (Princeton University), Catherine E. Snow (Harvard University), Philip J. Deloria (University of Michigan), Helen Hardacre (Harvard University), Kenji Hakuta (Stanford University), William P. Rivers (Joint National Committee for Languages, National Council for Languages and International Studies), Richard D. Brecht (American Councils for International Education), Eva Caldera (National Endowment for the Humanities), Stephen Kidd (National Humanities Alliance), Esther Mackintosh (Federation of State Humanities Councils), Maureen McLaughlin (U.S. Department of Education), Mohamed Abdel-Kader (U.S. Department of Education), Carol J. Erting (Gallaudet University), Meriwynn Mansori (VIF International Education), Gilles Bousquet (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Anandini Yoganathan (British Academy), Nelke van Dussen-Scholl (Yale University), Fernando Rubio (The University of Utah), Johanna Watzinger-Tharp (The University of Utah), and Jane Hacking (The University of Utah).

The Commission is grateful to have received briefing essays from several leading scholars: Terrence Wiley, Beatriz Arias, Jennifer Renn, and Shereen Bhalla from the Center for Applied Linguistics; William P. Rivers from the JNCL-NCLIS; Richard D. Brecht from the American Councils for International Education; Judith F. Kroll and Paola E. Dussias from the Pennsylvania State University; and Gail H. McGinn from the U.S. Department of Defense, retired. These essays are now available at www.amacad.org/language.

Thanks as well to the members of the Academy's Board of Directors, Council, and Trust for their leadership, advice, and support for this project, and to the Academy staff who ably served this Commission and prepared this report: John Tessitore, Julian Kronick, Esha Senchaudhuri, Robert Townsend, Carolyn Fuqua, Phyllis Bendell, Heather Mawhiney, Peter Walton, and Scott Raymond.

Finally, the Academy gratefully acknowledges the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Henry Luce Foundation for supporting the Commission on Language Learning, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities for supporting the Humanities Indicators.

We hope you will find this report informative and useful, and that you will find ways to implement its recommendations in your own communities. We also look forward to hearing your thoughts about this report and about other ways to support language education in the United States.



Jonathan F. Fanton
President
American Academy of Arts and Sciences