Hawai‘i Increases Global Competitiveness with Language Roadmap Initiative

In response to Congressional interest in 2006, NSEP's Language Flagship developed a pilot language roadmap effort to help states better answer the demand from government and business for their educational systems to produce young professionals with language and cultural skills. Following in the footsteps of Oregon, Texas, Ohio, Utah, and Rhode Island, the state of Hawai‘i, in partnership with the Language Flagship and the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, recently implemented its own Language Roadmap Initiative.

This great resource outlines initiatives, policies, and partnerships that can help Hawai‘i develop into a globally competitive workforce that serves the state's language needs and fuels its economic goals. The Language Roadmap Initiative is ideal for a state as linguistically diverse as Hawai‘i; the 2012 U.S. Census for Hawai‘i reveals that one in four households uses a language other than English at home. This unique linguistic diversity will help foster the development of a highly proficient multilingual workforce that can then respond to the needs of various communities throughout the state.

The Hawai‘i Language Roadmap Initiative includes an extensive list of key educational and economic factors for achieving the program's goals. For example, the initiative calls for a public service announcement campaign and career day program to help educate the public about the vital role of multilingual employees in both the private and public sectors. Additionally, the roadmap looks to create and implement the World Language Initiative, which will include occupation-related language programs to address immediate workforce language needs, K-12 initiatives (such as dual language immersion), heritage speaker programs, the creation of a state language proficiency certificate, and the expansion of study abroad opportunities. Retaining multilingual talent for key economic sectors and improving translation and interpretation training and certification will also play a vital role in the Language Roadmap Initiative.

JNCL-NCLIS would like to congratulate and thank all those involved in developing and implementing the Hawai‘i Language Roadmap Initiative. We are excited by the prospective growth of Hawai‘i's global education opportunities, and we hope that other states will follow in the effort to create a nationwide multilingual and global citizenry. Read more about the initiative at http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/languageroadmap/.