Language | Culture | Readiness

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF PROJECT GLOBAL OFFICER

An initiative to build capacity for critical languages, regional expertise and intercultural communication skills within the officer corps

PROJECT GO

Project Global Officer is an initiative of the National Security Education Program sponsored by the Defense Language and National Security Education Office (DLNSEO), and administered by the Institute of International Education.
“I enrolled in Persian (Dari) for two separate summers at Indiana University. I had some experience with Near Eastern languages and cultures but my breadth of knowledge was greatly widened as Project GO exposed me to Persian language and cultural studies. Having the ability to describe the intricate history and cultural nuances of Afghanistan while being able to carry on general conversations and comprehend major concepts in Persian media gave me a very rare capability which I knew the DoD found to be critical.”

—Air Force First Lieutenant Andrew Kibellus
Persian, Indiana University (2012, 2013)

“I always had an interest in humanitarian work, particularly in Africa. Having a language and cultural experience like Project GO has opened up doors to military and military related jobs. I had the opportunity to join the Society of American Military Engineers humanitarian team on a trip to Uganda for a drinking water project. My experience with Project GO was instrumental, as I took the role of the cultural expert for the humanitarian team. I was able to communicate clearly and effectively with the local populace to help them understand the work we were doing.”

—Air Force Second Lieutenant Andrew Fenner
Swahili, James Madison University (2013, 2014)

“Project GO expanded my language, regional expertise, and culture skills by focusing not only on increasing my linguistic capabilities, but by also explaining and allowing me to interact in the culture, to help me better understand the values, interests, and beliefs of the culture I was studying. Project GO influenced my decision to apply in the Language Enabled Airman Program because it increased my interest in learning a new language, and I wanted to continue to do so in my Air Force career.”

—Air Force Second Lieutenant Carrera Burris
Arabic, California State University, San Bernardino (2012, 2014)
For the past 10 years, Project Global Officer (Project GO) has built a talent pipeline through the expansion of critical language education, overseas study, and intercultural dialogue opportunities for future military officers nationwide. As a result of the Department of Defense Language Transformation Roadmap published in 2005, the National Security Education Program launched Project GO as a pilot program in 2007 to strengthen language, regional expertise, and culture capabilities in support of the defense strategy. Since 2007, Project GO has funded over 4,000 Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) students to study critical languages, both domestic and overseas, during the summer.

Project GO partners with Army, Naval, and Air Force ROTC Headquarters, U.S. institutions of higher education with significant ROTC enrollments, and Senior Military Colleges to advance ROTC students’ critical language capabilities to meet the current and emerging needs of the Department of Defense. Project GO responds to the changing global security environment by expanding the critical languages offered to ROTC students, ensuring they are positioned to apply their critical language and cross-cultural communication capabilities as future military officers. After participating in a Project GO program, many alumni have been accepted into programs designed to sustain and improve critical language skills, such as the Air Force’s Language Enabled Airman Program. Project GO students have also furthered their study through the ROTC Language Flagship Program and the Boren Scholarships and Fellowships Program.

Project GO alumni return from the program with well-developed language, regional expertise, and culture capabilities that they apply to their current studies and future missions. These skills serve as a force multiplier for the Services since 32% of Project GO cadets and midshipmen are science, technology, engineering, and math majors. Project GO enables ROTC students nationwide to develop the skills needed to become dynamic and effective military leaders.

As Director of the Defense Language and National Security Education Office, I am proud of Project GO’s success in supporting our mission to lead the nation in recruiting, training, sustaining, and enhancing language and culture capabilities to ensure national security and defense readiness for tomorrow’s mission requirements.

Dr. Michael Nugent

Director, Defense Language and National Security Education Office
Director, National Security Education Program
U.S. Department of Defense
Project GO is a collaborative initiative that promotes critical language education, overseas study, and intercultural dialogue opportunities for ROTC students. Sponsored by the Defense Language and National Security Education Office and administered by the Institute of International Education, Project GO provides institutional grants to 24 U.S. institutions of higher education. The program began in 2007 with the goal of developing future military officers to possess the necessary linguistic and cross-cultural communication skills required for effective leadership for all the Services in the 21st century operational environment.

In 2007, Project GO awarded grants to four institutions proposing projects to increase the number of ROTC students studying critical languages. In the last 10 years, 36 U.S. institutions of higher education have received grant funding through the program, including all six of the Senior Military Colleges (SMCs), to provide language and culture training for ROTC students across the Services, funding domestic and overseas ROTC language programs and scholarships. Over 4,000 students have participated from universities in 48 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

Project GO is the only source of funding available exclusively for Army, Naval, and Air Force ROTC students to study critical languages domestically during the summer and is the most accessible and flexible source of funding for summer language study overseas.

Students have achieved varied levels of proficiency in the 19 critical languages offered in the program since 2007, and language offerings continue to evolve in response to the global security environment. Project GO languages currently include Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian (Dari, Farsi, and Tajik), Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, and Urdu.

Project GO has demonstrated that ROTC students are able to achieve success in critical language learning through flexible language training at U.S. institutions. Project GO continues to strengthen its program model in order to develop future military officers with the language skills and cultural capabilities necessary to meet existing and emerging needs within the Department of Defense.
Project GO, originally titled the ROTC Language and Culture Project, was launched as a result of the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap published in February 2005. Project GO directly addresses two of the four goals identified in the Roadmap: 1) create foundational language and cultural expertise in the force; and 2) establish a cadre of language specialists. In 2007, Project GO awarded grants to four institutions proposing projects aimed to increase the number of ROTC students studying critical languages. The initial grant recipients were Indiana University, San Diego State University, University of Mississippi, and the University of Texas-Austin.

During the pilot years, Project GO adapted the program to best meet the scheduling needs of ROTC students by focusing resources on summer language training and summer study overseas opportunities. This shift allowed institutions to serve more ROTC students beyond their on-campus ROTC population, expanding Project GO accessibility to a national level.

In 2011, as Project GO continued to refine and improve its model, the program instituted the minimum proficiency goal of Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Level 1 (intermediate) for all Project GO participants, to be achieved through a series of multiple interventions. In order to achieve these proficiency targets, Project GO actively promotes language training opportunities among ROTC students year-round. In 2012, Project GO introduced the program-wide goal for participants to complete a minimum of four semesters of the same critical language and to study abroad for eight weeks or longer.

In 2015, the Project GO-Advanced initiative was launched. The objective of this special initiative is to expand Project GO by increasing the number of ROTC students who achieve ILR Level 2 or higher (advanced or professional level proficiency) in speaking, listening, and reading in a number of critical languages. Three institutions were selected for the Project GO-Advanced initiative: University of Arizona (Arabic), Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (Chinese), and University of Pittsburgh (Russian). Twenty-five students enrolled in the Project GO-Advanced initiative in its first year, with the majority reaching the proficiency goal.

“Post 9/11 military operations reinforce the reality that the Department of Defense needs a significantly improved organic capability in emerging languages and dialects, a greater competence and regional area skills in those languages and dialects, and a surge capability to rapidly expand its language capabilities on short notice.”

–Defense Language Transformation Roadmap, February 2005
2007
The ROTC Language and Culture Project was inaugurated with the goal of increasing the number of ROTC students studying a critical language.

2008
Languages Offered:
- Arabic
- Chinese
- Persian
- Russian
- Tatar
- Uzbek

2007
Four institutions were selected to participate: Indiana University, San Diego State University, University of Mississippi, University of Texas, Austin

2008
31 Project GO students studied abroad in China, Jordan, Morocco, Russia, and Tajikistan

2009
Project GO responded to scheduling conflicts by supporting summer language training and study abroad opportunities for ROTC students.

2010
Project GO expanded program eligibility to include any ROTC student across Services throughout the country.

2011
Instituted minimum proficiency goal of ILR 1 and required ROTC students to be OPI tested after 4 semesters/12 credits of language study.

2009
Boston University Project GO Scholars, China, Summer 2015

2010
Worcester Polytechnic Institute Project GO Scholars, China, Summer 2016

2011
Indiana University Project GO Scholars, Domestic, Summer 2014
2012
Project GO expanded to 25 institutions across the U.S., with all Senior Military Colleges having participated in the program.

2013
Pre-and Post-program proficiency assessments were implemented to better track Project GO students’ language gains.

2014
Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and Russian Flagship Online Reading and Listening tests were added to assess Project GO students with 4 or more semesters of language experience by the end of the program.

2015
Project GO expanded to meet regional Service needs by offering Indonesian, Japanese, and Portuguese instruction for the first time.

2015
Launched the Project GO-Advanced Initiative, expanding the number of ROTC students achieving ILR 2 or higher in Arabic, Chinese, and Russian.

2016
90% of Project GO scholars achieved the program goal of ILR 1 or above.

2016
Project GO supported 354 ROTC students on study abroad programming in the following locations:
- China
- Estonia
- India
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Jordan
- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Morocco
- Oman
- South Korea
- Taiwan
- Tanzania

University of Florida Project GO Scholars, Domestic, Summer 2016

Arizona State University Project GO Scholars, Indonesia, Summer 2016

Building on their previous Project GO experience, Norwich University Project GO alumni participate in a student delegation visit to the Republic of China Military Academy.
SNAPSHOT OF TODAY’S PROJECT GO

24 U.S. institutions across the U.S. support either a domestic, overseas, or blended Project GO program

Arizona State University
Boston University
Duke University
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Indiana University
James Madison University
Marquette University
Northeastern University
Norwich University
San Diego State University
Texas A&M University

The Citadel
University of Arizona
University of Florida
University of Kansas
University of Maryland
University of Mississippi
University of Montana
University of North Georgia
University of Pittsburgh
University of Wisconsin
Virginia Tech
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

354 Project GO students studied overseas in critical countries during 2015-2016

Previous Project GO Institutions: California State University-San Bernardino, Florida Institute of Technology, Louisiana State University, Michigan State University, North Carolina State University, Southern University, University of New Mexico, University of South Florida, University of Texas, University of Utah, University of Virginia, Virginia Military Institute
The U.S. Army ROTC is the largest ROTC program among the three Services and has partnered with Project GO since 2007. Army ROTC Project GO participants balance a rigorous training program with demanding academic studies. With a background in language and culture skills, Project GO alumni are well positioned to pursue career specializations such as military intelligence, military information support operations, foreign area officer, or work in the Special Forces community.

“Army officers with strategic language and culture capabilities better posture the U.S. within our global environment. Project GO participants gain cultural competency skills and often share this insight with other cadets during simulated situations in key leader engagements.”

—Army Lieutenant Colonel Larry Rentz
Professor of Military Science, University of Maryland

“Army officers with strategic language and culture capabilities better posture the U.S. within our global environment. Project GO participants gain cultural competency skills and often share this insight with other cadets during simulated situations in key leader engagements.”

—Army Lieutenant Colonel Larry Rentz
Professor of Military Science, University of Maryland

“The success I experienced in the introductory Persian (Dari) program instilled in me a confidence that I had the capacity to learn a complex language.”

—Army First Lieutenant Blake Lemmons
Persian (Dari), Indiana University (2011)

ARABIC, CHINESE, and RUSSIAN are the most popular Project GO languages among Army ROTC cadets.

Language a Critical Skill Set for Alumna Serving in PACOM

“Through my experience with Project GO, Chinese became less of a necessity and more of a passion. It eventually led to a deep respect and interest in the East Asia region. Learning Chinese ended up not only giving me a critical skill set but also directing the trajectory of my career in a positive way. I most certainly anticipate using Chinese in relation to my future assignments. The complexity of the global environment will continue to require students of global affairs to push the boundaries of education in order to face a future of ambiguity and indistinguishable emerging threats.”
The U.S. Navy has worked with Project GO since 2007 to ensure Naval ROTC midshipmen have an opportunity to enhance their language, regional expertise, and culture skills by studying a critical language. The U.S. Navy has always been an expeditionary force. We see more and more the need for our officers to understand the bigger picture, especially when engaged with allies or partners. Project GO will develop officers who are aware of their limitations and capable [of knowing] what kinds of questions to ask. [Even when] Project GO participants matriculate into a more technical field over the future, you are going to have naval officers advance with enough familiarization of regional types of issues to ask the right questions to the right people."

—Mr. Lee Johnson, U.S. Navy, Senior Language Authority

Marine Corps Colonel James Bright, Professor of Naval Science at Texas A&M, advocates Project GO as a force multiplier. “In a global environment, the Marine Corps needs technical skills and strategic language and culture capabilities to converse with allies, build trust and confidence with other countries, provide humanitarian aid, and conduct missions in combat areas. The language and culture skills both Naval ROTC midshipmen and Platoon Leaders Course (PLC) students gain through this experience allows an ease of communication at the peer-to-peer level.” Colonel Bright notes that many midshipmen have never been abroad before participating in Project GO. This opportunity “removes the blinders and challenges misconceptions of strategic countries. When Project GO students return they are enthralled with the program and gain a greater appreciation of the people they have met.”

Naval ROTC midshipmen have participated in Project GO since 2010

31% of Project GO midshipmen studied Chinese in 2015-2016

50% of Project GO midshipmen were STEM majors in 2015-2016

Naval Graduate Prepares for Flight School

Navy Ensign Mark Jbeily studied Arabic in Morocco with the University of Texas in 2013.

“Project GO made me a better officer by giving me a greater understanding of how the U.S. is perceived in the region. This understanding was only possible through the immersion Project GO provided me as a midshipman. Project GO and opportunities like it show aspiring officers that the Department of Defense is serious about investing in them as individuals.”

Ensign Jbeily is currently pursuing a Master of Philosophy in International Relations at the University of Oxford as a 2015 Marshall Scholar before reporting to Navy Flight School.
“No matter the region of the world, U.S. national security depends on our ability to understand and relate to the diverse populations and the cultures located therein. Educational programs such as Project GO serve to develop a foundational base for our future military leaders that will well serve us as we meet the global challenges of the future.”

— Major General Don Loranger, U.S. Air Force, Retired, Project GO Director at University of Montana

The U.S. Air Force has partnered with Project GO since the program was started in 2007. Project GO alumni can apply to the Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP), a program that seeks to develop cross-culturally competent leaders across all Air Force specialties with working-level foreign language proficiency. Since 2012, 50 Project GO alumni have been accepted into LEAP.

“Project GO instilled in me a drive to continue learning and studying the Russian language and culture, such that I’ve been able to further improve my language, regional expertise, and culture skills since my Project GO experiences. I had no knowledge of LEAP prior to Project GO. My Air Force ROTC commander encouraged me to apply to LEAP. Participating in LEAP has also motivated me to continue studying Russian on my own, knowing that I now have a real opportunity available to me for using Russian in my career.”

— Air Force First Lieutenant Brady Gough
Indiana University (2012)

“The [Chinese] language skills honed and the cultural acumen gained through my Project GO experience shaped my vision to continue on a professional development path that would continue to involve and use the background Project GO provided. The LEAP program was an obvious choice to fulfill this vision.”

— Air Force First Lieutenant Amy Hunt
University of Mississippi (2013)

The Language Flagship, Boren Awards, Project GO for Air Force Cadet

In addition to Project GO, Air Force Cadet Jeremiah Cox has participated in two major DoD language initiatives. Cadet Cox, who studied Arabic in Jordan and Oman with Northeastern University’s Project GO program in 2014 and 2015, is majoring in International Security Studies at the University of Oklahoma (OU). After achieving intermediate-high proficiency through Project GO, Cadet Cox joined the Arabic Language Flagship program at OU, with a goal of achieving superior level proficiency. Currently, he is completing his Flagship Capstone year overseas as a David L. Boren Scholar in Meknes, Morocco. Cox’s favorite part of the Project GO program was “going abroad with a bunch of aspiring officers to learn and grow professionally and linguistically.”
Senior Military College (SMC) is one of six colleges and universities that offer a combination of higher education with military instruction. The six SMCs are Norwich University, The Citadel, Texas A&M University (TAMU), University of North Georgia (UNG), Virginia Military Institute and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), all of which have received grant funding through Project GO. Senior Military Colleges have funded nearly 25% of Project GO participants since 2012. Project GO’s objectives for internationalizing the SMCs include: increasing the number of SMC students who study a critical language, particularly overseas; increasing the number of international students who study on-campus at SMCs by facilitating relationships between the SMCs and educational institutions overseas; and increasing interaction among international students and SMC ROTC students. Below are some institutional highlights from the SMCs:

- Since 2008, Project GO has contributed to the University of North Georgia’s institutional capacity as the university created majors and minors in Arabic and Chinese as well as minors in Korean and Russian. Building on the impact of Project GO and the increase in student demand and institutional support, UNG established the ROTC Chinese Language Flagship program in 2011.
- Project GO has contributed to the growth of several critical language programs at Virginia Tech since the university joined the program in 2012. Virginia Tech has added a new Russian major as well as Arabic and Chinese minors. Of the new Russian major students who graduated between 2014-2016 at Virginia Tech, 22 out of the 30 were Project GO participants.
- Texas A&M University has instilled a culture of critical language learning in its ROTC cadet corps. Out of the 23 students who participated in TAMU Project GO 2016 summer programs, four students majored in their critical language, 15 minored in their critical language, and three planned to declare a minor in their critical language.
- The Citadel has leveraged the Project GO program to support the hiring of tenure track Chinese faculty members, created a Chinese minor, and established The Citadel’s overseas program to Taiwan. With support from the university leadership, Project GO has been a key program supporting the development of a unified study abroad office on The Citadel’s campus.

“Project GO is an integral part of our Corps Global Leadership Initiatives program. Our cadets are able to strengthen their language skills, cultural competence, and international leadership skills by participating in Project GO. Furthermore, our cadets bring back invaluable perspectives and real-world experience to better prepare themselves for the future and strengthen the internationalization of our Corps and our University. I’ve seen first-hand the importance of understanding the complex global issues facing our nation’s military. Project GO plays a critical role in preparing our cadets to become Second Lieutenants and Ensigns who are fully prepared to succeed in a dynamic, uncertain, and ever-changing global environment.”

—Brigadier General Joe Ramirez, U.S. Army, Retired
Commandant of Corps of Cadets
Texas A&M University
The success of Project GO is due to collaborative partnerships developed between U.S. institutions of higher education and the Service ROTC programs. Project GO institutions build on these partnerships to increase the number of ROTC students studying critical languages on campus and abroad. For many institutions, Project GO has been successfully leveraged to support the development and growth in study abroad programming, critical language degree programs, and institutional internationalization, benefiting not only ROTC students but also the student body at large.

**Worcester Polytechnic Institute (Since 2015)**
Project GO is Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)'s first study abroad program to integrate students from other institutions. Since WPI joined the program in 2015, Project GO has expanded WPI’s study abroad capabilities and brought together administrative leadership to establish new institutional procedures for study abroad programs.

**Marquette University (Since 2012)**
Marquette University has leveraged its Project GO program to secure university-wide support for Arabic faculty hires, including a tenure-track position. Building on its overseas Project GO program, Marquette University has committed to establishing Arabic major and minor programs as part of their academic year offerings.

**San Diego State University (Since 2007)**
As one of the first Project GO institutions, San Diego State University (SDSU) has supported over 300 ROTC students to study critical languages in the past decade. In 2017, SDSU will launch the first overseas Portuguese Project GO program in Brazil.

---

### PROJECT GO-ADVANCED

**University of Arizona (Since 2012)**
The University of Arizona hosts a domestic and overseas Project GO program and since 2015 has hosted the Arabic Project GO–Advanced program. The Project GO-Advanced program offers summer study in Amman, Jordan and spring semester study in Meknes, Morocco. The University of Arizona leverages its Arabic Language Flagship Program to provide flexible course options for ROTC students to study Arabic through the advanced level during the academic year. In addition, the University of Arizona launched an Arabic major in Spring 2017.

**University of Pittsburgh (Since 2012)**
The University of Pittsburgh hosts the Russian Project GO-Advanced program in Narva, Estonia. All nine Project GO-Advanced students met the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) 2 goal in speaking, with the majority reaching ILR 2+ or 3. For its Project GO alumni, the University of Pittsburgh has introduced an academic year online sustainment course that helps cement proficiency gains.

**Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (Since 2009)**
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University has been a Project GO institution since 2009, and in 2015 was selected to host the Chinese Project GO-Advanced program. Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University’s Project GO program is closely aligned with the Embry-Riddle Global Security and Intelligence Studies degree program’s Chinese track, whose ROTC alumni go on to work in various military and national security careers.
“The amount of cultural and geopolitical insight I developed during my time at Indiana University and abroad has given me several opportunities to influence training at the unit level for my peers and soldiers I have trained. Having a working knowledge of the complex political, religious, and social nuances of the Middle East and Central Asia has repeatedly enabled me to develop training that informs soldiers about a part of the world that is generally unfamiliar to them. Having a good understanding of the culture in our operational environments is paramount to mission success and I count this as one of the greatest benefits of Project GO.”

—Army First Lieutenant Blake Lemmons, Persian (Dari), Indiana University (2011)

“I am assigned to the 563rd Operations Support Squadron, part of the 563 Rescue Group providing briefings to personnel recovery. I act as the China subject matter expert for my unit, and my language knowledge served me well. Participating in Project GO and studying another language made me a more culturally aware officer. Experiencing another culture like I did in China helps me apply a different perspective to everything I do. With my background, I can bring a different lens to a group setting that increases diversity and success rates.”

—Air Force Second Lieutenant Jacob Suss
Chinese, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (2013)

“My participation in Project GO absolutely made me a better officer and helped prepare me for my career. Through Project GO, I learned how to respect all people and cultures completely different from my own, to see things from a different point of view, and so much more,” said Army First Lieutenant Jennifer Ward, who deployed in Iraq in 2016. “While I did not speak much Swahili on my deployment, the values and viewpoints I developed through Project GO were essential to helping my team succeed with our mission while in Iraq.”


“I have used my Swahili, and my experiences in Kenya multiple times in my job assignments. I am listed as a Swahili language speaker in the national database because of my yearly participation in taking the Defense Language Proficiency Test exam. I am a member of the Defense Institute of Military Operations, which requires knowledge of a different language and culture. I plan to apply for the international healthcare specialist program which will assist in furthering my military experience in a global scale. I hope to one day be a permanent asset to the international healthcare specialist program, to use what I’ve learned with Project GO on a larger military scale.”

—Air Force Captain Jennifer Byrne
Swahili, James Madison University (2011, 2012)
“This program is about changing the way the U.S. engages with the world. Four years ago, you could count on one hand the number of future officers with in-depth experience in the language and cultures of Eurasia or Sub-Saharan Africa. Today, over 4,000 cadets and midshipmen from across the U.S. have studied those languages, have visited those countries, and most importantly, have learned to cross cultural boundaries. They have gained skills that will serve them well in their careers, no matter where they go.”

—Dr. Kathleen Evans-Romaine
Project GO Director at Arizona State University

“Throughout my academic career, I have always had a desire to learn about cultures and languages different from my own. Naturally, when I heard of Project GO, I was excited to join the program. Out of the list of languages offered at my institution, I chose Arabic because it is vastly different from any other languages that I have studied thus far. It didn’t take me long once becoming involved with Project GO to learn that I loved the Arabic language.”

—Air Force Cadet Samantha Smith
Arabic, University of Arizona (2016)

“Following my graduation from University of North Georgia in May 2015, I returned to Oman on a David Boren scholarship and spent another semester enhancing my skills in Arabic language before beginning my Fulbright Research Fellowship in January 2016. I would never have had the opportunity to be among the first in my family to travel outside of the U.S. if not for the support of Project GO. None of these wonderful experiences would have been possible had it not been for the initial opportunity provided by the program.”

—Mr. Jacob Dietrich
Arabic, University of North Georgia (2012, 2013)

“Project GO is critical to establishing foundational language and regional skills in new officers. Air Force officers coming on active duty with these skills minimizes the training they will require in the future. Project GO provides a strong foundation on which to develop deeper levels of expertise and knowledge, allowing these officers to be ready to support Air Force missions worldwide.”

—Ms. Cara Aghajanian
Director, Air Force Language, Regional Expertise and Culture Office