

## **Interview with Dr. Gerburg Garmann Applied Languages Mini-Grant Program**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this interview is to familiarize the reader with the Applied Languages Min-Grant Program.

### **Interview**

Dr. Garmann, an assistant professor of Modern Languages at the University of Indianapolis, obtained her Ph. D. in from Justus-von-Liebig University in Germany (1987), as well as Erstes Staatsexamen für das Lehramt an Gymnasien (1985). She also studied at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she earned her ABD (French) in 1990. She is fluent in three languages—German, French, and English. Her main focus of her studies encompassed intercultural relations, in which she has published literature regarding relations between France and Germany.

As her initial motivation for this program, Dr. Garmann saw the need for students not to just be bilingual but to be bilingual in their desired area of work. Her goal is to focus on applying the studies in their relative field, rather than leaving students to graduate and not have an opportunity to put into practice what was learned. However, the current vocabulary learned in the classroom for a particular language will not necessarily apply to a future job position in which the students are seeking, as she stated, “Students are not prepared linguistically for the working world.” For example, if a Spanish major desires to work with a company in financial consulting and does not have an opportunity to learn and apply Spanish in regards to financial services, their Spanish degree will not be as effective as it could have.

In order to provide this opportunity, the applied languages program will involve multiple disciplines to match language students with their area of concentration to better prepare them for the working world. Such courses could be a German class that focuses on business terms or a French class that focuses on science terms. Also, the program will seek to provide internship opportunities in which students can use the language of their study in the real work environment, allowing them to see what skills will really benefit them most.

Dr. Garmann’s program also emphasizes learning in the global context. Each country will have a different culture and if one does not understand that culture, it can become very difficult to work in that environment or perhaps even get a job. There are some things in one’s culture that are acceptable where as in another culture, that same thing may be unacceptable. Therefore, it is necessary to give students a background in culture understanding to prepare or make them aware of such situations, once again requiring the program to cross into other disciplines.

Through this program, Dr. Garmann not only hopes to provide students with the right skills for the real working world but to also change the attitude of students to realize that the most of the world is already bi-lingual and most United States schools do not offer any foreign language courses until sixth or seventh grade, where as students in Germany and other countries around the globe are bi-lingual by the seventh grade. The world is becoming more and more international, and businesses will begin to need more and more graduates that are not only bilingual but capable of speaking the language specific to the job field, and this program aims directly at this problem.