

SEALC Stakeholder Meeting Summary

March 14, 2024

AAS Conference, Seattle, WA

Ellen Rafferty convened the meeting with a brief discussion of SEALC's activities for 2023-2024 and noted that this year's meeting would focus on future collaboration in support of SE Asian language programs. A series of speakers then addressed questions about their organization's priorities with respect to Southeast Asian languages, their ability to support various activities, interest in forming a consortium, possible NRC support, future funding, and other ideas.

Thamora Fishel, GETSEA and NRC-Cornell University

The Graduate Education and Training in Southeast Asian Studies (GETSEA) consortium was formed with the mission of enhancing graduate education in Southeast Asian studies across North America. The consortium has been awarded a \$275,000 grant by the Henry Luce Foundation through its Luce Initiative on Southeast Asia (LuceSEA). Thamora stressed the importance of collaboration instead of competition for the success of Southeast Asian Studies centers. GETSEA supports AY scholarships for virtual language study, offers free online mini-courses open to all graduate students, and provides network-building opportunities for graduate students.

Becky Butler, Carolina Asia Center, UNC at Chapel Hill

Becky addressed the growth of Southeast Asian language instruction at UNC. UNC has had a Pan-Asia NRC since 2014 and received a LuceSEA award for 2022-2027. This support has enabled offering Vietnamese as a pilot project in 2020 and has grown to a full-time permanent instructor in 2025. UNC's priorities include expanding Vietnamese to the UNC language exchange and hosting an FLTA for an additional SEA language. UNC supports working collaboratively on a SEA Consortium, working collaboratively on funding opportunities, and would like to offer online S'gaw Karen or Chin classes.

Laura Hammond, SEASSI and LPO, University of Wisconsin – Madison

Laura discussed the application status for SEASSI this year, noting that the priority deadline is March 15. As of March 7, SEASSI had received 31 applications for in-person instruction and 18 applications for remote instruction (including 10 applications for Khmer, which is only offered online). SEASSI is administered by the Language Program Office (LPO), which also administers the Southeast Asian Flagship Languages Initiative (SEAFIL): Indonesian, Thai and Vietnamese. The LPO supports Southeast Asian Languages through the WISLI scholarship awards, the WISLI Pre-Service Orientation Week, SEAFIL support, and other services to the community. LPO would like to actively participate in establishing a Southeast Asian Consortium, noting that a model exists with SASLI (South Asia Summer Language Institute). LPO is also interested in strategic partnerships for funding and proposals in an effort to obtain additional Title VI funding for summer language institutes.

Agustini, COTSEAL, University of Michigan – Ann Arbor

The Council of Teachers of Southeast Asian Languages (COTSEAL) was started in 1984. COTSEAL's aim is "to provide leadership, encouragement, and ideas which can strengthen the quality and increase the amounts and kinds of teaching of Southeast Asian languages in the United States." Agustini noted that COTSEAL's priorities include professionalizing the field of Southeast Asian language teaching, training instructors in pedagogy and curriculum development, and creating standard testing and assessment tools. COTSEAL provides webinars with these objectives and collaborates with SEALC and various SEA NRCs. COTSEAL encourages students to apply for SEASSI, is interested in forming a consortium, and is

interested in pursuing collaborative funding opportunities. COTSEAL would also like to collaborate on a national campaign to create awareness of SEA language teaching in North America.

Yuting Li, Luce Foundation

Yuting discussed the three pillars for grant making for the ASIA program at the Luce Foundation: Asia-focused teaching and research in higher education, research and exchange with policy relevance, and public education and engagement. Luce Foundation support invigorated SEA Studies in the 1980s and was critical in consolidating a national institutional base for SE Asian Studies.

Over the course of five years between 2018-2023, LuceSEA has supported 20 projects totaling over \$15 million in both North America and Southeast Asia, all addressing the major objectives of infrastructure, innovation and collaboration. Although LuceSEA competition concluded in 2023, Luce remains committed to strengthening the study of Southeast Asia. Yuting noted the importance of the following issues going forward: promoting new collaborations, SEA language training, inclusion and access, multidisciplinary frameworks, and the development of common languages and practices among different stakeholders of projects. Yuting also noted that SEAS in the U.S. today face challenges (faculty retirement, and reduced funding) but also new opportunities (new technology, multidisciplinary collaboration, and heritage learners).

Yuting encouraged the group to think about the organization and presentation of all the resources available to the SEA Language community, perhaps in the form of a web portal that enables students, instructors, and administrators to easily find resources available at other institutions.

Brian Cwiek, Department of Education

Brian briefly discussed the charge and [purview](#) of the International and Foreign Language Education (IFLE) program at the DoE. He encouraged review of the program's [website](#) as well as the Language Resource Centers (LRC) [website](#). Brian noted that there are restrictions and limitations on IFLE funding that are based upon statute and that Title V funding will never be sufficient to address all the needs of the community. Brian presented a series of slides on language enrollment (see [slides](#)) and noted several trends. NRC/FLAS institutions are actually seeing growth in SEA language enrollment, but the majority of SEA language enrollment is not at these institutions. Filipino/Tagalog leads enrollments at NRC/FLAS institutions due largely to enrollments at University of Hawai'i, but Vietnamese leads enrollments nationally. Accurate measurement of language class enrollment may become more difficult as universities offer classes that are categorized as language classes but which may have cultural, area studies, or other elements as their primary focus. Brian shared data that showed that students continue to advance in their language studies as expected (roughly half of first year students continue to year two, roughly half of second year students continue to year three, and so on).

Brian strongly encouraged the group to begin now to look at the LRC and NRC/FLAS competitions for the next cycle. Institutions may receive multiple LRC awards.

Abby Cohn, Cornell

Abby discussed the history of SEALC, which was formed in 2018 and positioned well to apply for the consortium award from the Luce Foundation. Moving forward, the community that has benefited from SEALC will need to address the following: formalizing a consortium, formalizing a steering committee, formalizing institutional support, determining the functions of a new SEA Consortium, and evaluating the consortium's relationship with GETSEA and other existing consortia.

The next step is to convene a working group to discuss the formation of a new SEA Consortium. The working group will circulate SEALC goals and committee mission statements; it will be open to all those who are interested in being involved; and it will circulate a draft of the consortium's goals and structure for input and discussion at the SEALC final conference at Cornell in September 2024. Please email sealc@intl.wisc.edu to join this working group or to be kept informed of its progress. A subcommittee may also be formed to consider applying for an LRC. Please email sealc@intl.wisc.edu if you are interested in joining this subcommittee.

The next in-person discussion of the formation of a SEA consortium will be at Cornell September 20-22. SEALC will be sending additional information later this spring.

Open Discussion

The recording of the open discussion can be found at <https://sealc.wisc.edu/post-luce-transition/>.

Discussion highlights:

- Please join the working group (co-chaired by Abby Cohn and Siddharth Chandra) by emailing sealc@intl.wisc.edu.
- Historical documents from the formation of SEALC and the SASLI consortium could be useful to consider, but the landscape has evolved since the formation of SEALC and the SASLI consortium is much more limited in scope. Other groups may have a successful consortium model that we could draw upon.
- The majority of students taking SEA Languages are not at NRC/FLAS institutions. We need to be able to communicate and coordinate with these institutions.
- The MSU LRC is reaching out to universities to enable students to take classes at other institutions. There are different fee structures, credit structures, and academic calendars.
- It's important to determine what the field actually needs and then to reverse design the structure of a SEA consortium.
- We need to work together to address the challenges of the field, including tightening budgets and retirements. Those of us who need to work with university leadership need to be persuasive and convincing. At the same time, it's important to take risks and allow for some failures to occur. If the scope of this project is too small, some important elements will be left on the table.
- The Department of Education offers 12 different grant programs. There are programs for shorter periods of time with less money but specific activities could be mapped to these programs.
- The SEALC meeting at Cornell will be September 20-22. Each of the language groups will be presenting the impact SEALC has had on them, their accomplishments, and what they'd like to achieve in the future. We will have a keynote address that addresses the challenges and directions of LCTL pedagogy and national collaboration. We also hope to have administrators of NRCs, stakeholders who would like to take participate, and representatives from the Luce Foundation and the Department of Education. The SEA consortium working group will report to all attending.
- The SEALC project enabled the Burmese group to apply for a grant at the Department of Education to develop an open education resource textbook for intermediate Burmese. MSU is also developing online resources. Coordinating these activities could be a role that the consortium could play. Representing the nodes of the community, how they relate to each other, and how they can be accessed is important.

- A discussion about synchronous, asynchronous, bi-synchronous, hybrid modalities, and enabling technologies is important. Some languages may be more adaptable to alternative modalities than others. How does the community balance the need to reach out to different learning communities, including heritage speakers and self-paced learners, with some of the challenges of distance learning.
- Thanks to all for a great discussion. Please email sealc@intl.wisc.edu with any questions or to join the working group.