

Keep Modern with Arabic Languages

The Modern Languages Department offers five languages, which include Spanish, French, Italian, Chinese and American Sign Language. As the college draws up its Master Plan it would implore the department to entertain the prospect of adding courses in Middle Eastern Languages.

By doing so, it would expand on the offerings from departments including, but not limited to, history, philosophy and political science. It would also follow the thousands of universities nationwide that have expanded their curricula to include Arabic. Since 2002, enrollments in Arabic courses have increased ten fold to 51,582, according to a survey conducted by the MLA and reported in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. If CSI aspires to compete with the likes of Rutgers University, which recently adopted a Middle Eastern Languages program, it would consider what goal lies at the heart of every student—jobs.

With the 9.8% unemployment rate eclipsing the meager ration of entry-level job offerings, CSI will need to create tracks to growing job-fields. If initial course offerings in Arabic evolve into full baccalaureate programs, students can work towards careers as translators. The field expects to grow 24% until 2016, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and "demand will remain strong for translators of...Arabic and other Middle Eastern languages."

The road to facilitating such courses, presents a long process. The proposed addition would have to "originate from within a department," then survive two faculty committees and ultimately the CUNY Board of Trustees. Then there is the problem with attracting professors of Middle Eastern languages. "[T]he supply of teachers [hasn't] kept pace with student demand," Professor Karin C. Ryding told *The Chronicle*.

Even though such an undertaking poses obvious challenges, the college should at least prepare itself for such a demand. Staten Island recorded 5,337 households, or 1.2% of the population, with Arab descent in the 2000 census, and a good bet says that the 2010 census will yield higher numbers. "There is a growing population of Arabs on Staten Island," Omar Shakour told the *Staten Island Advance*. While the college's Mission Statement makes no promise of jobs, it commits to "students preparing to enter their chosen careers." One measure to the career options for students would be the consideration of adopting Arabic language courses.