



PROJECT UPDATE

Note: This form is for **APPROVED GRANTS** only! Periodic updates are a requirement for the grants. The information provided will be posted on the Learning College website.

Directions: Fill out the form and email it to anne.holte@montgomerycollege.edu.

Project Name: Building Native Language Academic Literacy

Project Director: Eileen Cotter, Margaret Kirkland, Sharon Fechter, Linda Robinson

Project Update: In the spring 2007 semester, several events took place as part of this grant. The culminating activity for the semester was a colloquium on Heritage Language Learning at which Dr. David Schwarzer, a nationally recognized leader in the field of bilingual (and the evolving concept of translingual) education, presented. In addition, the colloquium also featured a student panel of heritage language learners.

The audience for this colloquium consisted of MC and MCPS faculty and staff. One of the goals for this grant was to grow the existing linkages between MC and MCPS faculty and staff with relationship to our common second language students. In preparation for the colloquium, several meetings of both MC and MCPS personnel were held to discuss topics and questions to guide the presenter and at the same time to come to a greater understanding of our institutions' ways of working with these students.

Dr. Schwarzer was not only entertaining but extremely motivating. (In an aside to a student, one of the faculty grant directors expressed a concern that Dr. Schwarzer's talk was running a few minutes long. The student replied, "If I could talk like that, I would talk longer too.") Some of his ideas for fostering native language literacy included having library databases in other languages available to students and respecting students' native languages by encouraging them to write abstracts of their research reports in their native languages. For our diverse college, it is not enough to know that students speak other languages; we need to foster and respect those languages both in and out of the classroom.

Also to prepare for the colloquium, a number of student focus groups were held. The students on the panel were drawn from these focus groups. The focus groups were simply outstanding. While there are "glitches" galore when trying to arrange for such meetings at a

college such as MC, where students are not on campus for long hours outside of their classes and where space is at a premium, the effort was more than rewarding. The students' insights and perspectives enlightened us and helped to reframe our thinking on how to develop native language literacy at MC. At the colloquium, the students were peppered with questions from the audience. It was an extremely fruitful experience that reinforced our belief that involving our students in all aspects of planning for our academic and extra-curricular offerings is essential.