Indiana University Bloomington's new Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR) opened in mid-August 2002. CeLCAR is 1 of 14 language resource centers (LRCs) nationwide and is funded by a 4-year $1.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) under Title VI of the Higher Education Act. CeLCAR's goal is to enhance the United States' national capacity for teaching and learning the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) of the Central Asia region, which includes the major (mostly Turkic) languages of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang Province, northwestern China), and Uzbekistan.

"These languages have grown dramatically in importance to the United States," says William Fierman, associate professor of Central Eurasian Studies, director of the Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center, and now the director of CeLCAR. "Our lives are now deeply affected by developments in regions that had seemed so distant from us. If we are to understand the world in which we now live, we must become more knowledgeable about these regions, their languages, and their cultures."

Beginning-level language and cultural learning materials for these regions that are accessible to an English-speaking public are inadequate, pedagogically outmoded, or almost nonexistent. The immediate challenge for the center is to develop high quality, technologically sophisticated instructional materials that meet modern curriculum standards and methodologies for language learning. In the first year, the center will focus on developing materials for two languages, Pashto, spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Uyghur, spoken mostly in Xinjiang Province.

These two languages present great initial challenges for the center: there are few pedagogical materials available in the United States; their orthographies are based on Arabic/Persian alphabets; and compatible fonts for word processing and computerization are only just becoming available, notes Roxana Ma Newman, assistant dean for the Office of International Programs and associate director of CeLCAR. Nevertheless, these two languages were chosen for the first year of the project because "we thought it would be good to start with a clean slate, to be able to develop language materials without being restricted by what already exists," says Bill Johnston, assistant professor of applied linguistics and LCTL specialist who is a consultant to the center. Starting in year two, work will begin on three other Central Asian languages, Tajik, Turkmen, and Uzbek, languages for which more materials are available.

The CeLCAR staff is beginning its work by identifying current methodologies that drive communicative language learning. "There are many ways to approach language teaching," says Betty Lou Leaver, a visiting academic specialist in curriculum development and consultant to the center. "We believe the most successful methodology for encouraging confident, functional use of languages is through theme-based syllabi that use authentic language materials." Leaver and Johnston have been conducting a series of materials development workshops this

Continued on page 21
New Title VI Center continued from page 4

fall, in which IU instructors of other LCTLs have also participated.

Materials to be developed for each language over a three-year period are student textbooks, teachers' guides, and interactive CD-ROM workbooks. In addition, CeLCAR's Web site is envisioned as a clearinghouse of information relevant to language learning for all the languages of the Central Asian region.

CeLCAR's native speaker curriculum developers are Talant Mawkanuli, visiting assistant professor in Central Eurasian Studies whose two languages are Uyghur and Kazakh, and graduate student Khwaga Kakar, whose two languages are Pashto and Dari. Other staff members include Anna Jacobson, doctoral candidate in language education who is the center's specialist in computer-assisted language learning; Peter Marsh, a recent CEUS graduate who is the administrative assistant; and Cynthia Ramlo, webmaster and graphic designer.

The materials will be pilot tested each year during IU's Summer Workshop for Slavic, East European, and Central Asian Languages (SWSEEL). Next summer, seven Central Asian region languages are expected to be offered: Azeri, Kazakh, Pashto, Tajik, Turkmen, Uyghur, and Uzbek. "As our government and businesses increase their operations in the Central Asian region, the need for speakers of the languages spoken in these areas and for trained specialists will increase dramatically," said Jerzy Kolodziej, director of SWSEEL.

The highly competitive selection of IUB to create a Central Asian language resource center recognizes Indiana University's long tradition of scholarship and excellence in the languages and civilizations of this vast region.

"The grant is prestigious," says Johnston. "In many ways, it validates the work that already has been done here at a time when the region was not so prominent in world politics."

—RMN

with text adapted from an article by Michael Koh
Indiana Daily Student
May 5, 2002

Legislative Drafters continued from page 2

four mid-level professionals who interned at ILSA. These were Zamikaya Mbalo, legal compliance officer of the South African Sports Commission; Aletta Stelling, legal administration officer of the South Africa Department of Justice; Annelie Bevan, state law advisor of the North West Provincial Government; and Mike Mashapa, attorney with Barry Golele, Attorneys.

During their stay, Botha and the four drafters attended a meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures on senior bill drafting in Madison, Wisconsin. Botha also consulted with Kathleen Patchel, professor at IU School of Law—Indianapolis, who will lead the first two-week legislative drafting workshop at UP in November. She will be collaborating with lecturers and professionals from a number of participating South African institutions. The workshop is expected to provide training for up to 40 drafters.

The second and third years of the project are similarly structured in terms of workshops in Pretoria, U.S. internships, and professional development visits by UP and RAU faculty. For further information on the linkage, contact Shawn Reynolds, CIEDA; telephone: (812) 856-5861; e-mail: shreynol@indiana.edu.

At the October meeting in Bloomington are (left to right) Shawn Reynolds (CIEDA), Kathleen Patchel (School of Law—Indianapolis), Christo Botha (University of Pretoria), and Philip Sachtleben (Indiana Legislative Services Agency).