

**CENTER FOR ARABIC STUDY ABROAD (CASA), CAIRO, EGYPT  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, AUSTIN**

**USED GRANT PROPOSAL, 2008-2012**

**1. INTRODUCTION:**

This proposal seeks a four-year renewal of the US Department of Education (USED) grant to the Center for Arabic Study Abroad (CASA), an advanced intensive Arabic language and culture program currently housed at the University of Texas, Austin, with an overseas training site at the American University in Cairo (AUC), Egypt. CASA was established in 1967 with funding from the USED for the purpose of providing advanced Arabic language training at AUC to qualified American students and scholars in Arabic/Middle Eastern Studies. In the past ten years, CASA has sought and received additional funding from private foundations, which has allowed the program to increase the number of fellowships, undertake curriculum development, and offer more Arabic language training options to advanced students and faculty. CASA currently offers four different Arabic training programs at AUC:

- 1) CASA Summer Only: A seven-week intensive summer program that provides training in both Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), and introduces fellows to Egyptian culture and society.
- 2) CASA Full-Year: A twelve-month intensive program that includes CASA Summer and offers advanced level language courses in all skills along with content-based instruction in areas such as history, economics, literature, politics, religion, and anthropology.
- 3) CASA II: A one or two semester program intended to allow fellows who have completed the CASA Full-Year Program within the past five years to further enhance their language skills and/or engage in Arabic-based research in Egypt as part of their academic or professional work.
- 4) CASA III: A two-to-four-month program that aims to provide refresher language courses and Arabic-based specialized courses to American university professors who utilize Arabic in their teaching and research.

CASA began as a consortium consisting of eight universities with major Middle Eastern programs: The American University in Cairo, The University of California at Berkeley, The University of California at Los Angeles, The University of Chicago, Harvard University, The University of

Michigan, Portland State University, and Princeton University. In 1967, the Consortium secured USED funding and awarded eight full-year fellowships. Since that time, the CASA Consortium has more than tripled in size to twenty-nine institutional members representing universities with strong and well-established Arabic programs. (See Appendix I for a complete listing of current consortium member institutions.) Policy and planning for the administration of CASA rests with the Governing Council, which consists of six members of the CASA Consortium. Two new Governing Council members are chosen by the Governing Council each year to serve a three-year term. In addition to the six selected members, the CASA Director and the Co-Director at AUC also serve *ex officio* as members of the Governing Council. The members of the Governing Council discuss and approve policy, oversee the development of testing and evaluation procedures, approve curriculum proposals made by the Executive Director in Cairo, and act as an advisory council for the stateside Director. They also choose, at their annual November meeting, the Fellowship Selection Committee that makes the final selection of CASA fellows each March.

Over the past forty years, CASA has served as the flagship of all advanced Arabic language programs both in the US and abroad, and the CASA experience has become almost a prerequisite for students pursuing academic careers that involve the Middle East in general and the Arab world in particular. Professors look to CASA as a crucial step in the Arabic language and culture training of their students; indeed, many of these professors themselves are former CASA fellows. To date, CASA has trained more than 1,450 students, most of whom have become professors of Arabic or Middle Eastern Studies, business and professional people, government employees, journalists, and NGO administrators.

The success of the CASA program owes much to the support it has received throughout the years from USED. This support has enabled CASA to respond to national needs and provide quality programs of instruction to its fellows. During this time, CASA has made concerted efforts to seek additional funding sources to supplement its federal funding. These efforts culminated in 2000 with two one-million dollar endowments from the Mellon Foundation and the Ford Foundation to support its programs in

Cairo. These two endowments are managed by AUC, and their dividends have been used mostly to cover the difference between the USED grant and the actual cost of the program, which currently runs at close to \$500,000. CASA continues to seek additional outside funds to support expanding its programs and enable it to continue to maintain the quality Arabic programs it offers.

## **2. NEEDS AND OBJECTIVES:**

American strategic interests as well as cultural and economic relations with the Arabic-speaking world have grown at a steady pace since CASA was formed, and CASA has taken a leading role in serving these interests and fostering these relations through the hundreds of its graduates who are active in academe, government, public and private think tanks, and the business world. In the past six years, the need for American speakers of Arabic who possess both Superior proficiency skills in the language and substantial knowledge of its socio-political and cultural contexts has become common knowledge. CASA, which has been producing Superior level Arabic speakers for nearly forty years, has the infrastructure in place to continue to produce speakers at this level. What has changed most drastically in the past six years is the horizon of opportunities for Arabic speakers: while in the past CASA attracted academics and a few journalists and professionals, we are now seeing a steep increase in students pursuing government and other public sphere careers. In order to meet these new demands while maintaining its mission to train the next generation of teaching and research faculty, CASA continues to expand its programs and the number of fellowships it offers.

The last six years have also witnessed unparalleled expansion of Arabic programs both in numbers of students and college-level programs. The Modern Language Association of America (MLA) figures indicate that the number of students enrolled in Arabic in the US was at 5,505 in 1998 and reached 10,584 in 2002, an incredible 92.3 percent increase. This sudden upsurge has placed tremendous demands on Arabic programs throughout the U.S. as well as demands for more opportunities to study abroad and at a more advanced level. The overseas programs that currently exist for Arabic focus mainly

on the needs of students at the Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced proficiency levels. CASA is one of the few Arabic programs worldwide that specialize in providing training beyond the Advanced level and are designed to take students to the ACTFL Superior level (Level 3—professional proficiency--on the government ILR Scale). By the time they complete their CASA year, the vast majority of CASA fellows reach Superior proficiency in their language skills and are ready to use Arabic for a wide variety of professional and academic needs. So, while there are many opportunities for American students to study Arabic in abroad programs, the opportunities available for study towards reaching the Superior level remain very limited. CASA continues to be the only program that has the history, the expertise, the organizational structure already in place to achieve this goal.

The increase in the number of students studying Arabic in the US has contributed to a larger pool of students applying to the CASA program. The following table shows the increase in number of students applying for the CASA summer and full year programs and the number of CASA fellowships offered over the past seven years:

<i>ACADEMIC YEAR</i>	<i># OF CASA SUMMER &amp; FULL-YEAR APPLICATIONS</i>	<i># OF FELLOWSHIPS OFFERED</i>
2000-2001	52	24
2001-2002	59	25
2002-2003	95	29
2003-2004	81	31
2004-2005	99	28
2005-2006	118	32
2006-2007	140	40*

*\* Out of these 40 CASA summer and full-year fellows, 32 were funded by the USED grant. The rest were funded by the Fulbright Binational Commission in Egypt and some by private funds.*

This rise in demand for CASA training has allowed CASA to become more selective in choosing its fellows, which in turn has resulted in a significant improvement in the proficiency level of the entering CASA fellows. Thus, while the average proficiency rating for the students entering CASA ten years ago was in the Intermediate-Mid to Intermediate-High range on the ACTFL scale, the vast majority of the

2006-2007 fellows entered with a level ranging from Advanced-Low and Advanced-High. Of course, these fellows will be at an even higher level of proficiency when they leave CASA, since the program adjusts its instruction to meet the needs and proficiency levels of its fellows.

This improvement in the quality of the CASA applicant pool is also a reflection of significant progress made by the Arabic teaching profession in achieving higher proficiency levels with classroom instruction in the U.S. However, this leaves CASA with the challenge of providing more advanced level training to these students. At the same time, while CASA has been able to be more selective in its selection process, it has had to turn away a large number of candidates who qualified for the program but could not be admitted due to lack of funding and because of space and staff limitations at AUC. The CASA program at AUC has reached maximum infrastructural capacity and cannot accommodate any more fellows even with increased funding. In order to meet increasing needs and demands, CASA will follow a two-pronged approach: First, it will continue to offer the maximum number of fellowships it can accommodate at AUC, which is 34 fellows (27 full-year fellows + 7 summer fellows). In addition, it expanded capacity by opening a second CASA center in Damascus Syria in June 2007. Relying on its own funds, CASA provided 8 full-year fellowships to students who are spending the 2007-2008 year in Damascus pursuing an intensive program similar to the one CASA offers in Cairo. CASA plans to submit a separate application to expand its Damascus operation and hopes that USED will be supportive of the CASA expansion into Damascus to meet the increased demand for advanced training in Arabic.

The present grant proposal seeks support for the CASA Consortium to continue to offer its programs in Cairo, Egypt, to maintain the current number of fellowships and to enhance their overall quality. The specific objectives of the CASA project for the 2008-2012 funding cycle may be outlined as follows:

- i. Provide advanced language and culture training to 34 CASA fellows (27 Full-year fellows and 7 summer-only fellows), 4 CASA II fellows, and 4 CASA III faculty fellows every year.

- ii. Continue to offer CASA's intensive summer and full-year advanced programs that fully integrate the learning of written, literary Arabic with spoken colloquial Arabic, with heavy emphasis on culture and developing Superior level proficiency in all skills.
- iii. Continue the instructional material development projects that were launched in the previous funding cycle. Currently, CASA has two major material projects underway: 1) a new multi-media series of textbooks for Egyptian Colloquial Arabic, 2) new reading and listening materials for the summer course *Egypt: Culture and Society*.
- iv. Begin two new materials development projects: one for listening comprehension and for vocabulary learning. Both projects will utilize technology to make materials available to the students to support the new AUC smart classrooms on the new campus.
- v. Incorporate a new Service Learning component in the program aimed at facilitating further contact and interaction between the CASA fellows and Egyptian society.
- vi. Expand the cultural program through the *Mishwaar wa Dardasha* "Field trip and Conversation" program that pairs the CASA fellows with students from Egyptian universities.
- vii. Continue the activities of CASA II Program, launched three years ago to provide additional language, culture, and research training for fellows who have completed the full-year CASA program within the past five years.
- viii. Continue to offer the CASA III Faculty Program and provide American professors of the humanities and social sciences with the opportunity to improve their Arabic skills for teaching and research. The Fulbright Commission in Cairo has agreed to provide funds for the in-country expenses for three to five CASA III fellows per year.
- ix. Continue to provide training workshops for the CASA teachers aimed at keeping them abreast of new developments in language pedagogy and technology.
- x. Modify the current CASA application process to allow on-line submission of applications and testing.

### **3. PLAN OF OPERATION:**

#### **3.1. FOUR-YEAR TIME LINE:**

Over the next four years, CASA plans to carry out a wide variety of activities that will proceed according to the following timeline:

PRE-GRANT ACTIVITIES: SPRING 2008

- ❑ Select 27 full-year fellows (USED funded), 7 summer fellows (USED funded), 4 CASA III fellows (travel funded by USED), and 5 CASA II fellows (CASA-funded) for summer 2008 and the 2008-2009 academic year (YEAR ONE).
- ❑ Update reading materials and complete the listening materials for the MSA summer course *Egypt: Culture and Society*.
- ❑ Begin design and development of “MSA Computer-Assisted Vocabulary Building Project”.
- ❑ Finalize the editing for the ECA project “*Hadduuta MaSriyya*” “An Egyptian Story” (the book and DVDs, 10 units, piloted successfully in the Summer Program in 2007).
- ❑ Complete 10 units of cultural assimilator project “Misunderstandings in Intercultural Communication” for the summer ECA course.
- ❑ Organize two teacher training mini-workshops to introduce CASA teachers to the new teaching materials for the summer session.
- ❑ Archive all teaching materials in paperless format (word-documents, CD, DVD).
- ❑ Organize the move to AUC’s new campus.

YEAR ONE: JUNE 1, 2008- MAY 31, 2009

- ❑ Select 27 full-year fellows (USED funded), 7 summer fellows (USED funded), 4 CASA III fellows (travel funded by USED), and 5 CASA II fellows (CASA-funded) for summer 2009 and the 2009-2010 academic year (YEAR TWO).
- ❑ Organize two 2-day teacher training workshops in the fall and spring semesters on teaching vocabulary and writing.
- ❑ Provide training for all fellows for the use of “Movie maker” software to be used for class projects that fellows will be undertaking throughout the program.
- ❑ Organize and facilitate service learning activities for selected fellows with various NGOs in Cairo.
- ❑ Redesign the curriculum for the fall course “*Reading and Vocabulary Building*” into a content and skill based course titled “*Readings on Arab Society and Culture*,” develop and field-test preliminary drafts of materials for this new course, and get feedback from both faculty and fellows.
- ❑ Redesign the curriculum for the fall “*Listening and Speaking*” course into a content and skill-based course titled “*Issues in Contemporary Arab Societies*,” develop and field-test preliminary drafts of materials for this new course, and get feedback from both faculty and fellows.
- ❑ Continue developing “*Computer-Assisted Vocabulary Building*” project for Superior learners”.
- ❑ Develop task based and project based materials based on five Egyptian movies selected by ECA teachers.
- ❑ Create a handbook for CASA teachers containing mission statement, policy statement, definition of CASA pedagogy, role of service learning in the program, etc.

YEAR TWO: JUNE 1, 2009- MAY 31, 2010

- ❑ Select 27 full-year fellows (USED funded), 7 summer fellows (USED funded), 4 CASA III fellows (travel funded by USED), and 5 CASA II fellows (CASA-funded) for summer 2010 and the 2010-2011 academic year (YEAR THREE).
- ❑ Conduct an outside review of the CASA programs and materials by Professor Kirk Belnap (BYU/NMELRC) and Professor Martha Schulte-Nafeh (Arizona).
- ❑ Conduct a teacher training workshop for professors teaching CASA’s spring content-based courses.

- ❑ Provide training for all fellows for the use of “Movie maker” software to be used for class projects that fellows will undertake throughout the program.
- ❑ Organize and facilitate service learning activities for selected fellows with various NGOs in Cairo.
- ❑ Publish fellows’ projects carried out in service learning on the web.
- ❑ Continue developing and testing reading materials and tasks for “*Readings in Arab Society and Culture*” and collect feedback from both faculty and fellows.
- ❑ Continue developing and testing listening materials and tasks for “*Issues in Contemporary Arab Societies*” and collect feedback from both faculty and fellows.
- ❑ Continue developing “*Computer-Assisted Vocabulary Building*” project for Superior learners.
- ❑ Develop ECA teaching materials based on TV debates on contemporary issues in Egyptian society.
- ❑ Develop objectives for teaching culture in the program.
- ❑ Start revising the spring curriculum to strengthen the language component in all content courses.

YEAR THREE: JUNE 1, 2010- MAY 31, 2011

- ❑ Select 27 full-year fellows (USED funded), 7 summer fellows (USED funded), 4 CASA III fellows (travel funded by USED), and 5 CASA II fellows (CASA-funded) for summer 2011 and the 2011-2012 academic year (YEAR FOUR).
- ❑ Provide training for all fellows for the use of “Movie maker” software to be used for class projects that fellows will undertake throughout the program.
- ❑ Organize and facilitate service learning activities for selected fellows with various NGOs in Cairo.
- ❑ Publish students’ projects carried out in service learning on the web.
- ❑ Conduct two 2-day teacher-training workshops: one in the fall semester on testing the reading and listening skills and the other in the spring on testing the speaking skill in both ECA and MSA.
- ❑ Prepare reading materials and tasks for “*Readings in Arab Society and Culture*” for publishing.
- ❑ Prepare listening materials and tasks for “*Issues in Contemporary Arab Societies*” for publishing.
- ❑ Finalize editing on the project “*Computer-Assisted Vocabulary Building*” for Superior learners.
- ❑ Further align the program with the teaching objectives set for teaching the Egyptian culture.
- ❑ Continue redesigning the spring courses to strengthen the language component in all content courses.
- ❑ Work on the selection of Arabic novels for superior language learners and start developing materials to facilitate reading and cultural understanding through literature.

YEAR FOUR: JUNE 1, 2011- MAY 31, 2012

- ❑ Select 27 full-year fellows (USED funded), 7 summer fellows (USED funded), 4 CASA III fellows (travel funded by USED), and 5 CASA II fellows (CASA-funded) for summer 2012 and the 2012-2013 academic year (YEAR FIVE).
- ❑ Provide training for all fellows for the use of “Movie maker” software to be used for class projects that fellows will undertake throughout the program.
- ❑ Conduct a teacher training workshop on testing and assessment.

- ❑ Organize and facilitate service learning activities for selected fellows with various NGOs in Cairo.
- ❑ Publish fellows' projects carried out in service learning on the web.
- ❑ Publish the materials developed for the “*Readings in Arab Society and Culture*” course and make it available to all Superior learners of Arabic in the US and abroad.
- ❑ Publish materials developed for the “*Issues in Contemporary Arab Societies*” course and make it available to all Superior learners of Arabic in the US and abroad.
- ❑ Publish materials developed for “*Computer-Assisted Vocabulary Building*” for superior learners.
- ❑ Update ECA listening materials based on TV programs and debates on current issues in Egyptian society.
- ❑ Further develop multi-faceted assessment system of student performance involving a variety of assessment techniques over the learning period.
- ❑ Finalize redesigning the curriculum for the spring courses.
- ❑ Finalize work on the selection of Arabic novels for superior language learners and developing materials to facilitate cultural understanding through literature.

### 3.2. SELECTION OF CASA FELLOWS

Since the twenty-nine CASA Consortium member institutions represent most major Middle East area studies and Arabic language programs in the US, many CASA applicants and fellows naturally come from these programs. However, CASA considers itself to be a national program open to all American citizens and permanent residents without regard to race, gender, color, age, sexual orientation, ethnic background, or physical disability. CASA receives applications from US citizens living in all parts of the U.S. and Canada, as well as Europe and the Middle East itself. US residents who are noncitizens are welcome to apply to the program, but they are required to join on a *PYOW (Pay Your Own Way)* basis, in which they pay tuition and do not receive any financial support from the program. CASA accepts an average of two to three PYOW students each year. Tuition fees paid by these students help CASA cover part of the shortfall it faces between the USED grant and the actual costs of the program.

Every September, CASA issues a call for applications to its various programs and disseminates information about each program and the funding opportunities it provides. Program announcements and calls are distributed via the Arabic-L listserv, MES and Arabic-related newsletters, websites of the American Association of Teachers of Arabic (AATA) and the National Middle East Language Resource Center (NMELRC), and by direct mailing to Arabic programs throughout the country. In order to

facilitate accessibility to information about CASA and to application materials, CASA maintains a web site that provides extensive information about the various programs and their academic and cultural components, the application and selection process, and the CASA living experience in Cairo. The site also allows students to download application materials and selection exams from past years. The CASA web site is available at the following URL address: <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/casa/>.

Applicants to CASA summer and full year programs are required to take a proficiency entrance exam that has written and oral components. The written section of the exam is administered on the same day (usually the first Friday in February) throughout the world at approximately fifty testing centers whose location is chosen according to applications submitted. The CASA stateside office coordinates directly with an official or staff member at each site and provides the exact number of sealed exams required. In order to protect their identities and ensure unbiased grading all applicants are provided with a University of Texas-issued ID number which they use on the test forms in lieu of their names. The completed exams are then returned to the CASA office, where they are corrected under the supervision of the Stateside CASA Director. In addition to the written exam, an ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is conducted over the telephone by certified ACTFL OPI testers. The written exam and the oral interview have proved to be an accurate guide to the students' prospects for success in the CASA programs.

The selection of CASA fellows is carried out every March by a selection committee consisting of (i) three representatives from three Consortium universities which rotate every year, (ii) the CASA Stateside Director, and (iii) the Cairo Executive Director. The selection of fellows is determined based on six factors: 1) test scores from the CASA written entrance examination and ratings from the OPI; 2) degree of commitment to the study of Arabic and a career centered on the Middle East as expressed in the statement of purpose; 3) references from language and non-language professors; 4) Arabic grade point average; and 5) overall grade point average, and 6) good overall medical condition for living abroad attested to by a physician. The statement of purpose must clearly demonstrate the candidate's long-term

professional commitment and explain how the CASA experience fits within the applicant's plans. The examination score and the statement of purpose are given more weight than the other factors. All six factors are evaluated by each member of the Selection Committee, and a final ranking for each applicant is determined.

CASA, the University of Texas, Austin, and the American University in Cairo adhere to the principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action at all stages of the selection process concomitant with the objective selection criteria listed above. While the CASA administration has no control over who decides to study Arabic language and literature and therefore who applies to CASA, past CASA fellowship recipients have included representatives of virtually all religious, racial, and ethnic minority groups found in the United States. Age is not a consideration in the fellowship selection process. CASA fellows have been as old as fifty-five and as young as twenty. In addition, the CASA III Program is designed specifically to promote study among more mature faculty. The location of the program in a developing country, Egypt, which may not have sophisticated medical facilities readily available for some medical conditions, has required very careful consideration of the health and safety of every applicant. When proper documentation has been provided, however, students with medical problems or physical disabilities have participated very successfully in all CASA programs. CASA especially welcomes applicants from minority groups.

### 3.3. CASA ACADEMIC PROGRAMS:

In Cairo, the CASA summer, full-year, CASA II, and CASA III programs continue to provide what is considered by U.S. Arabists to be the best advanced Arabic language training available anywhere in the world. The success of the CASA program derives from four main factors. The first factor is the outstanding quality of the CASA faculty, who rank among the best-trained and most experienced *cadre* of Arabic language teachers anywhere in the world. The second is the CASA fellows, who are drawn from the nation's very finest graduate and undergraduate students and who, through their remarkable

commitment and motivation, motivate and inspire the faculty. The fellows are very demanding of the program in terms of the quality of instruction, teaching materials, and the cultural program. Their comments and suggestions are always given full consideration and are often incorporated into the program, enriching it immeasurably. The commitment of faculty and students to the goals of the program have facilitated the third factor, a comprehensive curriculum with well-defined objectives, methods, and materials for each component. The program goals and materials are constantly evolving to reflect new pedagogies and respond to fellows' changing needs. Finally, the location of CASA in a thriving Arab capital rich in history and culture provides fellows with extracurricular activities such as cinema, theater, museums, libraries, clubs, and everyday socializing,

Each of the four CASA programs fills a particular educational niche:

### 3.3.1 The CASA Summer Program:

The summer program is designed to introduce students to life in Cairo, both culturally and linguistically. It offers full immersion in Arabic, both ECA and MSA, and provides an extensive introduction to Egyptian culture and society through readings, multi-media materials, lectures, and tours of sites of historical and cultural significance. The summer program spans nearly eight weeks and offers twenty-two to twenty-three contact hours per week as follows:

- Ten hours a week devoted to the development of speaking, listening, and culture skills in ECA. The CASA ECA summer course differs from other introductory level colloquial courses in that utilizes fellows' advanced knowledge of MSA to provide a rapid introduction to ECA . It also introduces fellows to different sociolinguistic levels of ECA and highlights the cultural contexts in which ECA vocabulary and structures are used. The teaching materials used in this course consist of four units of the ECA multi-media textbook "*Hadduuta MaSriyya*" "An Egyptian Story" currently being developed by three of CASA's senior teachers. The book is currently undergoing its final revision and editing and we expect to submit it for publication in Spring 2009.
- Eight hours a week devoted to further development of MSA skills in reading, listening, speaking and writing through a course titled *Egypt: Culture and Society*. The course places special

emphasis on reading and listening to the news on a daily basis and exposing the fellows to historical, political, social and economic issues that have shaped Egyptian history and led to the Egypt of today. In this course, CASA has begun to use its newly developed reading and listening materials specially designed for this course whose final draft was used in 2007 and is now being edited in preparation for publication also in Spring 2008.

- Three to four hours a week devoted to allowing the fellows to practice their oral skills and engage in discussions on Egyptian culture and society with language partners—usually Egyptian college students-- in small groups of 4-5 students. The activity is named *Mishwaar wa Dardasha* “Field Trip and Conversation,” and each group meets with the assigned language partner to visit a place in Cairo (e.g. Azhar Park, Sayyida Zaynab, al-Hussein, etc.), where they spend time exploring the area and chatting about various topics and issues related to their study and their living experience in Egypt.
- Three hours a week are devoted to service learning aiming to extend learning beyond the classroom and into the community. In the summer of 2007, students worked with two NGOs in the Mokattam area of Cairo, one that provides assistance to female-headed households, and one that works with children from underprivileged homes.

In addition, fellows spend an additional 3-4 hours daily working on homework assignments and participate in a variety of cultural activities within Cairo, such as taking a boat ride on the Nile, visiting local cafes, touring local markets, going to the movie theater, and so forth.

In order to maintain small, linguistically homogeneous classes, the CASA Summer program features five different sections that are created based on the fellows’ level of proficiency. Placement in the MSA sections is made based on the fellows’ scores on the written portion of the CASA Entrance Examination, while placement in the ECA sections is based on the fellows’ ratings from the OPI they did as part of the CASA exam and a short interview conducted in ECA before classes begin in June. The Executive Director, in consultation with the CASA faculty, makes any necessary placement adjustments by the end of the first week of classes. In addition to the regular classes, the CASA Summer program provides individualized remedial tutorials for fellows with specific deficiencies (such as pronunciation).

### 3.3.2 The Full-Year Program

The aim of the CASA full-year program is two-fold: 1) to further develop the fellows' overall level of proficiency in Arabic and help them reach the ACTFL Superior level of proficiency (3 to 4+ on the FSI scale) in all skills (see Appendix VI for a comparison of beginning and ending oral proficiency scores and scores on the CASA entrance and exit exams in recent years), and 2) to provide students with specialized training in fields of their choice that will enable them to function in professional contexts. For the majority of the fellows, the CASA full-year program represents the last "formal" program of language study they pursue, which makes it incumbent upon the program to prepare the fellows to use the language as a communication and research tool for continued graduate and post-graduate study and careers in the government and private sectors.

### 3.3.3 Full-Year Program: Fall Semester

The CASA fall semester aims to: 1) develop fluency, speed, and accuracy in reading Arabic without a dictionary, a task which requires rapid expansion of MSA vocabulary; 2) improve listening comprehension and note-taking abilities; 3) enhance ECA skills; 4) develop speaking ability in MSA in each fellow's area of specialization; and 5) integrate writing skills with reading and listening. The fall program offers four different sections of six to seven fellows each, and the weekly schedule features 23-24 contact hours distributed among the following courses:

1) ECA	6 contact hrs/week
2) Reading, Vocabulary & Structure	6 hrs/week
3) Listening and MSA Speaking	6 hrs/week
4) Weekly Lecture (part of the Listening course)	1 hr/week
5) Service Learning	3-4 hrs/week

Integral to CASA teaching techniques are: daily class discussions in Arabic, intensive and varied drilling of aural/oral skills in the MSA and ECA classes with extensive recourse to television programs, radio broadcasts, and plays, writing clinics with on-the-spot corrections of compositions, and reviews of Arabic grammar as necessary. In addition to these in-class activities, the CASA teaching staff in Cairo

has amassed a large library of audio and video materials to supplement class work and to allow students to work outside class at their own pace.

Rounding out the fall semester is the lecture series, which is combined with note-taking assignments designed to more precisely gauge students' comprehension and prepare them for the note-taking they will need to do in some of their spring elective courses. Lectures in the CASA lecture series deal with a range of economic, political, social and literary issues, and provide fellows with the opportunity to hear and engage with a number of Egyptian and Arab intellectuals in Cairo.

A key aspect of the fall lecture series is that, along with sharpening the fellows' listening comprehension skills, it introduces them to a number of prominent figures in Egypt. These guest speakers provide them with an historical overview on a variety of topics and interesting insights into the current political, intellectual, and artistic scene. Occasionally, students are so impressed with a lecturer that they request a course with him or her for the spring semester. In addition to the benefits they extract from such courses, the contacts the fellows make with their spring term professors can prove to be very significant indeed. When they return later to begin dissertation research or fieldwork, many find the good relations they established with these same professors extraordinarily helpful.

With the tightly-structured, super-charged fall semester under their belts, fellows are primed for the spring semester, in which they tackle more specialized courses directly related to their own areas of interest and specialization.

### 3.3.4 Full-Year Program: Spring Semester

The spring semester is the culmination of the CASA full-year program, and it is designed to provide the fellows with the opportunity to refine and apply the advanced language skills they have developed in content-based courses of their choice. In the spring semester, each fellow is required to take the course "*Arabic Writing, Stylistics and Rhetoric*" (3 contact hours/week) in addition to three electives (3 contact hours/week each) for a total of twelve hours per week. Spring classes are conducted in seminar fashion, and the reduced number of class contact hours is intended to give fellows the chance to spend

time on their own reading, writing, and conducting research related to their courses, as well as taking further advantage of the extracurricular opportunities Cairo offers.

Spring course selection is completed late in the fall semester when fellows meet with the Executive Director to learn about courses previously offered and clarify their own preferences, sometimes suggesting new courses altogether. The Executive Director then forms a list of possible elective courses that match the requests as closely as possible within budgetary restrictions. Class size is small (4-6 fellows in each) so as to promote better interaction. In the last two years, fellows have chosen such stimulating and challenging topics as Translation, Contemporary Arab Thought, the Economics of Egypt, the Politics of Egypt, Literary Criticism, and the Urban Planning of Cairo. CASA Spring courses often feature some of the most prominent names in Egyptian academic circles. As part of their spring program, some fellows choose to enroll in courses in their areas of specialization designed for Arab students and taught by Egyptian professors at AUC or Cairo University. The Executive Director helps the fellows obtain ID cards from Cairo University to allow them to enroll in such courses and have access to the university libraries.

As part of their CASA spring semester course work, fellows often visit specific institutions and agencies to use resources and conduct personal interviews. For example, students taking the Urban Planning of Cairo course in the spring visit the Egyptian Ministry of Planning and its affiliated libraries, while students taking the Egyptian Cinema Course visit the General Institute for Cinema offices and meet with its staff. Such out-of class experiences constitute an integral part of the program, and the CASA administration is always seeking opportunities to expand such experiences.

By the end of the spring semester, the fellows have acquired sufficient Arabic to enable them to participate meaningfully in personal and professional interactions using the appropriate register of the language and are ready to begin using the language in their academic or professional careers.

### 3.4 The CASA II Program

CASA II represents the newest addition to the CASA academic programs, and is currently in its fourth year of operation. Since its inception, the program has offered additional language and culture training to 15 fellows who completed the CASA full year program within the past five years and wanted more advanced specialized training to support their research. While most CASA full-year fellows reach Superior level proficiency during the year-long program, an additional semester or two in Egypt beyond the CASA full-year gives fellows the opportunity to sharpen their skills and reach advanced professional proficiency (Level 4 on the ILR Scale). The students who apply to CASA II are the very best and most promising young Arabists we have, and the opportunity to train them at this level fulfills a crucial national need. Many of them will teach the next generation of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies specialists.

The structure of the CASA II program offers fellows the opportunity to study for one or two semesters (Fall or Spring or both) in Cairo, depending on the particular needs of each fellow. The CASA Executive Director works with each CASA II fellow to tailor her or his program individually. Each fellow is expected to enroll in three tutorials per semester for a total of 12 to 15 hours a week. These tutorials can be in any of the language skills or in the fellow's own field of specialization. In addition, CASA II fellows have the option to enroll in any of the regular CASA classes that are offered during the fall and spring semesters as part of their CASA II program. CASA II fellows are also expected to participate in and contribute to the full range of cultural activities of the regular CASA program. The CASA II program is entirely funded by CASA's own financial resources as part of CASA's cost-share portion.

### 3.5 The CASA III Program

The CASA III program is designed as a "refresher" course for American faculty members who teach and/or conduct research in Arabic. CASA offers between four to five CASA III fellowships

annually that are funded by the Fulbright Binational Committee in Egypt. USED funds are used to provide travel funding for CASA III fellows.

The program requires a general level of “Advanced” proficiency in Arabic based on the ACTFL Scale (approximately three to four years of college-level Arabic). A 20- minute oral interview in Arabic is conducted with each CASA III applicant before selection is made to assess her/his current level of proficiency in the language.

CASA III offers maximum flexibility both in terms of its time period and curriculum. Fellows have the option of attending during the CASA regular summer session (early June-end of July), or choosing a period ranging from 2 to 4 months in length in either Fall or Spring during which to complete their program of study. Each CASA III fellow designs an individual program of study with the CASA Executive Director. The fellows may choose to concentrate on developing their skills in ECA, MSA, or both, or may choose to do tutorials in advanced readings with specialists in their research fields. Some CASA III fellows may opt to participate fully or partially in the regular CASA Summer Program in order to benefit from the classroom experience and exposure. Others may choose to participate in the program in the fall or spring and may be interested in a program that combines text reading and language skill development. Generally, the number of contact hours for each CASA III fellow ranges between 12 and 15 contact hours a week, depending on the fellow's needs, interests and focus. In all CASA III classes and tutorials, fellows are paired with distinguished AUC language teachers and distinguished professors from other Egyptian universities.

The CASA III program continues to receive high praise from its participants, who routinely cite the dedication of the teachers, the lectures, and cultural program as a whole as having been of particular value. One fellow wrote in her program evaluation:

*“From the first halting attempts at speaking without notes in front of an audience, I progressed to that most pleasurable experience, the experience of lecturing with self confidence and a feeling of fun. By including me in the CASA III group, you gave me*

*what I had never been given before, a natural relationship with the language and a feeling of ease with it.”*

Interest in CASA III remains very strong, and we expect this level of interest to increase as the ranks of American faculty teaching and researching the Middle East continue to grow across the US.

### 3.6 The Cultural Program

The cultural component of CASA begins with an extensive orientation program upon fellows' arrival in Cairo. Each year, CASA holds workshops lead by former CASA fellows that deal with living in Cairo. Topics of discussion within these workshops include: developing contacts and friendships with Egyptians, negotiating an apartment lease, and dealing with incidents of verbal harassment (especially for women) on the streets. In addition, a number of other steps have been taken to enhance the cultural orientation program:

- (1) The Executive Director presents a general introduction to Arab, Muslim, and Egyptian culture.
- (2) The *CASA Key to Cairo Handbook*, prepared by former CASA fellows, is updated each year with current information and distributed to all incoming fellows in June. The handbook provides a comprehensive introduction to life in Cairo and offers suggestions and insights into life in the "Big Mango" as described by CASA fellows.
- (3) Two student assistants, usually CASA fellows from the previous year, help the incoming fellows find apartments and negotiate the amount of rent. These student assistants are hired in April of every year and are placed in email contact with all selected CASA fellows before their departure from the US so that they can answer any questions the fellows might have about their upcoming experience.

According to reports from participants, faculty, and staff, these efforts have been very effective in helping fellows adjust to the new cultural environment.

The academic component of the Cultural Program presents a broad view of Egyptian culture and society that frames the study of the language, including a systematic introduction to all periods of Egyptian history, from Ancient Egypt to the Coptic and Islamic periods to the modern period, through tours, field-trips, and lectures. In addition to sites such as Rashid (Rosetta), the Suez Canal Zone, the Coptic monasteries at Wadi Natrun, and the Orthodox Monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai, the

program includes a trip to Egypt's leading newspaper, *Al-Ahram*, where the students tour the press rooms and meet with more than a dozen journalists for a group discussion and informal individual conversations. They also meet with the head of *Daar Al-Kutub*, Egypt's national library, and tour *Daar Al-Wathaa'iq*, the national archives. Although CASA fellows do not have time to undertake personal research while the CASA program is in session, the CASA experience provides an invaluable orientation to advanced research facilities in Cairo.

To supplement regular class work, CASA offers its fellows many opportunities to be engaged in intellectual and cultural life in Cairo. Last year the program hired two young Egyptian women to serve as Cultural Assistants to the program. These two assistants currently work with the fellows, the Executive Director, and the faculty to prepare a weekly program of cultural activities that include visits to museums, theaters, markets, mosques and churches, and festivals commemorating famous personalities and cultural events. These activities take place on weekends, holidays, and in the evenings, not during class time. In addition, fellows have access in summer, fall, and spring semesters to non-credit classes in Arabic calligraphy, Qur'an recitation, drama, and music. These have proven popular, and they provide important contexts for language and cultural enhancement.

The CASA administration continues to provide formal channels to help fellows make contact with Egyptians by procuring Cairo University ID cards for CASA fellows, allowing them access to the campus and lectures there, and arranging meetings with the faculty and students at Ain Shams University and Cairo University, with the Coptic Pope, and with the Rector of Al-Azhar University, among others. CASA also provides fellows with schedules of intellectual gatherings of various interest groups in Cairo, referrals to Egyptian non-profit organizations, and contacts for language exchanges with native speakers.

### 3.7 Material Development and Teacher Training:

As the leading advanced Arabic training program, CASA constantly strives to maintain an up-to-date curriculum that responds to fellows' language and content needs and reflects improvements in language pedagogy. It also seeks to adhere to clearly defined curricular objectives and learning outcomes

coordinated throughout the various courses it offers. Finally, CASA is working to produce materials that reflect its philosophy of teaching and that incorporate the latest advancements in technology to facilitate the learning process.

CASA has developed a general set of learning outcomes and proficiency goals for the various language skills. However, the existence of multiple sections, each at slightly different level, makes it crucial for the program to maintain a high level of coordination of objectives, teaching methodologies, and testing techniques. To that end, CASA has recently instituted weekly meetings of the Executive Director and the teachers of all sections in each skill to discuss overall progress in each section and to allow teachers to exchange ideas and learn from each other. These meetings have helped CASA ensure that, across all sections, the teaching philosophy, objectives, and methodology remain the same. Teachers' response to these meetings has been very positive despite the extra time commitment, because they provide an important (if informal) avenue for professional development.

Currently, CASA has four materials development projects: two are in their final stages of development and two are just beginning. These four projects will be carried out as part of the present grant proposal and they include:

i) Egyptian Colloquial Arabic: *Hadduuta MaSriyya* "An Egyptian Story"

CASA is currently in the final stages of editing its new comprehensive ECA textbook *Hadduuta MaSriyya* with a substantial video component that focuses on speaking, listening, and culture, and provides instructional support for the various levels of proficiency within CASA during the summer and fall semesters. The book has been coauthored by Ms. Nevenka Korica, CASA's Executive Director and Ms. Heba Salem, one of CASA's veteran ECA teachers. It was field-tested in all classes in Summer 2007 and received very favorable evaluations from the fellows and teachers, and is currently being used in the Fall ECA classes. The materials will undergo final editing during the 2007-2008 academic year and will be published in Spring 2009. These materials will be available for use in Egyptian Colloquial classes at American colleges and universities, representing another contribution by CASA to improving Arabic

teaching in the US.

ii) Reading and Audio-Visual Materials for *Egypt: Culture and Society*:

In 2004, CASA introduced a new course entitled *Egypt: Culture and Society* to its summer program curriculum. This course, which focuses on MSA skills, contains a general introduction to Egyptian society and culture, and incorporates a wide variety of audio and video materials, lectures, and field trips that help the fellows develop better understanding of the social and cultural environment in which they are living. The Executive Director and Ms. Azza Hassanein, one of CASA's MSA instructors, have undertaken the task of developing instructional materials for this new course. To date, they have selected a number of core texts that were field-tested during the 2006 and 2007 summer sessions to very positive reviews. The materials will be revised and edited and ready for publication by Spring 2009.

iii) Listening Comprehension Materials:

CASA is also redesigning its listening curriculum and is preparing to launch a new material project focusing on listening. During Fall 2006 and Spring 2007, the CASA Director and Executive Director developed guidelines for developing materials for this course, and the listening teachers are working on compiling a bank of Advanced and Superior level listening materials for use both inside and outside the classroom as well as specific global comprehension and intensive listening tasks to accompany each listening selection. The project is scheduled to be completed in year two of this grant as indicated in the timeline.

iv) MSA Vocabulary Project:

Another new material project that will be developed under the current grant aims to facilitate more effective vocabulary acquisition at the Advanced and Superior levels. In summer 2007 the CASA Director and Executive Director, together with two CASA teachers, Kamal ElAkhnawi and Azza Hassanein, started planning for development of a computer-assisted vocabulary learning project for the summer course *Egypt: Society and Culture*. During Summer 2007, a pilot CD was produced based on

vocabulary and expressions drawn from MSA texts used in the *Egypt: Culture and Society* course. The CD's provide an explanation (in Arabic mostly) of the meaning of each vocabulary item and allow the learners to see the new word presented in different contexts so that they can see the different shades of meaning a word might have. Work on this project will continue under the present grant and will be completed by the end of Year Two.

v) Teacher Training:

In addition to the material development projects, CASA plans to conduct a series of training workshops for all members of its faculty. CASA considers teacher training to be one of its highest priorities and will continue to provide opportunities for the faculty to improve their skills and enhance their understanding of the various pedagogical, psychological and cognitive factors involved in learning foreign languages. Under this grant, CASA plans an extensive teacher training program that involves the following workshops:

- ❑ Spring 2008 (pre-grant): Two teacher training mini-workshops to introduce CASA teachers to the new teaching materials for the summer session.
  - ❑ Year One: Two 2-day teacher training workshops in the fall and spring semesters on teaching vocabulary and writing.
  - ❑ Year Two: A 2-day workshop designed specifically for professors who teach CASA's content-based courses and who are not trained as language teachers. The workshop will focus on training these professors on incorporating group work, facilitating discussions, and incorporating task-based activities in their content courses.
  - ❑ Year Three: Two 2-day workshops: one in the fall semester on testing reading and listening, and one in the spring on testing speaking skill in both ECA and MSA.
  - ❑ Year Four : A 3-day teacher training workshop on testing and assessment in both MSA and ECA.
- In addition to these teacher training efforts, CASA has recently initiated a mentoring program for

its junior faculty in which each junior teacher is paired with a senior teacher who serves as her/his mentor. The two visit each other's classes periodically and engage in semester-long discussions on different aspects of teaching, learning, and classroom management. Different teams of mentors/mentees also meet periodically to share ideas and observations with each other. CASA believes this will enhance the overall quality of the program and result in a more coherent and unified program philosophy, objectives, and methodology.

#### **4. QUALITY OF KEY PERSONNEL**

The CASA program is administered by a US-based Director appointed by the CASA Governing Board, an ex-officio Co-Director at AUC (the Director of the Arabic Language Institute at AUC), and an Executive Director based at AUC, and appointed by the CASA Governing Board. CASA is supported by a full-time staff member in Cairo and a full-time staff person at the CASA office at the University of Texas, Austin. The costs of running the stateside operations of CASA and the salary of the US Director are not part of the USED grant, but are provided as cost-sharing by the annual dues paid by the twenty-nine member schools of the CASA Consortium and the program fees paid by the CASA fellows. The USED grant provides 75% funding for the Cairo Executive Director's salary, and the rest is provided as part of CASA's cost-share.

The current CASA Director is Dr. Mahmoud Al-Batal, Associate Professor of Arabic in the Department of Middle Eastern at UT and Associate Director of the National Middle East Language Resource Center (NMELRC). Dr. Al-Batal, who is now completing his seventh year as CASA Director, has taught Arabic for 30 years and is a prominent member of the Arabic teaching profession in the US. He holds a BA in Arabic Language and Literature from the Lebanese University in Beirut, and MA and Ph.D. degrees in Arabic Linguistics from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He has coauthored the *Al-Kitaab* Arabic textbook series (with Kristen Brustad and Abbas Al-Tonsi) published by Georgetown

University Press and widely used throughout the US. In addition, he has published a number of articles on various aspects of teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language. He served as CASA Executive Director in Cairo from 1985 to 1987, Director of the Arabic School at Middlebury College from 1991 to 1998, and Director of the Emory College Language Center from 2000 to 2004. Before coming to the University of Texas, Dr. Al-Batal was named as Emory University's Arthur Blank/NEH Distinguished Teaching Professor. In December 2005, he received the Distinguished Service to the Profession Award from the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL) of the Modern Language Association of America (MLA). Dr. Al-Batal devotes 25 percent of his time to directing the CASA program and this quarter time effort is compensated for entirely by CASA with no financial obligation to the USED grant.

The Stateside Director is appointed for a five-year renewable term and is ultimately responsible for all pedagogical, financial, administrative aspects of the program, both in the US and Egypt. Dr. Al-Batal will continue to serve as Director for the duration of the present grant and will oversee full implementation of its various activities.

Assisting the Stateside Director currently is Ms. Fiorenza Bruni, half-time Program Coordinator of CASA at UT. Ms. Bruni received an MA in Italian Language and Literature from Middlebury College through their intensive study abroad program in Florence, Italy. She obtained a BA in Italian from the University of Texas at Austin. Her professional background has included work as a senior book editor, freelance writer, telecommunications accounts executive, travel and special events coordinator, pastel artist and fundraiser. She has been a member of the UT administrative support staff for nearly 18 years. Historically, the stateside CASA Program Coordinator was employed on a half-time basis; however, due to the recent increase in the number of CASA fellows and the planned expansion into Damascus, CASA has decided to make this position full-time effective October 1, 2007, entirely funded by the CASA Consortium.

In Egypt, Dr. Zeinab Taha, Director of the Arabic Language Institute (ALI) at AUC serves as CASA Co-Director at AUC. Dr. Taha holds a BA in Political Science from AUC, an MA in Teaching

Arabic as a Foreign Language (TAFL) also from AUC, and a Ph.D. in Arabic Linguistics from Georgetown University. Dr. Taha has 30 years of experience in teaching Arabic at AUC, Georgetown University, and Middlebury College, as well as vast experience administering language programs and working with American students. She previously served as CASA Executive Director 1997-1999 and 2004-2006 and as Acting Director for the Arabic Language Institute at AUC during the 2001-2002 academic year. She has published in the areas of Arabic Linguistics and TAFL, and co-edited *A Handbook for Arabic Language Teaching Professionals in the 21st Century* with Elizabeth England of AUC and Kassem Wahba of Georgetown University (Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006). Dr. Taha devotes 5% of her time to CASA and her salary is completely funded by AUC with no cost to the CASA USED grant.

The current CASA Executive Director (since 2006) is Ms. Nevenka Korica, one of CASA's star teachers. Ms. Korica is a native of Serbia who has spent many years in the Arab world. Ms. Korica began studying Arabic in 1981 in the Department of Oriental Philosophy, Belgrade University, and graduated with a B.A. in 1985. She worked as a translator and news announcer in the Arabic service at Radio Yugoslavia. Ms. Korica came to Cairo in 1990 on a scholarship granted by the Egyptian government. She completed the MA Program in Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language (TAFL) at AUC in 1999 and has taught for ALI and CASA prior to becoming CASA Executive Director in 2006. Ms. Korica's possesses native-like proficiency in both MSA and Egyptian Arabic and is considered one of CASA's outstanding teachers and material developers. Her vision and expertise continues to guide the program and its faculty as CASA reshapes its curriculum. The fact she is a non-native speaker of Arabic serves as great inspiration to the CASA fellows because it provides them with a concrete example of what they can achieve in Arabic.

The Executive Director has the responsibility to recruit and train instructors, maintain and develop the curriculum, counsel the fellows, conduct evaluations and testing, write the selection examination, prepare the summer and yearly reports, and run the day-to-day financial administrative and financial affairs of the CASA programs at AUC. The full-time Executive Director of CASA is appointed

for a two-year renewable term; we expect Professor Korica to be reappointed for another two year term (2008-2010). Professor Korica devotes 100% of her time to CASA and her salary is jointly funded by the USED Grant (75%) and CASA (25%).

The Executive Director is assisted by Ms. Wassima Elshafie, CASA Program Coordinator in Cairo. Ms. Elshahfie graduated with a B.A. in Business Administration from Cairo University in 2003. She joined the CASA program in fall 2003, working first as a student assistant, then as a junior secretary. She was promoted to the position of CASA Program Coordinator at AUC in August 2007, on the retirement of Mr. Gaber Haroun, who had served in that position since 1982. Ms. Elshafie devotes 100% of her time to her CASA duties and her salary is funded jointly by the USED grant (66%) and CASA (33%).

CASA faculty and secretarial staff are exclusively host-country personnel. In the summer and fall semesters, CASA draws almost all of its language teachers from the faculty of the Arabic Language Institute at AUC, and in the spring from faculty at other Egyptian universities. All CASA language teachers are experienced and have received substantial training in language pedagogy. All of them hold M.A. degrees in TAFL, and six of them have received Ph.D.'s: two from Georgetown University and two from Ain Shams University in Cairo. (Please see Appendix II for curriculum vitae of directors.)

## **5. BUDGET EFFECTIVENESS AND COST-SHARING:<sup>1</sup>**

The present grant proposal is seeking USED funding in the amount of \$375,000 for each of the four years included in this proposal. While this figure represents the maximum funding allowed by USED for the present funding cycle, it covers only part of the projected expenses of the program. The figures included in the Budget Narrative attachment show that the total actual cost of running the CASA program in Cairo is estimated to be \$533,978 for the first year of this grant with a 3% increase for personnel and benefits, in the subsequent years. CASA hopes to make up for the shortfall by using funds

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed budget figures and a budget narrative are included in the Budget Narrative attachment.

from CASA Consortium dues, program fees, PYOW fees, and dividend income from its Mellon and Ford Endowments at AUC. CASA will use its income from all these sources to the fullest extent possible but would like to underscore the fact that receiving USED funding at the highest level possible is crucial to enable CASA to fulfill its mission. If USED funding is dropped below the \$375,000 level, CASA will be forced to reduce the number of fellowships it plans for the next three years. This would be a most unfortunate development, given the national demand for more Superior level speakers of Arabic. CASA hopes that USED will enable CASA to meet this need by funding it at the maximum level allowed.

The full \$375,000 amount requested from USED for each year under this grant will be used entirely to support the Cairo-based CASA programs; no portions of these funds will be used to support the CASA Stateside office at the University of Texas, Austin. The CASA Consortium will provide cost-share contributions to cover all operating stateside expenses, including US Director and Program Coordinator salaries, operating expenses for the CASA Office at UT, travel and lodging expenses related to the CASA Selection meeting. In addition, as the attached budget narrative section shows, the CASA Consortium will be contributing additional amounts of \$158,978, \$165,935, \$178,648, and \$188,062 respectively in cost-sharing funds to support the various activities proposed for CASA training in Cairo. These amounts reflect the following cost-sharing percentages in the four years of the grant: Year 1 (70% USED, 30% CASA); Year 2 (69% USED, 31% CASA); Year 3 (67% USED, 33% CASA); and Year 4 (66% USED, 34% CASA).

The University of Texas at Austin, receives no indirect costs from the USED budget. At the same time, the University provides space for the administrative offices of the program, administrative support from all levels of the university, including deans and the president, electricity, purchasing and accounting services, the services of the Office of Sponsored Projects and the Grant and Contract Office in processing our proposals, and access to all university facilities accorded to all university staff, including libraries and other research facilities. The Stateside budget provides salaries and benefits for the US Director and the US Program Coordinator, telephone rental and service, equipment and maintenance of physical

properties, supplies, reproduction requirements, postage, fax charges, travel expenses for the Fellowship Selection Committee, and expenses for the annual meeting of the Governing Council and Consortium Representatives.

Like UT, The American University in Cairo receives no indirect costs from the USED budget. The only amount AUC currently receives from the USED budget is \$30,000 per year (under the Contractual line in the accompanying budget figures) to rent four language classrooms and two offices. AUC treats CASA fellows as full-fledged AUC students and provides full administrative support at all levels, including the Office of the President and the Office of the Dean of Students, the direct involvement of the Office of External Affairs, medical care at the AUC Clinic, library facilities, housing for interested summer students, and any other services deemed necessary to make the stay of CASA students productive. These non-dollar costs must also be considered in the cost-sharing figure.

We believe that the budget presented herein is highly cost effective. Experience has shown that the optimum size for a full-year CASA Program is between 25 and 27 fellows. At this size, administrative support can be fully utilized, while a smaller student body requires the same administrative structure and therefore raises per capita cost. In addition, the 25-27 figures allows for flexibility in setting up homogeneous classes according to skill level, which has proven very beneficial academically.

The cost to USED per full-year student of providing CASA fellows with the most advanced Arabic training available anywhere is less than nine months of study at most major US institutions. The per capita cost of around \$12,807 is well below that of many public universities, and yet includes much more: three semesters of full tuition and cultural activities, round-trip travel to Cairo, and a monthly stipend. The current CASA stipend of L.E. 2200 is approximately \$400 per month, well below the current FLAS stipend of \$1,000 per month for graduate students majoring in Middle Eastern Studies at major US universities.

CASA makes concerted efforts to pare down costs to the lowest level possible without diminishing the quality of its programs. The CASA administration is confident that when evaluation is

made on the basis of quality and impact, its budget will be deemed efficient and cost-effective. It is our hope that USED officials will fund CASA at the highest level available in order to help it maintain its leading role in the field of Arabic language training and continue to provide the academic, business, and government sectors with the most competent Arabists produced by the American educational system.

## **6. EVALUATION PLAN:**

### **6.1. FELLOWS' EVALUATION**

Testing and assessment of the fellows' progress rank among CASA's highest priorities, and the program employs a variety of testing tools to assess the extent to which it is meeting its set goals. CASA utilizes a variety of achievement, proficiency, and prochievement tools for evaluating the progress made by the fellows at various stages in the program. To select its fellows and assess their level of proficiency in Arabic, CASA uses proficiency-based evaluation tools for the various skills. Each CASA applicant is required to take a written proficiency exam that assesses proficiency in listening, reading, and writing. The same exam is administered at the end of the program as an exit exam to evaluate the progress made by each fellow in each of these skills (See Appendix VI for a comparison of scores on the CASA Entrance and Exit exams for last year's fellows.) The speaking skill is assessed through an ACTFL OPI given to each CASA applicant in conjunction with the written test. Before they leave the program, each CASA fellow is given an oral interview modeled after the US State Department Foreign Service Institute (FSI) oral exam. The interview has been modified somewhat to suit the CASA academic environment and will continue to be used as the final tool of evaluation of student progress in speaking. Scores on the FSI-style oral interview show the extent of the progress fellows make during their summer or year in CASA (See Appendix VI also for FSI Scores of last year's CASA Fellows).

In addition to these proficiency-based tools, the program employs achievement and prochievement tests that are given periodically in every course to test and evaluate fellows' progress. These tests are supplemented by constant individual feedback from teachers to fellows on how to improve their performance.

## 6.2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

The CASA programs are evaluated on four levels. First, at the middle and the end of each term, fellows are asked to give written evaluations of all aspects of the program, including classes, lectures, administrative and support staff, and the cultural program (see Appendices III and IV for sample evaluation forms). The Executive Director and the Stateside Director read carefully and discuss these comments and suggestions in the course of planning each year's academic and cultural programs. Many of the fellows' suggestions have been put into practice over the years, and have contributed to the rich array of activities that the program currently offers.

Recently, CASA has focused its efforts on receiving evaluative feedback from the fellows on the new materials developed for the CASA summer classes and the new programs introduced in the summer: the "Field trip and chat component and the Service Learning component. A questionnaire on these materials and program components was distributed to all fellows to seek their feedback. The fellows' evaluation of these programs has helped the CASA administration identify areas that need to be modified before next year's summer program.

Secondly, in addition to visiting some classes to observe teacher-student and student-student interaction, the Executive Director meets with the members of all classes several times each term to ascertain students' satisfaction. This feedback is immediately shared with concerned faculty. Furthermore, the Executive Director is available daily to students and faculty alike for consultations on an individual basis regarding any aspect of the CASA programs.

Thirdly, the Stateside Director makes two annual trips to Cairo: one in June to accompany the incoming fellows, and one during the course of the year to carry out the annual program evaluation. During these visits, the Director observes classes and meets with fellows, teachers, and administrators, both individually and in group sessions. The Stateside Director then prepares a formal annual evaluation report based on his observations for presentation to the CASA Governing Council.

Finally, an outside evaluation committee consisting of two Arabic or Middle East area specialists chosen by the CASA Governing Council conducts a comprehensive evaluation of the program every seven years. The evaluation committee prepares an in-depth evaluation of the following areas: (a) quality of personnel, both administrative and academic; (b) quality of student programs, including academic, cultural, and advisory aspects; (c) quality of curricula for each segment of the CASA programs; (d) stateside administration, including consortium matters, student selection, and innovation in the various CASA programs. The evaluation includes detailed recommendations for each of the above areas and is circulated among all members of the CASA Consortium and to any other interested parties upon request. The Evaluation Committee's Report is then discussed at a meeting of the CASA Governing Council, and recommendations are made for the implementation of the evaluation committee's suggestions. The last evaluation of CASA occurred in May 2000.

Under the present grant proposal, a comprehensive outside review is planned in Year Two. By then, the new CASA program in Damascus will be in its third year of operation, and the Cairo instructional materials and new program components will have been fully implemented. The review will be conducted by Professor Kirk Belnap, Professor of Arabic at Brigham Young University and Director of the National Middle East Language Resource Center (NMELRC), and Professor Martha Schulte-Nafeh, Coordinator of the Arabic Program at the University of Arizona. Professors Belnap and Schulte-Nafeh will visit both CASA centers in Cairo and Damascus and review programmatic structures, material development, and student life in both programs. Both Professors Belnap and Schulte-Nafeh have been invited to serve as consultants and they have committed to the project (see Appendix VIII for letters of commitment from both reviewers).

#### **7. ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES:**

The CASA program enjoys tremendous institutional support from both the University of Texas and the American University in Cairo. Both universities are committed to CASA's mission and they have

provided invaluable institutional support to all administrative, financial, and academic aspects of the program.

In Egypt, CASA enjoys many benefits from its association with AUC. First, the university is situated in Cairo, one of the most vibrant centers of culture and politics in the Arab world. Second, the imminent move of AUC to its new campus in New Cairo in Fall 2008 will improve the overall learning environment of CASA fellows in Cairo. The new campus will offer CASA exceptional classroom facilities with “smart classrooms” and ample space for the CASA offices and audio-visual materials library. In addition, CASA fellows will enjoy access to the new state of the art computer labs at AUC and to AUC’s new library facilities, including the famous Creswell Library of Islamic Art and Architecture. CASA fellows may also participate in AUC student clubs and organizations, contribute to student newspapers, and obtain information about "intellectual" gatherings of various interest groups. And finally, CASA’s presence within AUC’s Arabic Language Institute, with its diverse international student body, places the CASA fellows within a global community that offers many opportunities for interaction with international students studying Arabic, thus enhancing their overall experience.

## **8. IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT:**

Over the past forty years, CASA has provided Arabic language and culture training to hundreds of fellows who now work in public and private spheres as experts on the Middle East and the Arab world. CASA has trained over 1,450 academic professionals, diplomats, analysts and other government employees, international development professionals, journalists, lawyers, and business people who continue to influence many spheres of life within the US. CASA continues to excel at its mandate to provide the United States with a pool of expertise in Arab and Middle Eastern affairs with a Superior level of proficiency in Arabic. As the US involvement in the Middle East expands, CASA’s impact will be felt even more within academic and government circles.

US universities, whether or not they are members of the CASA Consortium, are increasingly dependent on CASA for advanced training of their graduate students. Universities also benefit from the participation of their faculty members in the CASA III Program. Students and faculty bring back to their universities from CASA knowledge, skills, experience, and enthusiasm that enrich US programs.

In addition, CASA has motivated and helped Arabic language programs all over the US to reach ever higher standards of language teaching and proficiency. Because CASA employs communicative and proficiency-based entrance exams, Arabic programs have gradually modernized their curricula in order to prepare their students to qualify for the program. In 2001, CASA employed, for the first time, a completely skill-based entrance exam that included, also for the first time, a complete ACTFL OPI conducted over the phone. In so doing, CASA has underscored the importance of proficiency-based testing and presented Arabic programs with a model of how such testing can be undertaken.

Also thanks to CASA, the caliber of Arabic teaching in the US has substantially improved. CASA graduates include professors of Arabic at many colleges and universities throughout the nation. These graduates apply the techniques they experienced while studying in CASA, and some of them are at the forefront in the development of new methods and materials for the teaching of Arabic.

In addition to training future Arabic instructors, CASA is responsible for producing teaching materials and developing innovative teaching methods to serve the needs of advanced Arabic learners in the U.S. and abroad. The teaching materials for ECA, MSA, and listening comprehension currently under development at CASA will be made available to advanced level Arabic programs in the US and will help improve the overall quality of instruction in these programs, especially at the Advanced level and beyond, where it is most needed.

CASA can also take much of the credit for improving the language proficiency of scholars in Middle Eastern disciplines in general. Without CASA, political scientists, historians, anthropologists and other Middle East specialists would not have obtained the language training they needed for their

research. These CASA fellows too now swell the ranks of Middle Eastern Studies faculty across the country; CASA graduates teach at nearly every major U.S. program in Middle Eastern Studies.

The extent to which CASA can impact the academic, government, and business fields in the US is heavily dependent on the amount of federal funding it receives. Eight fellows participated in the pilot 1967 CASA program; this number rose to a peak of 60 in 1973, but then, due to decreased federal funding, dropped to 56 in 1974, averaged 30-35 during the period 1975 to 1991, and fell to a low of 19 full-year fellows in fiscal years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. Currently the number stands at 25 USED-funded full-year fellows. CASA plans to increase this number to 27 full-year fellows to enable CASA to further its educational impact; however, to achieve this goal, CASA needs the full amount requested in this proposal.

#### **9. RELEVANCE TO INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

The University of Texas, Austin is applying for this grant on behalf of all twenty-nine institutional members of the CASA Consortium; however, UT believes that CASA's mission fits well within its own international and educational mission. The University of Texas at Austin is a world-class university that is firmly committed to international education. UT's Center for Global Educational Opportunities (C-GEO) is "one of the largest study abroad programs in the U.S., offering a rich array of educational experiences in nearly eighty countries. Last year alone, over 2,000 UT students traveled the globe to learn in a variety of programs and settings. UT's goal is to make international learning experiences available to every UT-Austin student as the world is increasingly "globalized" and the opportunities and need for people with significant cross-cultural skills and experience have never been greater."<sup>2</sup>

The CASA mission fits extremely well within UT's vision for Arabic. Over the past five years, UT's commitment to Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies has grown tremendously, and this has made the

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<sup>2</sup> Excerpt taken from C\_GEO web site <http://www.utexas.edu/student/abroad/about/index.html>

UT Arabic program one of the strongest programs in the nation. UT currently has seven full-time professors of Arabic (4 tenured professors, 1 tenure track, and 2 lecturer tracks) and is currently searching for an 8<sup>th</sup> position in Arabic Language and literature. This represents the largest number of tenured and tenure-track positions fully dedicated to Arabic language and literature in any US institution. Currently, 20 graduate students are pursuing MA and PhD degrees in Arabic Studies at UT, five of whom are CASA graduates. In addition, UT was recently designated as an Arabic Flagship Center, and is using NSEP funding to provide no-strings-attached opportunities for American undergraduates to reach Superior level of proficiency in Arabic, and funding for six graduate students, who serve as language mentors to these undergraduates.

CASA benefits from the resources UT provides, and UT benefits from CASA as well. Because of CASA's prominence in the field of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies, UT's international visibility is enhanced. CASA also provides UT students with more opportunities for advanced language training abroad. Last year five UT students joined CASA: one received a full-year CASA fellowship in Damascus, one a full-year fellowship in Cairo, one joined CASA as a PYOW fellow, and 3 received CASA Summer fellowships.

#### **10. NEED FOR THE OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE:**

The extended overseas experience that CASA provides is essential to the mission of the program for several reasons. Students of Arabic cannot reach a Superior level of proficiency in the language without developing proficiency in at least one Arabic dialect and without acquiring the ability to switch back and forth between MSA and the dialect or combine elements from both varieties based on various sociolinguistic contexts. Such ability can only develop in an immersion setting, because the necessary amount of exposure to and participation in a full range of authentic cultural situations cannot be duplicated at institutions in the US. The inseparable links between language and culture make living in an Arabic-speaking environment crucial to developing Superior language skills. Fellows of the CASA

Egypt program live and study in Cairo, a cultural capital of the Arab world. Cairo's position as a political, economic, and intellectual center gives participants a wealth of opportunities to experience Egyptian culture and society from many perspectives. CASA takes advantage of its location by bringing students into contact with important Egyptian scholars and public figures through courses and guest lectures. This helps expose CASA fellows to Egyptian literature, history and politics, and provides channels for cross-cultural exchange between the U.S. and one of its most important allies in the Middle East.

A substantial portion of the CASA curriculum focuses on Egyptian Colloquial Arabic, the most widely spoken and understood dialect of Arabic. Because of Egypt's influence in film, music, and other fields, many Arabic speakers outside of Egypt understand the Egyptian dialect, making it useful for communication across the Arab world. By living and studying in Cairo, fellows interact daily with Egyptians outside of the classroom, providing constant language practice and exposure. The CASA curriculum also includes trips to important sites around Cairo, allowing fellows to study Egyptian history and culture first-hand.

Living abroad also serves long-term professional goals. CASA provides all participants in CASA summer, full year, CASA II, and CASA III programs an invaluable opportunity to develop and plan future research projects and make contacts in Egypt. It gives them access to national libraries and archives as well as experts in their fields of study. Many CASA fellows go on to receive research fellowships such as Fulbright and American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), in part because granting agencies know that CASA graduates have the linguistic and cultural skills necessary to successfully carry out their proposed work.

Finally, living in Egypt allows CASA fellows to serve an extremely important function as ambassadors of American values, ideals, and goodwill toward the people of Egypt. The current state of relations between the US and the Arab world makes it imperative for more Americans to study the languages and cultures of this region and to experience living abroad as a means of more meaningful intercultural communication.

## **11. COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITIES:**

The present CASA proposal meets **two** of the three USED priorities established for FY 2008.

These two priorities are

1) Absolute priority:

CASA proposes to conduct its entire group training activities in Cairo, Egypt. In addition, the various language and cultural training components that take place within the CASA program focus on Egypt and the entire Arab world located within the Near East, an area specifically designated by USED as priority area for FY 2008.

2) Competitive Preference priority I:

CASA is proposing an advanced overseas intensive language program in Egypt, a country in which Arabic is spoken. Arabic is one of the languages specifically designated by USED as priority languages for FY 2008.