LinguaMeeting

CREATIVE WAYS TO FUND LINGUAMEETING

Innovative Strategies to Implement LinguaMeeting: Insights from Three Universities
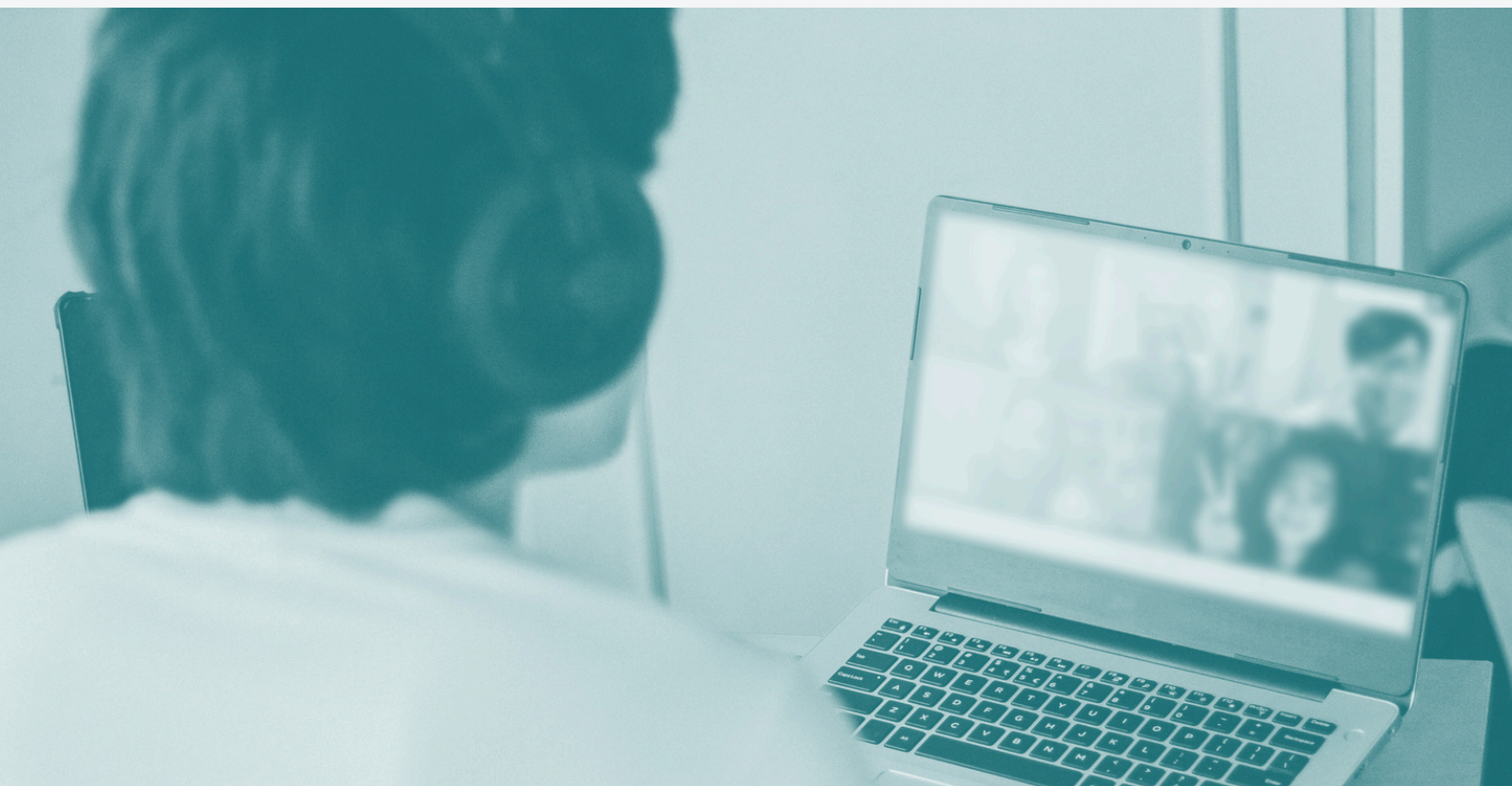
Table of Contents

Creative Funding Strategies for Student Access to LinguaMeeting

How Three Schools Are Funding Student Access

Conversation practice with native speakers is a hugely beneficial experience for all language learners—and technological advances have made this possible for a whole new generation through online platforms like LinguaMeeting. Schools that require speaking practice with online language coaches as part of their regular classes find that it dramatically improves both student engagement and performance.

However, at a time when the cost of education is prohibitively high for many college students, adding the cost of live conversations with language coaches is a decision that requires careful consideration. Language departments sometimes hesitate to make these services a required part of the course because they come at an additional cost—one that they don't want to pass on to students.

Some LinguaMeeting adopters are so passionate about making this service affordable for their students that they find creative workarounds to reallocate existing fees or funds. Schools considering using LinguaMeeting for their language courses but concerned about cost can learn from those who have found creative solutions.

Let's learn more about the valuable service driving these decisions.

Why is LinguaMeeting so popular?

LinguaMeeting is an online platform that provides language students with access to native-speaker coaches trained to provide conversation practice in nine languages. It offers regular language practice and cultural experiences to students of all language abilities, from basic language skills to graduate level.

LinguaMeeting is a popular choice for language programs because:

It lowers student anxiety about language learning.
LinguaMeeting's coaches are well-trained to put students at ease and help them feel comfortable with making mistakes.

It helps students make a personal, real-world connection.
The coaches share personal information and experiences, providing a rare window into their daily lives and cultures. Deepening a relationship with a real person adds infinite dimension to the conversations and gives students real-world practice, which builds their confidence.

The coaches receive training that prepares them to help students level up.
Not only do the coaches show kindness and compassion in their chats with students, but they also know how to connect the conversation to the language skills the student is working on in class.

Small group sessions are available.
Beginning students, in particular, may feel nervous about a one-on-one meeting with a coach—and their language ability at that point may limit the conversation. Small group sessions are an excellent (and more affordable) way to ease into conversation practice because the spotlight isn't all on one person.

Students get exposure to excellent cultural content.
LinguaMeeting coaches host live Experiences on Zoom—covering fascinating and lively cultural topics like the food, history, architecture, and cultural events of their hometown or region.

LinguaMeeting's customer support team helps make the transition seamless.
The team is well-known for being reliable and responsive, making the onboarding process easy for instructors.

In addition to all the benefits above, schools using LinguaMeeting report that **students who supplement their course experience with live conversation practice progress more quickly, have more fun, and build more confidence.**

Collecting Funds from an Existing Lab Fee at Columbus State

🏫 Overview

Bobby Nixon, Associate Professor of Spanish at Columbus State University, decided to pilot LinguaMeeting in Fall 2024 while using a different service provider simultaneously. Columbus State is a regional university where most students attend college with financial aid support.

The Spanish Department at Columbus State has been charging a student fee for over twenty years, repurposing it for different uses over time. The student fee, around $15-20, was put in place to fund the computer lab and conduct level tests.

However, many departments have fees designed to support computer labs that are no longer needed, as most students now have their own laptops. Additionally, the university no longer allows students to move levels based on level tests. As a result, it became possible to redirect 100% of these funds toward conversation practice.

In this case, the fee comes from financial aid for tuition, so it doesn't appear to the student as an additional charge. In some states, like Georgia, you can't add new fees.

Instructors can also emphasize the benefits so that students really understand the value of what they're getting. "An instructor should emphasize that students have lots of choices. They can choose their coach and a broad variety of Experiences opportunities," said Nixon. "They really appreciate that."

Nixon also said that the experience of using LinguaMeeting substantially reduced the work for instructors because instructors can select pre-designed conversation guides to assign to their courses. They no longer have to create and upload content for student conversations.

> *"Students enjoy LinguaMeeting quite a bit more—including their unlimited access to Experiences," Nixon said. "I'm really happy with this trial."*

Takeaway

☑ *Explore whether a fee already exists that could be redirected for this purpose—especially if it's funding something like a now-defunct language lab.*

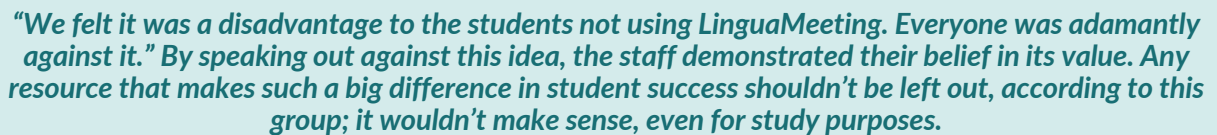# Using Online Course Fees to Fund LinguaMeeting Sessions

🎓 Overview

The Spanish Coordinator at a public university in the Southeastern USA* introduced LinguaMeeting to their department after previously using another service provider.

The university's department had an opportunity to capture funds coming in via tuition because online courses at their university are slightly more expensive than face-to-face ones.

"For online classes that are completely online, the university charges more. So the difference goes into a fund for the department, and we can use that money for classes," the coordinator mentioned. Currently, the online sections fund the face-to-face sections because there's no direct mechanism to raise money for in-person courses.

While anecdotal evidence shows that students using LinguaMeeting are more confident in their language skills, the administration would like to see a study proving that it increases proficiency. They proposed running a control group without access to LinguaMeeting—and comparing their results with another group that had access.

"We felt it was a disadvantage to the students not using LinguaMeeting. Everyone was adamantly against it." By speaking out against this idea, the staff demonstrated their belief in its value. Any resource that makes such a big difference in student success shouldn't be left out, according to this group; it wouldn't make sense, even for study purposes.

The coordinator also underscored the importance of listing LinguaMeeting as "Required Material," since scholarships and financial aid can pay for it as long as it's "required" and not "suggested."

Takeaway

✓ *Find out if there are any fees that fund online course materials. Ensure LinguaMeeting is designated as "Required Materials," not optional—and encourage students to work with their financial aid officer to clear up any potential confusion about whether LinguaMeeting can be covered by financial aid.*

This University prefers to remain anonymous.

Healthy Budgets of the Past Set a Precedent at the University of Chicago

🎓 Overview

At the University of Chicago, Spanish Language Program Director Nené Lozada explained how past budget planning aligned with the program's pedagogical vision. This approach helped secure dedicated funding for online conversation practice.

Historically, graduate students in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures (RLL) led small conversation groups as part of their pedagogical training. Known as "lectors," they played a crucial role in the program.

"The lectors needed to understand the program's overall goals so they could effectively guide students' speaking practice," said Lozada. "It wasn't all about grammar—it was about meaningful conversation in small groups."

Nevertheless, as the program expanded, they didn't have enough grad students to staff all the conversation groups. A few undergraduate students were hired to compensate, but this solution proved costly, and the undergraduates lacked the expertise needed for the role. "Coordinating the lector sessions became increasingly challenging," Lozada noted.

At this point, the department received an invitation to try a different service provider offering an online communication platform. The pilot program proved highly effective, resolving logistical issues such as hiring lectors, securing small rooms, and managing scheduling conflicts. A few years later, the department introduced LinguaMeeting for introductory Spanish courses.

> *"LinguaMeeting became an excellent complement to these courses because the conversations were structured and guided," Lozada explained.*

The changes, driven by the university's commitment to promoting language studies, led to the reallocation of funding to platforms like LinguaMeeting.

"We have a team of dedicated colleagues committed to language education, as well as strong institutional support for both instructors and students," Lozada mentioned. "We're uniquely positioned to request budget allocations that align with our pedagogical goals. The funding exists, but it requires approval."

Students also recognize the value of these resources. "Many appreciate that the university provides this opportunity, and some even choose to continue practicing their language skills after completing their courses," said Lozada.

Takeaway

✅ *Past spending can set a helpful precedent for future budgets. Understanding your department's financial history can help shape budget expectations moving forward. You may find that using LinguaMeeting is a cost-saving measure compared to previous expenditures.*

Steps for Creative Funding: From Pilot to Full Implementation

🎓 Overview

Based on these three schools' experiences, there are several different channels you can pursue as an instructor or department chair to explore funding opportunities.

These include:

Smart small: Run a pilot.

- Collect student and instructor feedback and learning outcomes. To build a compelling case, ask about confidence levels, proficiency, and engagement.
- Always ask students, "Do you recommend that your instructor requires LinguaMeeting in future semesters?" This is a key data point!

Align LinguaMeeting features with institutional and departmental priorities.

- Evaluate the benefits of LinguaMeeting, such as cultural competency, language proficiency, and equity, and determine how they align with the goals of your institution and department. Leverage the aligned goals.
- Build administrative support: Work with department chairs, deans, and administrators.

Identify and leverage internal and external resources.

Internal Funding:
- Study the budget. Is there a language lab fee that's no longer needed? Another type of online course fee that could be used? Consider reallocating existing fee structures to support the use of LinguaMeeting.
- Consider adding a fee if that makes sense, provided it doesn't conflict with state legislation prohibiting the creation of new fees.

External Opportunities:
- Apply for grants to support initial implementation and data collection.
- Departments can also look at applying for grant money, especially mini-grants. For example, use a smaller grant to cover LinguaMeeting for a year, and collect data on student anxiety. Universities want this data.

Leverage financial aid and student buy-in.

- List LinguaMeeting as "Required Material" to enable financial aid coverage.
- Educate students on accessing financial aid and encourage departmental support in navigating these processes.
- Use student surveys to demonstrate broad support and perceived benefits.

How Does LinguaMeeting Pricing Work?

📒 Pricing Structure and Accessibility

The pricing for conversation sessions varies depending on the type, duration, and total number of sessions. The LinguaMeeting website provides **pricing details and a price estimator**.

LinguaMeeting strives to keep the cost as low as possible for students. For $40, students can get a package of six one-on-one, fifteen-minute sessions or six thirty-minute, small-group sessions.

LinguaMeeting Grants

- ☑ Curriculum Enhancement Grant
- ☑ Experiences Grant
- ☑ Conference Presentation Grant
- ☑ Technology Research Grant

Learn more here!

As a company, LinguaMeeting strongly believes in its services and wants to make them as accessible as possible. Numerous additional research studies highlighting the successful integration of LinguaMeeting into language classes are available for further reading.
Go to this folder to access case studies and more.

Conclusion

In a climate of declining enrollments and surging education costs, language departments are understandably hesitant to add more to students' financial obligations—and, in some cases, constrained by state legislation designed to protect students from having to pay additional or hidden fees.

But, as the three schools above have demonstrated, sometimes opportunities already exist to pay for the service by redefining a budget or reallocating funds. It can even be as simple as reframing or redefining the purpose of a budget line in light of modern developments, such as a now-defunct language lab.

The potential benefits of online conversation practice are huge, including anxiety reduction, increased cultural awareness, and deeper engagement in the course. Reach out to LinguaMeeting for help designing your creative solution and transforming language learning outcomes for your students.

LinguaMeeting