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## **NEW MLA SURVEY REPORT SHOWS ADVANCED LANGUAGE STUDY GROWS FOR SEVERAL LANGUAGES DESPITE LOWER OVERALL LANGUAGE ENROLLMENTS IN US COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

**Comprehensive nationwide report reveals increases in the study of  
Korean, American Sign Language, Portuguese, and Chinese.**

(New York, NY) The language interests of students in US colleges and universities are continuing to diversify, according to a comprehensive new report, *Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2013*, released today by the Modern Language Association of America (MLA). While total enrollments in languages other than English decreased since the MLA's last survey in 2009, several languages saw increasing enrollments, and particularly growth in enrollments in advanced language classes.

The MLA report is the longest-running comprehensive analysis of the study of languages other than English at US colleges and universities; this is the twenty-third survey in the series. The report includes undergraduate and graduate course enrollments in languages other than English in fall 2013 for 2,616 AA-, BA-, MA-, and PhD-granting colleges and universities in the United States. Partial funding for the report came from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Security Educational Program.

Total language enrollments on US college campuses decreased by 6.7% between 2009 and 2013. But some languages—Korean, American Sign Language (ASL), Portuguese, and Chinese—showed higher enrollments. The sharpest percentage increase was in Korean enrollments, which rose at every institutional level between 2009 and 2013: 27.6% in two-year institutions, 45.3% in four-year institutions, and 86.6% in graduate programs. This growth in 2013 follows increases of 18.2% between 2006 and 2009 and 37.1% between 2002 and 2006. American Sign Language continued to experience strong growth, showing an increase of 19.0% in total enrollments, and was the language with the third most enrollments, displacing German, now fourth. Also up were enrollments in Portuguese (10.1%) and Chinese (2.0%).

Advanced enrollments—those in third- and fourth-year classes—as a percentage of all undergraduate language enrollments increased for six languages between 2006 and 2013 (ASL, Arabic, Chinese, Biblical Hebrew, Modern Hebrew, and Japanese); between 2009 and 2013, the percentage also increased for an additional three languages (Ancient Greek, Russian, and Spanish). In 2013, advanced classes made up 20% or more of all the undergraduate enrollments in Chinese, Biblical Hebrew, Portuguese, and Russian. “It’s encouraging to see more students studying languages in greater depth,” said Rosemary G. Feal, the executive director of the MLA. “Advanced courses allow students to achieve the kind of linguistic and cultural proficiency they need to participate in a multilingual world.”

Although Spanish remains the most studied language, with total enrollments surpassing enrollments in all other languages combined, for the first time in the history of the survey, enrollments in the language declined at all levels, falling by 8.2% overall. “This change suggests that students in US classrooms have more options than they had in the past. They may be coming from high school with knowledge of a language other than Spanish or French, and they are taking advantage of the impressive array of offerings at the college level,” said Feal.

Data from this survey have also been added to the [MLA Language Map](#), where visitors can view language programs and enrollments in the context of where languages are spoken in the United States. Researchers who want to find out more about enrollments over time and to search by state or institution can create custom reports in the [Language Enrollment Database, 1958–2013](#).

### Key Findings of the Report

Following are some of the key findings of *Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2013*.

- Total enrollments in all languages decreased by 6.7% between 2009 and 2013, after rising by 6.2% between 2006 and 2009 and by 12.9% between 2002 and 2006.
- Enrollments increased in Korean (44.7%), American Sign Language (19.0%), Portuguese (10.1%), and Chinese (2.0%).
- Spanish and French still led as the two most studied languages. American Sign Language continued to experience remarkable growth and was the language with the third most enrollments, displacing German, now fourth.
- The top languages studied in US colleges and universities in fall 2013 were

Language	Enrollments	Change since 2009
Spanish	790,756	–8.2%
French	197,757	–8.1%
American Sign Language	109,577	+19.0%
German	86,700	–9.3%
Italian	71,285	–11.3%
Japanese	66,740	–7.8%
Chinese	61,055	+2.0%
Arabic	32,286	–7.5%
Latin	27,192	–16.2%
Russian	21,962	–17.9%
Greek, Ancient	12,917	–35.5%
Hebrew, Biblical	12,551	–8.7%
Portuguese	12,415	+10.1%
Korean	12,229	+44.7%
Hebrew, Modern	6,698	–19.4%

- Spanish enrollments fell at every institutional level for the first time in the history of the survey. In absolute numbers, nearly half the drop was at the two-year-college level. Nevertheless, total enrollments in Spanish continued to surpass enrollments in all other languages combined, 790,756 to 771,423.

- Although most of the commonly taught languages showed double-digit declines in graduate enrollments, graduate enrollments grew in American Sign Language (216.3%), Chinese (9.7%), Korean (86.6%), Portuguese (18.4%), and Russian (0.8%). The number of bachelor's degrees in these languages, as reported by the United States Department of Education, also increased in 2013.
- Eighty-four more institutions in 2013 reported enrollments in Chinese than did in 2009, 26 more in American Sign Language, 23 more in Arabic, 19 more in Korean, and 17 more in Portuguese.
- Offerings in less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) can be transitory: 63 LCTLs with enrollments in 2013 did not show enrollments in 2006 or 2009, whereas 56 LCTLs offered in either one or both of the two previous surveys were not offered in 2013. Many LCTLs were offered at multiple institutions across the country, but 104 were taught in only one reporting institution.
- Enrollments in numerous individual language programs did not decrease in 2013, despite national declines. While national figures for enrollments in French fell by 8.1% between 2009 and 2013, 37.9 % of all French programs reported growth. Arabic enrollments fell nationally by 7.5%, but 41.9% of all Arabic programs recorded increased enrollments. Spanish enrollments fell nationally by 8.2%, but 36.9% of all Spanish programs reported enrollment growth.

“At a time when so many language programs are facing financial constraints, it’s inspiring to see how some programs are thriving,” said Feal. “If we are going to give *all* students the opportunity to pursue advanced language study, we need to document what successful programs are doing and advocate these models.”

### **Methodology**

The new MLA survey counts fall 2013 undergraduate and graduate course enrollments in languages other than English at 2,616 AA-, BA-, MA-, and PhD-granting colleges and universities in the United States. The response rate for the survey was 98.3%. Approximately one-third of the responses came from two-year colleges, and two-thirds from four-year institutions.

To conduct the survey, the MLA contacted registrars and other school representatives by mail, telephone, and e-mail. The MLA listing of institutions was supplemented with information from the National Center for Education Statistics, among other sources, to ensure that all eligible institutions were accounted for. The survey measures course enrollments, not the number of students studying a language.

### **About the Modern Language Association**

The Modern Language Association of America and its 26,000 members in nearly 100 countries work to strengthen the study and teaching of languages and literatures. Founded in 1883, the MLA provides opportunities for its members to share their scholarly findings and teaching experiences with colleagues and to discuss trends in the academy. The MLA sustains a wide-ranging print and electronic publishing program that includes books, journals, style guides, and an international bibliography. More information on MLA programs is available at <http://www.mla.org>.