



# Case Studies from the 2021 Enrollments Report

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This document contains the case studies from *Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in US Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2021* and is meant to be used as a resource in workshops and seminars, as well as by all those who are interested in learning more about the practices of successful language programs.

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### Emory and Henry College: Putting Language to Work

Emory and Henry College, a small liberal arts college in southwestern Virginia, has been educating students since 1836 and currently enrolls over 1,000 students—a statistic that makes the 277 Spanish enrollments in fall 2021 stand out. Mary Bell Boltwood, chair of the World Languages Department, notes, “Our county is only 1.6% Hispanic so not a lot of local businesses have found the need to adequately serve this community.” The department’s students, however, have stepped into the gap. “Our introductory Medical Spanish students work on creating a medical *fotonovela* during their second semester. They then volunteer at a health fair each semester for Hispanic migrant farmworkers, where they distribute their *fotonovelas* while working at the different stations.” Advanced Spanish students also “volunteered over an entire semester to translate a collection of legal forms for our county sheriff’s office. The deputy contacted us to ask us to do this. It was part of a translation unit in the course. This year they also worked with our Mass Communications department to translate some health-related radio announcements.”

Boltwood notes that many students take Spanish with an eye to professional advancement. The two-semester introductory sequence Medical Spanish, for example, is very popular with prehealth students. Such courses are usually only available at the intermediate level, “but we found offering it at the beginner level serves to interest these students more because they can see the utility of learning a second language.” Thus, even if “they do not go on to take intermediate level courses, they still leave the introductory course with a good foundation to use in their future careers in the healthcare field.” The success with Medical Spanish has prompted interest in doing something similar for business majors and for those entering the field of human services.

Such interdisciplinary thinking is not new to the department. “We do not have interdisciplinary degrees, but 99% of our students are double majors,” Boltwood says. The few Spanish

majors tend to be students interested in teaching Spanish; the department encourages students in other areas of study to consider Spanish as a second major that would pair with careers outside teaching. Boltwood points to a yearly cultural program cohosted with Career Services before Advising Week that helps foster interest in majoring or minoring in Spanish. “We invite in staff, faculty, alumni, and current students who talk about how knowing a second language has impacted their career or personal lives. It is a casual event,” she notes, “but it really seems to resonate with the students.”

## University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley: Training Interpreters for South Texas

The University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley, enrolled its first class in 2015 and grew from 28,500 to almost 32,000 students by the fall of 2021. Even more impressively, the university’s enrollments in American Sign Language (ASL) increased from just over 400 in fall 2016 to over 650 in fall 2021. And the university set up the ASL Interpretation Program, coordinated by Brian Cheslik, just before the pandemic, to meet the growing need for ASL interpreters in the Rio Grande Valley cities of South Texas.

Shawn Saladin, the associate vice president for faculty affairs, has said that creating an ASL major was a “dream.” Saladin has severe congenital progressive sensorineural hearing loss and received little community support while growing up. “They told me I would never go to college, and I wouldn’t even go to community college, so, ‘Don’t worry about it,’” he told the student newspaper, *The Rider*, in 2019. The new major, he noted, would not only help allay social isolation among the 15,000 people who are deaf in the Rio Grande Valley but also meet a nationwide need for interpreting services.

Cheslik points to both the state of Texas and his institution for the growth of the ASL Interpretation Program. “Since our program is still new, it is state-funded for the first five years before the university helps to fund.” Further, the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders and “college administration are very supportive of our work. We do revise our curriculum each year and college/department awards are given based on college programming.” The university has been designated a Hispanic-serving institution by the Department of Education; Cheslik notes this is an advantage: “Many of our students are bilingual already. Our program requires that students choose a concentration, so many choose Spanish translation to help them become skilled trilingual interpreters,” and students are eligible for both state and national ASL interpreter certifications.

Students proceed through the program as a cohort, taking many of the same courses together. They may also participate in the ASL Club, which works with the local community. “They host fundraisers and events in partnership with the local Deaf community and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Center,” Cheslik says, and they also work with the local DeafBlind Camp of Texas to sponsor informational and social events. The club also works to build ties with those outside the Deaf community. In summer 2022 the club offered six weeks of free ASL and Deaf awareness training to emergency personnel in several South Texas cities.

## University of Kansas: Finding Support in and out of the University

The University of Kansas first reported enrollments in Korean in the 1977 census, and through the 1980s the numbers remained in the single digits; by the 1990s enrollments had grown, leaping to 42 in the 1998 census. Enrollments were steadily in the thirties and forties through the early 2000s censuses, growing to 60 in 2013 and to 69 in 2016, and then jumping again, to 106, in the 2021 census.

Faye Xiao, chair of the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures (EALC), credits a number of offices for the increased Korean enrollments. “The KU Center for East Asian Studies (CEAS) plays a critical role: Title VI grants allow us to help students study in Korea with [the Department of Education’s Foreign Language and Area Studies] scholarships, hire lecturers to teach upper-level Korean courses, and hold writing contests with cash awards and cultural events such as the Lunar New Year’s Celebration and a Moon Viewing Party.” In addition to advocating for more funding from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), the department has successfully added new positions, including graduate teaching assistants, lecturers, and an assistant teaching professor, to its Korean program to meet the growing demand of students. “This fall [2023], with the support of a Korea Foundation grant, EALC will start a national search for a new tenure-track assistant professor position in Korean studies,” says Xiao. Further, the department uses the CLAS funding every spring semester to hire an Oral Proficiency Instructor (OPI), who works closely with students in small group sessions, facilitates students’ speaking practice, and conducts individual OPI tests.

Xiao notes that “South Korea has been one of the most popular destinations for KU’s study abroad program, which has been amplified by the generosity of KU alumni who have awarded scholarships to our students for study at South Korea’s top universities.” The Office of Study Abroad works with Korean studies faculty members to “help students locate the most suitable universities in South Korea,” while the Department of Curriculum and Teaching, which created the Teach English in Korea program, sends about ten students from the Korean language courses to a high school in Korea to teach English during the summer.

The Korean community in Lawrence is small, Xiao notes, and there is little need within the business community for Korean language learning. However, EALC works with the Language Training Center to bring Korean language classes to military personnel at the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth.

The department is quite active within the university, participating in university recruitment events, alumni seminars, the Business in East Asia symposium, the World Languages Fair for regional high school students, the Lawrence High School Multicultural Fall Festival, the KU Majors Fair, and the International Jayhawk Festival. Working with alumni groups and donors has also resulted in the aforementioned scholarships for study in Korea, and Xiao mentions the possibility of other alumni’s donating their Korean-language collections to the East Asian library at KU and establishing a scholarship in Korean studies.

Given the small Korean community in Lawrence, there is little need for heritage course offerings; rather, the increasing influence of Korean culture in the United States has

prompted a corresponding interest in Korean studies courses. “According to our precourse survey,” Xiao says, “most of our students take Korean because of their interest in Korean popular culture and/or desire to communicate with their Korean friends.” The department has taken note of this interest, encouraging Korean language and culture courses in EALC as well as related courses across the humanities and social sciences. EALC has also updated and expanded its curriculum. “A big step occurred in 2012, when we offered fourth-year Korean for the first time and increased credit hours from three to four for third-year Korean,” Xiao notes. “We doubled lecture classes for first-year Korean in 2019 and second-year Korean in 2020. We have been offering fifth-year Korean since 2015, making KU one of the ten US universities offering five levels of Korean language and a major/minor, according to the American Association of Teachers of Korean.” This has resulted, Xiao concludes, in a Korean program “thriving because of quality instruction by well-trained and caring instructors. The success is facilitated by up-to-date teaching materials, excellent communication among the instructors as well as between the teachers and students, and the safe and conducive learning environment that we have fostered.”

### **University of California, Los Angeles: Focusing on Heritage Speakers’ Language Needs**

While Los Angeles is home to a large number of students who speak Armenian, Turkish, and Hebrew at home, the number of courses and programs in these languages is often limited across US institutions. In addition to offering courses in nearly fifty different languages, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), accommodates the language needs of these heritage speakers through its Near Eastern Languages and Cultures department and its HEA–Title VI Center for Near Eastern Studies and Title VI National Heritage Language Resource Center. Sariel Birnbaum, a lecturer of Hebrew, encourages students to apply Hebrew to real-life situations. He asks students to describe their daily schedules, stories that they are reading, and stories from Israeli news or cinema in Hebrew. They also participate in mock trials based on Israeli court cases.

Zeynep Durmuş, a lecturer of Turkish, says that the Turkish program addresses an important need for Turkish language instruction in the United States: “Because of Turkey’s historical, political, and economic role in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, knowing and mastering the Turkish language and culture is an important need. To help meet this need, UCLA’s Turkish language program offers Basic Turkish, Advanced Turkish, and Ottoman Reading.” Students enrolled in Turkish courses are encouraged to develop career advancement skills by reading Turkish academic publications and newspapers, accessing archival documents on Middle Eastern and Ottoman history, and conducting field research.

Los Angeles has one of the largest populations of Armenians outside Armenia. Apart from the program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, UCLA’s Armenian program is the only one outside Armenia to offer instruction in Classical, Western, and Eastern Armenian. The program, which is mostly populated by heritage speakers, works closely with Armenian

organizations—including the National Association for Armenian Studies; Analysis, Research and Planning for Armenia; and Ararat Museum, as well as Armenian private schools and Armenian programs at local community colleges—to cosponsor lectures, conferences, and other events, such as UCLA’s annual Armenian Debating Contest, adjudicated by graduate students, says S. Peter Cowe, a professor of Armenian.

Since Eastern Armenian is spoken in Armenia and Western Armenian is spoken mostly outside Armenia, the program ensures that all Armenian learners are able to apply the languages outside their courses. Creative Literacy is an initiative developed by the program to promote literacy through creative and productive application of the language, such as publishing fiction works. “More than a handful of our students have been published in Armenian literary magazines, including the first case of an American-born author publishing a full-length volume of fiction based on works created in our courses, which had critical acclaim even in Armenia,” says Hagop Kouloujian, a lecturer of Western Armenian. “Other authors are to be published soon.”

### **University of Georgia; University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa; and Boise State University: Connecting with Local Communities**

Interacting with local bilingual communities not only facilitates language application but also helps students gain a greater appreciation for culture. At the University of Georgia, which offers instruction in over fifty languages, students and teachers from the university’s Vietnamese language program often visit local businesses and communities and invite guest speakers to campus. Masaki Mori, the head of Comparative Literature and Intercultural Studies, says that the department has created teaching awards for their teaching assistants.

The University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa, had an 86.9% total increase in Hawai‘ian language enrollments since 2016, along with strong increases in French, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish. One approach to encouraging language enrollments has been connecting with the many diverse local communities near campus. “Each of our language sections . . . offers a Culture Day event every year and invites not only our own students but local community members, including seniors and high school and middle school students, either as attendants or volunteers,” says Mee-Jeong Park, the chair of the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures. “In addition, some of our instructors offer service-learning opportunities at community venues through their advanced-level classes.” The University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa, an HEA–Title VI East Asian National Resource Center, has Language Flagship Programs for Chinese and Korean. In addition to undergoing intensive language training, students are required to complete an overseas capstone for Chinese (currently in Taiwan) and Korean. The Japanese section is the only program outside Okinawa that offers Okinawan language and culture courses.

According to Lucía Aranda, the chair of the Department of Languages and Literatures of Europe and the Americas, the local Latino community makes up 9.3% of the Hawai‘ian population, and there are three hundred Latino students at the university. To support heritage

speakers of Spanish, some courses in the Spanish program have adopted a project-based learning approach. Students in Spanish 303 produced a bilingual podcast, *Somos 808*. “The focus of the project was understanding the lived experiences of the local Spanish-speaking community in Hawai‘i and building connections with them,” says Aranda. “Students in the class came up with episode pitches, conducted interviews with members of the Spanish-speaking community in Hawai‘i, and produced five episodes on a variety of topics.” She adds that projects such as the podcast, which is available on Google Podcasts, Anchor, and Spotify, allows learners to use their language skills in a meaningful way.

The Department of World Languages at Boise State University offers courses in twelve languages, including less frequently taught languages such as Basque and Bosnian. The department chair, Jason Herbeck, reports that students and faculty members interact heavily with the local communities for nearly every language offered by the department. Students in the ASL section learned how to sign the national anthem, which they performed for homecoming attendees at a football game. The Chinese section and Chinese Club hosted an annual China Night to celebrate Chinese New Year, an event that attracted four hundred people in 2023. The Japanese and Korean sections hold annual speech contests that involve the Idaho Japanese Association and the Idaho Korean Association. Members of the French section are collaborating with a local, native French high school teacher to plan a French Day for high school and college students of French.

Boise State University is one of six institutions participating in the 2021 census with enrollments in Basque. The Basque section often collaborates with the local Basque community in Idaho, and faculty members make sure that students are involved. Herbeck notes that his colleagues cohost a weekly radio show, *Boiseko Taupada*, on the university’s radio station and partner with a sister station, Euskalerrria Irratia (Basque Country Radio), to discuss Basque culture, language, and diaspora. “A colleague also participated in the Euskozenoa project, a community forum between the Basque Country and Basque diaspora communities, and, as part of the Basque studies program, helped host the forty-third World Music Championship at Boise State,” says Herbeck.

Similarly, the Spanish section puts together many events to serve the Spanish-speaking and Latino community at Boise State. A member in the Spanish section founded Casita Nepantla, a space in the student union building that is dedicated to showcasing Latino art and culture and encouraging scholarly work on Latino issues. “Among other events, Casita Nepantla hosts, and Spanish section faculty participate in, La Bienvenida (Spanish Welcome) for first-year Latinx students,” says Herbeck. “The event is a type of college orientation for Spanish-speaking parents sending their students to college, providing this community with Spanish-speaking contacts on campus and familiarizing them with campus life.”

Members in the Spanish, German, and French sections also work closely with local businesses and industries, from delis and childhood centers to community health centers and the Discovery Center of Idaho. The department receives a great deal of support from the

College of Arts and Sciences, as well as the Center for Global Engagement, a campus partner that assists with study abroad programs and grants.

### University of California, San Diego: Reviving Esperanto

Esperanto is an LCTL that was most widely reported in the 1970s before seeing a small resurgence in 2009 and 2021. Created by the Polish doctor Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof in 1887, Esperanto is spoken around the world by an estimated two million people, including a small number of speakers for whom it is a first language. Zamenhof's goal was to create a language that is easy for anyone to learn, in the hopes that a universal language would encourage world peace. In 2015, Duolingo began offering Esperanto, likely increasing the number of Esperanto speakers. While Esperanto never became the global tongue that Zamenhof hoped for, there are still devoted Esperanto-speaking communities throughout the world—including one in San Diego, California. A group of Esperanto speakers called Grupo Esperanto used to have monthly meetings at a coffeehouse in San Diego, and the University of California, San Diego, is the only institution participating in the 2021 enrollment census to teach Esperanto. During the fall 2021 semester, the institution offered an anthropology course on Esperanto that yielded seventeen undergraduate enrollments.

### University of Wisconsin, Green Bay: Putting Languages in Cultural Context

The University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, made up of four campuses across eastern Wisconsin and an online component, has maintained a language program since the 1970s. The school has long offered French, German, and Spanish and occasionally Oneida; in the late 1990s the school added Japanese and Russian, and by the 2000s Arabic, Chinese, Oneida, Hmong, and Italian were routinely offered.

With just over 9,800 students enrolled in fall 2021, the institution reported over 1,400 enrollments in French, German, Japanese, Oneida, and Spanish. David Coury, chair of the Modern Languages section in the Department of Humanities, commented on the links between his institution and the community. Spanish, he noted, “is in-demand with businesses in our community. Over the past couple of years, we have introduced courses for heritage learners and a US Spanish course. Additionally, we have begun a new certificate for translation studies, because we receive many requests to have documents translated into Spanish, a task that requires specialized skills.” The members of the Spanish faculty “are quite active in the community,” and the school has hired more bilingual staff members in admissions and academic advising “both to encourage more students in those communities to seek higher education and to support them when they enroll.”

There are challenges to teaching languages at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay. Coury noted that while other departments may state their support of languages, few require it for graduation. “We have no university-wide language requirement and only a handful

of programs have a one-year language requirement. We have tried to get this included in various General Education reforms, but to no avail.” And in some cases academic advisers see language courses as distracting students from their path to graduation. The Modern Languages section has also struggled to maintain its faculty lines. Still, it has compensated through collaboration with other institutions. “We have two collaborative programs that we participate in: the UW-System’s Collaborative Language Program (CLP) for the teaching of less commonly taught languages and an exchange with St. Norbert College, a nearby small private liberal arts college.” Both these exchanges have allowed Green Bay’s students to continue to access French and German, as well as to learn other languages.

Despite these challenges, Coury and his colleagues have been able to maintain language instruction in commonly taught languages, as well as to respond to changes in the community. “We have offered Hmong in the past and we continue to offer Oneida and Menominee languages in support of our First Nations studies program.” The Menominee Nation are indigenous to Wisconsin; the Green Bay area has also been the destination of Somali immigrants. “Over the past ten years, we have seen an increase in our Somali student population. For the first time, we’ll be offering a noncredit beginning Somali course through our division of continuing education.” The department has been working to connect bilingual Somali students with Literacy Green Bay, a nonprofit organization that offers free English classes and tutoring, to develop teaching methods and curriculum for members of the Somali community.

This work has paid off. Coury noted that he recently asked Career Services to survey companies and organizations participating in their biannual career and internship fair about their international activities. “More specifically, we asked each organization if they had an international division or did business with other countries and whether they would be interested in and value students who had studied another language or were interculturally fluent. We were very pleased to find that about half of those organizations participating indicated that they would be very interested in such students. While Spanish was an interest for a good many companies, many had operations in the Middle East and Asia as well as in Europe. We then identified all of those businesses and organizations with a small globe icon on the list of participants and encouraged our students to meet with them and discuss their abilities.”

Success, Coury observed, can be measured by asking, “Are we meeting the needs of our students? Are we offering the courses that students want and the languages they are interested in? The latter of course is restricted by budgetary issues, but years ago we moved away from a traditional language and literature curriculum to a cultural study focus, while keeping most courses in the target language. . . . Students should impress on future employers their knowledge of cultural difference and their cultural sensitivity.”

## University of Oklahoma: Vigorous Support at All Levels

The Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics (MLLL) at the University of Oklahoma (OU) saw enrollment drops that were unfortunately consistent with nationwide declines. But some languages, such as Italian, dipped less than 5%, beating overall trends. Their success begins with support from their administration, including the dean, David Wrobel, in helping maintain the three-semester language requirement in the college. MLLL is also strongly supported by its home college, the Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences, which since 2021 has converted one-year instructorships and lecturerhips to renewable-term positions, reduced graduate teaching assistants' teaching load, and increased language instructors' salaries.

The department actively pursues collaborations inside and outside the university, from partnerships with overseas universities through OU's College of International Studies to relationships with K-12 schoolteachers across the state in cooperation with the College of Education. OU proudly sponsors and hosts the Oklahoma Foreign Language Teachers Association's annual conference, a valuable platform for networking and sharing best practices in language education. MLLL is seeking ways to increase engagement with local bilingual populations, including Indigenous American communities. The department is also revising several language programs, most recently Chinese and Italian, to incorporate cultural studies that attract students interested in other cultures and complement language studies; it also offers service-learning courses for specific fields such as medicine, law, and business. MLLL works with advisers to encourage outstanding language students, and the department places top instructors in third-semester-level courses to encourage further language study as well as majors and minors.

Finally, MLLL recognizes students' needs and achievements with internships, capstone projects, language proficiency assessments, and scholarships. "Our department also has a long history of recognizing outstanding students," notes the chair, Nian Liu. An annual MLLL scholarship banquet celebrates high-performing students and last year awarded \$90,000 to thirty-four students.