

Drury University-Department of Languages Policy Statement on Foreign Languages Intentions, Requirements and Outcomes

General Statement

Firstly, the Drury University Department of Languages asserts the centrality of foreign language learning in the Liberal Arts and concurs that learning a foreign language :

- ❖ Meets real world needs:
 - Rewards learners with a resume differentiator – the ability to communicate and collaborate in another language across cultures and time zones
 - Provides access to information and collaboration in any field - including science, technology, engineering, mathematics; business; and health care
 - Develops critical literacies by practicing skills to understand, exchange opinions, and present ideas
 - Develops flexible and adaptable thinking, plus an ability to function in new and unfamiliar situations
 - Prepares learners to think and interact in a global community

- ❖ Develops specific skills:
 - Participate in face-to-face interactions through technology, internships and volunteer opportunities in the community
 - Apply their competence in a new language to their career and personal goals, broadening their thinking beyond self-serving goals
 - Become more adept in understanding diverse cultural perspectives and their own identity.¹

Secondly, the Department of Languages commits itself to the use of best practices- those recognized nationally and internationally as necessary for the successful instruction in foreign language. These standards are detailed in the report of the American Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (found in Appendix A of this document). Briefly, the standards detail the need for the “five C’s”

- ❖ Communication- (students gain skill in oral conversation- speaking and listening; written communication- reading and writing.)
- ❖ Cultures- (students gain knowledge and understanding of the products, practices and perspectives of diverse cultures.)
- ❖ Comparisons- (students demonstrate knowledge of the nature of language and the nature of culture through comparisons to their own language and culture).
- ❖ Communities- (students use language in community settings and demonstrate a desire to communicate with others outside the classroom)
- ❖ Connections- (Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures)

¹ <http://www.actfl.org/news/position-statements/languages-core-component-education-all-students>. Accessed 23 Sept. 2013.

Departmental Policy on Credit and Content

Following the standards developed by the U.S. government and internationally recognized pedagogical bodies, and in pursuit of providing the highest quality and most complete instruction in foreign language, the department of languages strongly recommends and asserts the necessity of the following guidelines for courses counted as foreign language credit:

The foreign language requirement of Drury's CORE curriculum is designed to provide instruction and assessment in **five** course objectives: **reading, writing, speaking, listening and culture** in a language other than English. As such, at the beginning and intermediate level, only those courses which meet the five objectives will be offered and accepted for credit by the university.

Rationale and Supporting Evidence

While the policy of the department follows the national standards for foreign language, the Department of Languages has also developed the following rationale in further support of the policy for the specific case of Drury University. The elements of this rationale fall, generally, into (four) categories:

Intercultural Competence

International Competence

Development of Communicative Ability

Adherence to the Drury Mission and Vision

Intercultural Competence:

The fifth course objective of the language requirement is designed to ensure that students acquire cultural literacy in addition to linguistic literacy.

This competency is essential not only for continued study at the graduate level, but for the future employment of students graduating from the university. The 2013 AAC&U survey² of employers found

“More than nine in ten of those surveyed say it is important that those they hire demonstrate ethical judgment and integrity; intercultural skills; and the capacity for continued new learning.”

It bears note that true intercultural competence is not limited to the national example, however. The large number of immigrants and subnational cultures represented in the population of the United States requires knowledge of other national, linguistic and cultural traditions to enhance communication and competency. For example: The U.S. Census predicts that:³

By the year 2060, 31% of all U.S. citizens will be of Hispanic descent.

In that case, intercultural competency will require knowledge of the cultural traditions of the Spanish-speaking world.

² Hart Research Associates. “IT TAKES MORE THAN A MAJOR: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success An Online Survey Among Employers Conducted On Behalf Of: The Association Of American Colleges And Universities.” Washington D.C. 2013. p. 2

³ http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb13-ff19.html. Accessed 23 Sept. 2013.

International Competence

While there is no doubt that nationally-based intercultural competence is important (e.g. knowledge and comfort with diverse national backgrounds), employers also find that competence in global, international cultures is important. Hart and Associates found that in the area of “Global Knowledge” That it was “very important” or important” for 55% of future employers that students “know about global cultures, histories, values, religions and social systems.” And ⁴

:

Fully 82% of employers agree (27% strongly) that every student should take classes that build civic capacity, and learning about societies and cultures outside the United States.

The report goes on to emphasize that this international cultural competency is especially important for “societies other than those in Western Europe or North America.”⁵ Indicating the need for more study of languages and cultures of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

International competency is important for graduating students in areas beyond that of simple employment. Foreign languages are required of most graduate degrees in a variety of fields for the intercultural and international competency that the languages promote. Foreign languages give critical tools to research and education as students continue.

As one example, the American Sociological Association’s position is that⁶:

Sociological research and scholarship focus on social structures and processes that range from the micro to the macro level. In studying social interaction, for example, “entering the other’s world” is an important cognitive tool for developing an understanding that is valid and reliable. Without access to languages other than one’s native tongue, this can be a difficult task at best and can result in erroneous findings at worst. Moreover, in studying societies and social processes—such as national and international social movements; political unrest and armed conflict; immigration and migration; and the spread of illegal drugs, armaments, or contagious diseases—access to foreign languages can be crucial to sociologists’ ability to conduct impactful research that benefits society.

⁴ Hart, 2013 p.8

⁵ Hart, 2013. p. 12

⁶ http://www.asanet.org/press/asa_emphasizes_importance_of_teaching_foreign_languages.cfm. Accessed 23 Sept. 2013.

Development of Communicative Ability

It is widely accepted in the field of language acquisition that learning an additional language improves communicative abilities not only in that second language, but in the learner's native language as well.

Students who complete coursework in classes dedicated to all four linguistic skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) develop their communicative abilities in English and in the additional language.

This competency is essential, again, both for students' ability to complete graduate level coursework, and also for employment opportunities. The AAC&U report once again found that: More than three in four employers say they want colleges to place more emphasis on helping students develop five key learning outcomes, including: critical thinking, complex problem-solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge in real-world settings.⁷ Indeed, the report found that:⁸

80% of employers want universities to place the most emphasis on written and oral communication.

As additional information on this item, the Hart report found that:⁹

43% of employers want more emphasis placed on the ability to communicate in a language other than English.

⁷ Hart 2013. p. 2

⁸ Hart, 2013. p. 9.

⁹ Hart, 2013. p. 9.

Adherence and Compatibility with the Drury Mission and Vision

