

Foreign Language Enrollments in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2002

Elizabeth B. Welles

IN SEPTEMBER 2003 the MLA finished compiling the figures from its fall 2002 survey of foreign language enrollments in United States institutions of higher education. This latest survey is the twentieth in a series conducted since 1958 with the support of grants from the United States Department of Education (or from its predecessor, the United States Office of Education). The following report presents fall 2002 enrollments for individual languages and examines trends through time.

Using procedures developed for previous surveys, the MLA sent a questionnaire to the registrars of 2,781 two- and four-year institutions, soliciting information on credit-bearing enrollments for fall 2002 in all language courses other than English. Although the instructions on the questionnaire made it clear that the survey was seeking information on all language courses offered on the campuses of these institutions, the MLA has no way of knowing whether the registrars in all cases provided complete information. The questionnaire was not mailed until mid-October 2002, to ensure that the figures provided would be final (or nearly so) rather than preliminary. A second mailing was sent in early December, a third in mid-February 2003, and a series of follow-up telephone calls was begun in April.

All but 12 of the institutions receiving the initial survey mailing, or 99.6%, eventually responded—the highest response rate in the history of the MLA's enrollment surveys. Among the 2,769 respondents, 2,519, or 91.0%, reported having fall 2002 enrollments in at least one language other than English. Of the responses, 1,068, or 38.6%, are from two-year colleges, and 1,701 are from four-year institutions. No language courses other than English were offered by 7.6% of the four-year institutions and 11.3% of the two-year colleges.

This year for the first time, survey participants were able to respond on the World Wide Web using an interface designed for the collection of the survey data. Of the responses monitored and entered into our database, 28.7% were made on the Web site, 50.9% were made on a return postcard, and 20.4% were made in follow-up phone calls. The Web site was designed to tell us whether enrollments had been previously reported for an institution and for what specific languages. This feature helped make the survey more accurate, ensuring a higher level of consistency in the data reported by the participating institutions, whose particular individual respondents change from survey to survey. The user-friendly design of the Web interface also made it easier for the MLA survey administrator to keep track of additional information about language offerings. It instantly displayed comparisons between the numbers of programs offered in 1998 and those being reported for 2002. This display led to follow-up questions about the addition and subtraction of specific language offerings and about the reasons for those changes. For example, we asked institutions that reported enrollments in a specific language in 1998 but not in 2002 whether the language was still listed in the catalog; those that had enrollments in a language in 2002 but not in 1998 were asked if they were reporting about a new program.

The author is former Director of Foreign Language Programs and ADFL at the Modern Language Association.

Fall 2002 Enrollments

Tables 1a and 1b compare the fall 2002 enrollments in the fifteen most commonly taught languages with those in 1998, the year of the most recent previous survey. In table 1a, the languages are listed in descending order of fall 2002 enrollment totals; in table 1b they are listed alphabetically. The tables also show an aggregate count for the 147 other languages for which enrollment data were reported in 2002. Enrollments for those other languages appear in table 8. As tables 1a and 1b show, the total of foreign language enrollments for 2002 exceeded that for 1998 by 17.0%. It is the highest total recorded since the beginning of the MLA surveys (see fig. 1).

The list of the fifteen more commonly taught languages shows clear groupings: Spanish is far ahead; then come French and German; then Italian, American Sign Language (ASL), and Japanese; then Chinese, Latin, Russian, and ancient Greek; then biblical Hebrew, Arabic, Modern Hebrew, Portuguese, and Korean. For the first time since 1968, all show increases in enrollments. ASL's increase at 432.2% is more than four times that of any other language. Next is Arabic at 92.3%; biblical Hebrew at 55.9%; Italian at 29.6%; Japanese, Chinese, ancient Greek, Modern Hebrew, and Portuguese at between 20% and 30%; and Spanish, Latin, and Korean at between 10% and 17%. French, German, and Russian showed an increase under 3% and thus can be said to have had stable enrollments from 1998 to 2002.

Foreign Language Enrollments by Undergraduates in Two- and Four-Year Colleges and by Graduates in Universities

Tables 2a and 2b show enrollments of undergraduate and graduate students; two-year and four-year institutions further define the undergraduate population. Undergraduate enrollments at four-year institutions, which had declined 6.2% from 1990 to 1995, rose 4.6% in 1998 and rose another 11.8% in 2002;

they are now 9.8% more than the previous high in 1990. Graduate enrollments declined 15.2% from 1995 to 1998 but increased 11.9% from 1998 to 2002. They have fluctuated in a range of 5,000 students since 1983 and have not yet returned to the high of 1974 (see table 2c).

Foreign language enrollments in two-year colleges underwent a growth spurt of 40.2% between 1986 and 1990 and have risen continuously since: 3.6% in 1995, 8.8% in 1998, and 36.0% in 2002. The student population in two-year colleges increased 12.0% from 1986 to 1990 and 4.8% between 1990 and 1995, decreased 0.1% between 1995 and 1998, and increased 8.6% between 1998 and 2002.¹ Of the 1,068 two-year colleges included in our survey, 947 reported enrollments in 2002 (37.6% of all institutions), accounting for 45.6% of the total growth for all enrollments regardless of level or institution type. From 1998 to 2002, Spanish increased 22.9%, almost twice the increase in Spanish for the total survey. Spanish now represents 63.0% of all two-year college language enrollments, a drop from 1998 when it represented 69.7%. Community college enrollments in ASL, which accounted for 78.9% of the overall ASL total in 1995 and 61.3% in 1998, increased by 457.6% between 1998 and 2002 and now represent 64.2% of the overall ASL total.

Tables 3a and 3b show the regional distribution of language study in the United States. Whereas total enrollments and four-year and graduate enrollments are highest in the Northeast, Midwest, and South Atlantic regions, two-year college enrollments are overwhelmingly on the Pacific Coast. Appendix A shows sixteen languages and their enrollments by region. The study of Italian and Hebrew resides primarily in the Northeast. The study of the Asian languages Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese takes place primarily on the Pacific Coast. The study of Spanish is fairly evenly distributed nationally, with slightly higher concentrations found in the Midwest and South Atlantic. Arabic is also very evenly distributed, with an enrollment concentration of about 21% in the four most populated regions of the United States.

Table 1a
Fall 1998 and 2002 Foreign Language Enrollments
in United States Institutions of Higher Education
(Languages in Descending Order of 2002 Totals)

Language	1998	2002	Percentage Change
Spanish	656,590	746,267	13.7
French	199,064	201,979	1.5
German	89,020	91,100	2.3
Italian	49,287	63,899	29.6
American Sign Language	11,420	60,781	432.2
Japanese	43,141	52,238	21.1
Chinese	28,456	34,153	20.0
Latin	26,145	29,841	14.1
Russian	23,791	23,921	0.5
Ancient Greek	16,402	20,376	24.2
Biblical Hebrew	9,099	14,183	55.9
Arabic	5,505	10,584	92.3
Modern Hebrew	6,734	8,619	28.0
Portuguese	6,926	8,385	21.1
Korean	4,479	5,211	16.3
Other languages	17,771	25,716	44.7
Total	1,193,830	1,397,253	17.0

Table 1b
Fall 1998 and 2002 Foreign Language Enrollments
in United States Institutions of Higher Education
(Languages in Alphabetical Order)

Language	1998	2002	Percentage Change
American Sign Language	11,420	60,781	432.2
Arabic	5,505	10,584	92.3
Chinese	28,456	34,153	20.0
French	199,064	201,979	1.5
German	89,020	91,100	2.3
Ancient Greek	16,402	20,376	24.2
Biblical Hebrew	9,099	14,183	55.9
Modern Hebrew	6,734	8,619	28.0
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Spanish	656,590	746,267	13.7
Other languages	17,771	25,716	44.7
Total	1,193,830	1,397,253	17.0

Figure 1
Foreign Language Enrollments by Year, Excluding Latin and Ancient Greek

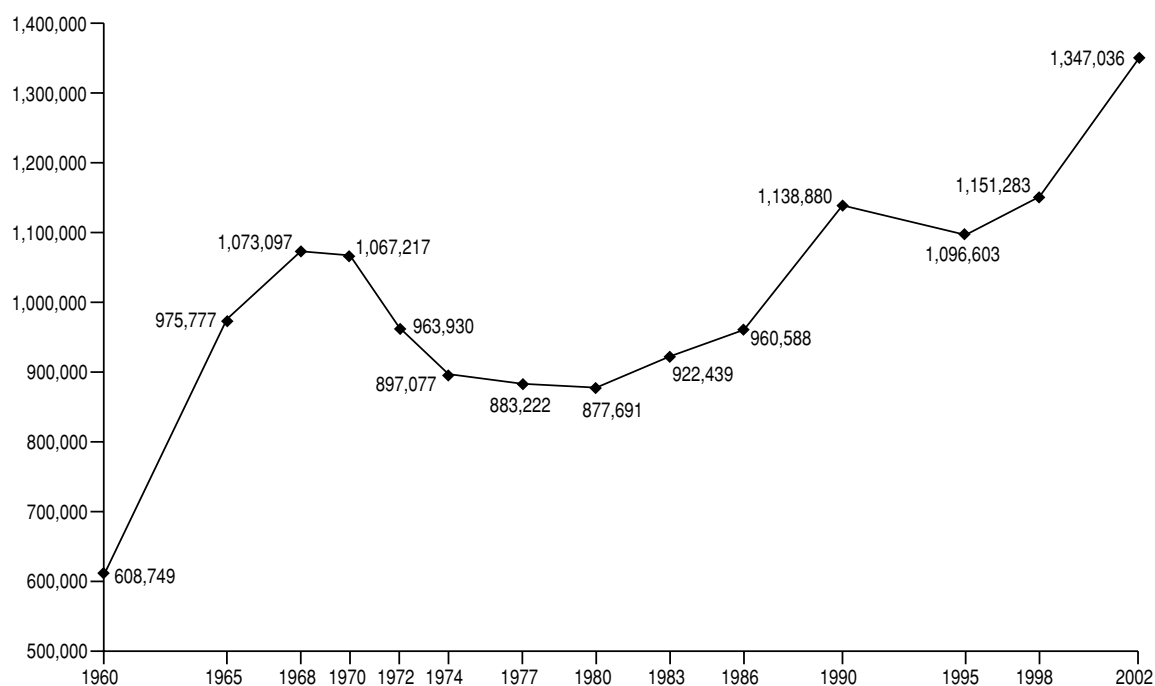


Table 2a
Foreign Language Enrollments by Undergraduate Students in Four-Year Colleges and by Graduate Students
(Languages in Descending Order of 2002 Totals)

Language	Undergraduates			Graduates			Undergraduates and Graduates		
	1995	1998	2002	1995	1998	2002	1995	1998	2002
Spanish	432,133	468,040	515,688	10,936	9,046	9,950	443,069	477,086	525,638
French	168,027	164,407	162,705	6,809	4,850	4,605	174,836	169,257	167,310
German	80,393	74,437	75,987	4,181	2,938	2,803	84,574	77,375	78,790
Italian	36,287	41,216	51,750	1,043	925	1,047	37,330	42,141	52,797
Japanese	33,888	32,588	38,545	1,406	1,334	930	35,294	33,922	39,475
Latin	24,030	24,411	27,695	1,040	894	1,045	25,070	25,305	28,740
Chinese	20,966	22,472	26,914	1,042	1,220	934	22,008	23,692	27,848
American Sign Language	852	4,254	21,613	58	163	121	910	4,417	21,734
Russian	21,305	20,541	20,208	1,424	964	770	22,729	21,505	20,978
Hebrew*	8,860	11,740	16,651	3,448	3,560	5,551	12,308	15,300	22,202
Ancient Greek	11,666	11,738	14,044	4,385	4,471	6,033	16,051	16,209	20,077
Arabic	3,807	3,902	8,194	441	445	531	4,248	4,347	8,725
Portuguese	5,359	5,958	6,945	710	488	487	6,069	6,446	7,432
Korean	2,943	3,546	4,045	231	309	111	3,174	3,855	4,156
Other languages	12,877	14,254	19,257	1,523	1,196	1,797	14,400	15,450	21,054
Total	863,393	903,504	1,010,241	38,677	32,803	36,715	902,070	936,307	1,046,956
Percentage Change	–	4.6	11.8	–	–15.2	11.9	–	3.8	11.8

*Modern and biblical Hebrew combined

Table 2b
Foreign Language Enrollments by Students in Two-Year Colleges (Languages in Descending Order of 2002 Totals)

	1986	1990	1995	1998	Percentage Change		
					2002	between 1998 and 2002	between 1986 and 2002
Spanish	89,491	133,823	163,217	179,504	220,629	22.9	146.5
American Sign Language	0	1,140	3,394	7,003	39,047	457.6	–
French	39,818	44,366	30,515	29,807	34,669	16.3	–12.9
Japanese	4,835	10,308	9,429	9,219	12,763	38.4	164.0
German	15,399	19,082	11,689	11,645	12,310	5.7	–20.1
Italian	6,303	8,325	6,430	7,146	11,102	55.4	76.1
Chinese	2,105	3,506	4,463	4,764	6,305	32.3	199.5
Russian	1,596	3,472	2,000	2,286	2,943	28.7	84.4
Arabic	354	423	196	1,158	1,859	60.5	425.1
Vietnamese	56	169	489	385	1,185	207.8	2,016.1
Latin	497	909	827	840	1,101	31.1	121.5
Korean	0	141	169	624	1,055	69.1	–
Portuguese	289	365	462	480	953	98.5	229.8
Hawai'ian	199	299	635	645	667	3.4	235.2
Hebrew*	697	786	819	533	600	12.6	–13.9
Ancient Greek	245	283	221	193	299	54.9	22.0
Other languages	997	1,023	1,747	1,291	2,810	117.7	181.8
Total	162,881	228,420	236,702	257,523	350,297	36.0	115.1
Percentage Change	–	40.2	3.6	8.8	36.0		

Hebrew and ancient Greek are not commonly taught at the two-year level but are included here for comparison with table 2a.

*Modern and biblical Hebrew combined

Table 2c
Total Foreign Language Enrollments by Student Status, 1974–2002

	Students in Two-Year Colleges	Students in Four-Year Colleges	Graduate Students
1974	154,466	750,277	41,892
1983	164,411	769,444	35,158
1986	162,881	807,084	33,269
1990	228,420	920,092	35,628
1995	236,702	863,393	38,677
1998	257,523	903,504	32,803
2002	350,297	1,010,241	36,715

Table 3a
United States Geographic Distribution of 2002 Language Enrollments

	Number	Percentage of National
Northeast	302,875	21.7
Midwest	304,366	21.8
South Atlantic	293,736	21.0
South Central	138,884	9.9
Rocky Mountain	104,323	7.5
Pacific Coast	253,069	18.1
National (total)	1,397,253	100.0

Table 3b
United States Geographic Distribution of 2002 Language Enrollments by Level

	Two-Year Colleges	Percentage of National	Four-Year Colleges	Percentage of National	Graduate	Percentage of National
Northeast	45,360	12.9	249,018	24.6	8,497	23.1
Midwest	45,648	13.0	250,162	24.8	8,556	23.3
South Atlantic	54,891	15.7	230,377	22.8	8,468	23.1
South Central	36,759	10.5	98,696	9.8	3,429	9.3
Rocky Mountain	36,037	10.3	66,134	6.5	2,152	5.9
Pacific Coast	131,602	37.6	115,854	11.5	5,613	15.3
National (total)	350,297	100.0	1,010,241	100.0	36,715	100.0

States included in each region:

Northeast: CT, DE, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT

Midwest: IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI

South Atlantic: AL, DC, FL, GA, KY, MD, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV

South Central: AR, LA, MS, OK, TX

Rocky Mountain: AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY

Pacific Coast: AK, CA, HI, OR, WA

Trends in Language Enrollments

Figure 1 shows trends through time in total foreign language enrollments: the steep growth in the 1960s, the decrease in the 1970s, and the steady rise through the 1980s. During the 1990s, enrollments continued to ascend, dipped in 1995, and reached an all-time high in fall 2002. This growth is tempered by the fact that total college enrollments have increased at a greater rate than foreign language enrollments; the difference in the two rates of increase is shown in table 4. Between 1977 and 1998, as the increase in the number of college students leveled off, the proportion of enrollments in modern foreign languages remained stable, ranging from the 1980 low of 7.3 per hundred students to the high in 1990 of 8.2. In our 2002 survey the proportion of modern foreign language enrollments per 100 institutional enrollments rose to 8.6, a moderate proportion but the highest in the history of MLA surveys since 1977.

Table 5 presents trends in enrollments in the twelve most commonly taught foreign languages (Latin and ancient Greek excluded) between 1960 and 2002, and the enrollment growth or decline for each language over selected periods. Table 6 gives the per-

centage of the total language enrollment count for the fourteen most commonly taught languages (Latin and ancient Greek included). Spanish is and has been the most widely taught language in colleges and universities since 1970, and it continues to account for more than half (53.4%) of all enrollments, a fact first recorded in our 1995 survey. The next largest grouping, French and German, represents 21.0% of students studying languages other than English. Italian, ASL, Japanese, Chinese, and Latin together make up 17.2%. A fourth grouping of languages, each representing between 1% and 2% of the total, comprises Russian, Hebrew, and ancient Greek; together they account for 4.8% of all language students. The languages that have enrollments lower than 1% in some cases show very dramatic increases but still account for a very small percentage of students studying languages. Korean, Arabic, and Portuguese, which individually grew significantly from the previous survey, account for only 1.8% of total enrollments.

Since their high points in 1968, French has lost 48.0% of its total enrollments and German 57.9%, but each seems to have stabilized in the last four years, with slight increases in both languages in comparison with the 1998 survey. Between 1970 and 2002 Japanese

Table 4
Modern Foreign Language (MFL) Enrollments Compared with Enrollments in Higher Education, 1960–2002

	Total United States College Enrollments*	Index of Growth (%)**	MFL Enrollments***	Index of Growth (%)	MFL Enrollments per 100 Overall
1960	3,789,000	100.0	608,749	100.0	16.1
1965	5,920,864	156.3	975,777	160.3	16.5
1968	7,513,091	198.3	1,073,097	176.3	14.3
1970	8,580,887	226.5	1,067,217	175.3	12.4
1972	9,214,820	243.2	963,930	158.3	10.5
1977	11,285,787	297.9	883,222	145.1	7.8
1980	12,096,895	319.3	877,691	144.2	7.3
1983	12,464,661	329.0	922,439	151.5	7.4
1986	12,503,511	330.0	960,588	157.8	7.7
1990	13,818,637	364.7	1,138,880	187.1	8.2
1995	14,261,781	376.4	1,096,603	180.1	7.7
1998	14,507,000	382.9	1,151,283	189.1	7.9
2002	15,608,000	411.9	1,347,036	221.3	8.6

*The figures in the first column are taken from the *Digest of Education Statistics*.

The 1960 and 2002 figures are estimates. The 2002 figure is taken from a projections table on the National Center for Education Statistics Web site (nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/proj2012/Table_11_2.asp).

**For index figures, 1960=100.0%

***Includes all languages listed in tables 1 and 2 except Latin and ancient Greek.

Table 5
Enrollments in the Twelve Leading Foreign Languages (Excluding Latin and Ancient Greek) in Selected Years, with Percentage Changes

	Enrollments						
	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	1998	2002
Spanish	178,689	389,150	379,379	533,944	606,286	656,590	746,267
French	228,813	359,313	248,361	272,472	205,351	199,064	201,979
German	146,116	202,569	126,910	133,348	96,263	89,020	91,100
Italian	11,142	34,244	34,791	49,699	43,760	49,287	63,899
American Sign Language	—	—	—	1,602	4,304	11,420	60,781
Japanese	1,746	6,620	11,506	45,717	44,723	43,141	52,238
Chinese	1,844	6,238	11,366	19,490	26,471	28,456	34,153
Russian	30,570	36,189	23,987	44,626	24,729	23,791	23,921
Hebrew*	3,834	16,567	19,429	12,995	13,127	15,833	22,802
Arabic	541	1,333	3,466	3,475	4,444	5,505	10,584
Portuguese	1,033	5,065	4,894	6,211	6,531	6,926	8,385
Korean	168	101	374	2,286	3,343	4,479	5,211
Total	604,496	1,057,389	864,463	1,125,865	1,079,332	1,133,512	1,321,320

	Percentage Changes between Surveys					
	1960–70	1970–80	1980–90	1990–95	1995–98	1998–2002
Spanish	117.8	–2.5	40.7	13.5	8.3	13.7
French	57.0	–30.9	9.7	–24.6	–3.1	1.5
German	38.6	–37.3	5.1	–27.8	–7.5	2.3
Italian	207.3	1.6	42.9	–11.9	12.6	29.6
American Sign Language	—	—	—	168.7	165.3	432.2
Japanese	279.2	73.8	297.3	–2.2	–3.5	21.1
Chinese	238.3	82.2	71.5	35.8	7.5	20.0
Russian	18.4	–33.7	86.0	–44.6	–3.8	0.5
Hebrew*	332.1	17.3	–33.1	1.0	20.6	44.0
Arabic	146.4	160.0	0.3	27.9	23.9	92.3
Portuguese	390.3	–3.4	26.9	5.2	6.0	21.1
Korean	–39.9	270.3	511.2	46.2	34.0	16.3
Total	74.9	–18.2	30.2	–4.1	5.0	16.6

*Modern and biblical Hebrew totals combined

Table 6
Percentage of Total Enrollments, 1968–2002, for the Fourteen Most Commonly Taught Languages in 2002

	1968	1980	1986	1990	1995	1998	2002
Spanish	32.4	41.0	41.0	45.1	53.2	55.0	53.4
French	34.4	26.9	27.4	23.0	18.0	16.7	14.5
German	19.2	13.7	12.1	11.3	8.5	7.5	6.5
Italian	2.7	3.8	4.1	4.2	3.8	4.1	4.6
American Sign Language	–	–	–	0.1	0.4	1.0	4.4
Japanese	0.4	1.2	2.3	3.9	3.9	3.6	3.7
Chinese	0.4	1.2	1.7	1.6	2.3	2.4	2.4
Latin	3.1	2.7	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.1
Russian	3.6	2.6	3.4	3.8	2.2	2.0	1.7
Hebrew*	0.9	2.1	1.6	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.6
Ancient Greek	1.7	2.4	1.8	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.5
Arabic	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.8
Portuguese	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6
Korean	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4
Other languages	0.7	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.5	1.8
Total enrollments (in numbers)	1,127,363	924,837	1,003,234	1,184,100	1,138,772	1,193,830	1,397,253

*Modern and biblical Hebrew totals combined

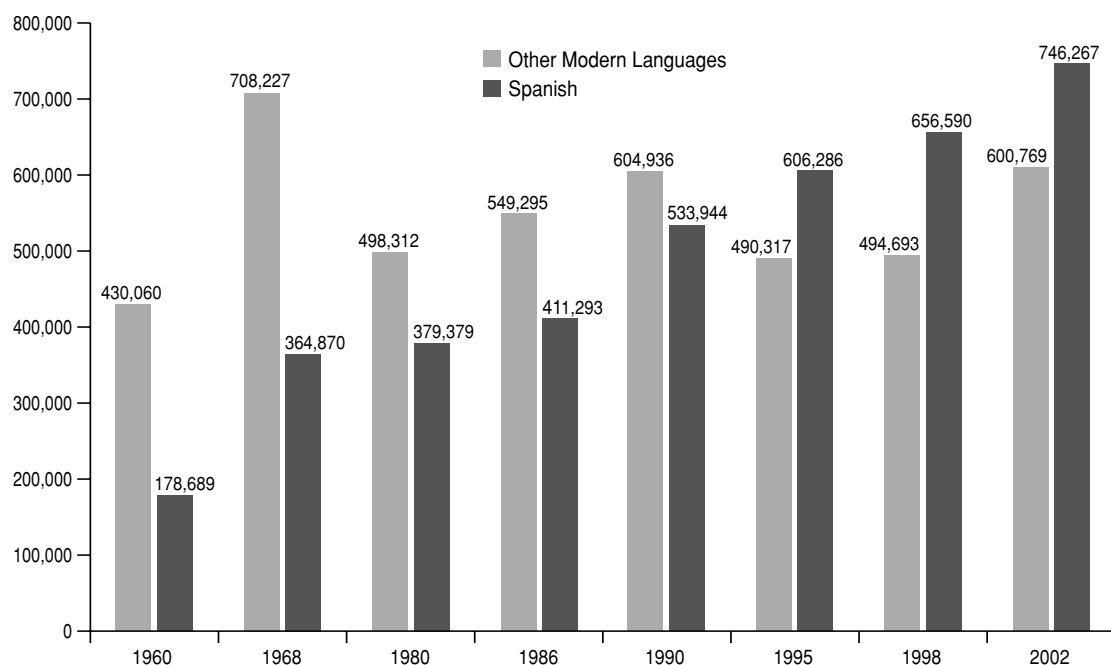
enrollments increased by nearly eight times, Chinese almost five and a half times. The greatest period of growth in actual numbers for both these languages occurred during the 1980s; they now are experiencing less variation and have represented 6% of all student enrollments for the current and previous two surveys.

Figure 2 contrasts the enrollments in Spanish from 1960 through 2002 with those in all other modern languages taught at the postsecondary college levels. While considerably higher in 2002 than in the previous two surveys, enrollments in languages other than Spanish are lower than they were at their high of 1968. After dropping off in the 1970s, they grew through the 1980s and peaked in 1990, which was the most recent high for the total enrollments in all languages other than Spanish. After a dip in the 1990s, languages other than Spanish indicate a rise in the current survey. Spanish enrollments, however, have increased consistently since 1960 and progressively accounted for a greater percentage of all enrollments until 2002. For this survey the number of students studying Spanish went up by 89,677, while the number of students studying all other languages increased by 113,746.

Figure 3a shows enrollment trends through time in the top seven most commonly taught modern languages, not including Spanish, and Figure 3b shows the trends for the remaining six languages listed in

table 1. French and German are similar: strong growth during the 1960s and a drop in the 1970s. While French recovered somewhat in the 1980s, it declined through the 1990s, though it now seems to be increasing again. German made a modest recovery from 1986 to 1990, declined throughout the 1990s, but has experienced an increase since 1998. Russian now seems to be stabilizing after showing great variability (dropping steeply in the 1970s and 1990s, rising in the 1960s and 1980s). Enrollments in Italian, Chinese, and Japanese grew consistently from 1960 to 1990, but since 1990 slightly different patterns have emerged: Chinese continues to grow; Japanese declined slightly but has been on the rise since 1998; and Italian recovered from the decline that it experienced in the 1995 survey and in 2002 is increasing substantially. American Sign Language was first recorded in the survey in 1990 and has shown a tremendous increase for each survey since then as more institutions begin to report it. Korean has grown steadily since it was first reported in 1974, showing an increase of 128.0% since 1990. Enrollments in Arabic were relatively stable during the 1980s; however, since 1995 they have shown rapid growth, particularly between 1998 and 2002, almost doubling (from 5,505 to 10,584). Portuguese showed consistent low growth through the 1990s but jumped between 1998

Figure 2
Enrollments in Spanish Compared with Those in All Other Languages, except Latin and Ancient Greek, by Year



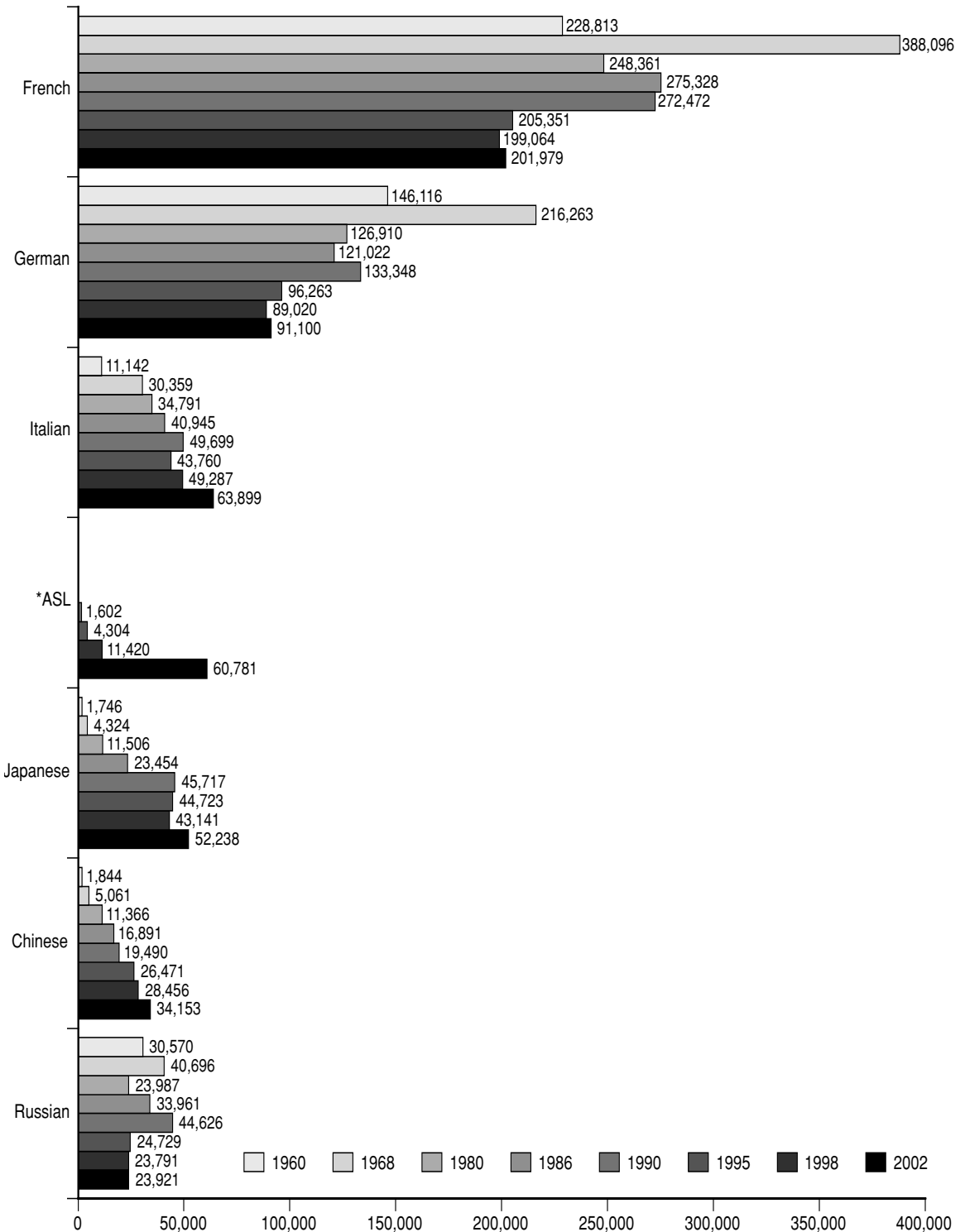
and 2002 (from 6,926 to 8,385). Enrollments in Hebrew and Greek have shown similar curves since their high counts in 1974, though Hebrew's growth has been steadier since 1990. Through the 1990s, Greek hovered in the 16,000s but in 2002 jumped to over 20,000. The net gain between 1998 and 2002 of 48 institutions reporting Greek perhaps accounts for this growth (see table 7a). The 2002 count for Latin is the highest in the history of the survey, showing a healthy jump after enrollments dropped during the mid and late 1990s from the previous high in 1990.

Information gathered about the differences between the programs that reported in 1998 and those that reported in 2002 revealed some interesting trends. The data based only on responses from those institutions reporting in 1998 showed smaller increases generally than those reporting overall in 2002 (table 7b); in three languages there were decreases. This difference should not be taken as an indication of what the enrollment figures might have been if the response rate in 2002 had been the same as that in 1998 (97.4%). It is doubtful that a 2.2% increase in respondents would have changed the picture significantly. The comparison of the 1998 and 2002 institutional figures (table 7a) is particularly useful for explaining the enormous growth of ASL: the bulk of the increase occurred through the reporting of institutions that had not responded previously.

ASL enrollments rose from 1,602 in 1990 to 4,304 in 1995 and then to 11,420 in 1998, increases of 168.7% and 165.3%. Besides student interest, the increase recorded in 2002 also has to do with a change in the nature of our survey. For over thirty years we have elicited enrollment data on less commonly taught languages by requesting information about "other languages" rather than listing them individually on the survey form. Through the 1998 survey, ASL was in this category, but with the enrollments reported in that survey it joined the list of the more commonly taught languages, then numbering fifteen. As a result, in 2002 ASL was among the fifteen languages about which we explicitly requested information. Many institutions that had not reported their existing ASL programs in 1998 did so in this survey. If these institutions had previously reported their existing ASL enrollments, the remarkable growth in ASL in the current survey might have been more evenly spread out across the three surveys from the 1990s. But it is also notable that 187 new programs were created between 1998 and 2002 (see table 1 in appendix B) to meet growing demand.

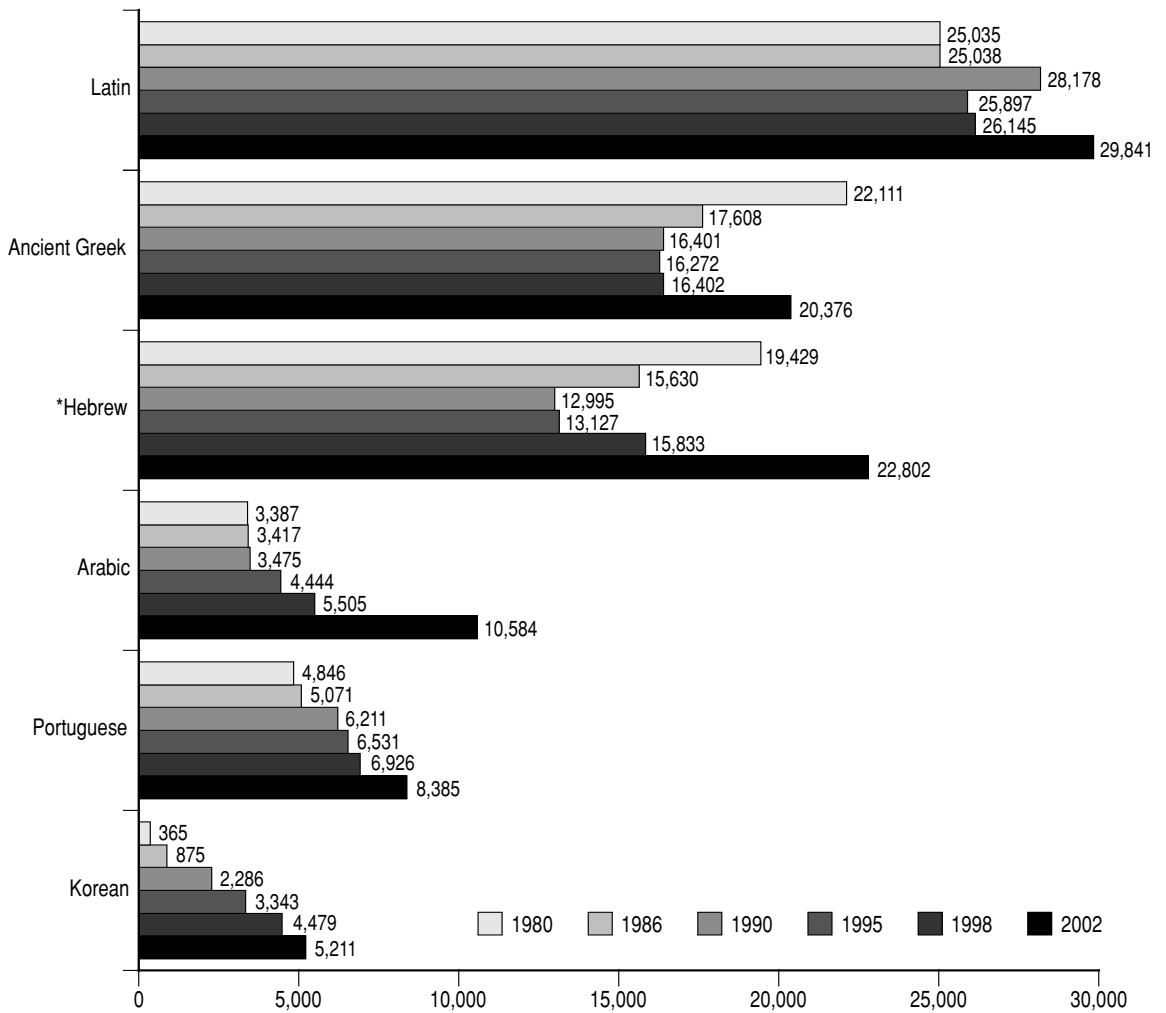
French, German, and Russian enrollment data from the 1998 respondents alone show decreases, while the overall enrollments in these languages were slightly up. For Arabic, Chinese, and Italian there is also a considerable rise in the number of institutions

Figure 3a
Enrollments in the Top Seven Modern Languages, Not Including Spanish, in Selected Years



*1960, 1968, 1980, 1986 figures for ASL not available.

Figure 3b
Enrollments in Six Less Commonly Taught Languages in Selected Years



*Modern and biblican Hebrew combined

Table 7a
Comparison of Numbers of Institutions Reporting Undergraduate Enrollments in the Top Fifteen Foreign Languages in 1998 and 2002

	1998	2002	Net Gain or Loss
Spanish	2,166	2,279	113
French	1,668	1,701	33
German	1,192	1,163	-29
Italian	531	606	75
American Sign Language	116	552	436
Japanese	683	696	13
Chinese	416	489	73
Latin	526	561	35
Russian	497	441	-56
Ancient Greek	518	566	48
Biblical Hebrew	194	226	32
Arabic	157	233	76
Modern Hebrew	150	163	13
Portuguese	143	175	32
Korean	76	91	15

reporting over 1998. Tables 1 and 2 of appendix B show that in undergraduate programs new offerings account for the gains notably in Arabic (74), ASL (as noted, 187), and Chinese (84). In most cases the number of new offerings since 1998 is larger than the number of programs no longer offered, except in Russian, where 59 programs were discontinued and 28 established, and in German, where 60 programs were discontinued and 39 established.

Less Commonly Taught Languages

During the 1960s, languages we now call less commonly taught (LCTLs) were designated “critical” or “strategic” by government entities and the MLA. Before 1986, the seven most commonly taught languages in United States colleges and universities were Latin, ancient Greek, French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish. By the 1986 survey, however, Japanese became the seventh most commonly taught language, and by 1998 it had moved up to fifth place; it now stands in sixth place, behind American Sign Language. Chinese was the sixth most commonly taught language in 1995 and is now the seventh.

Table 8 provides information about enrollment data by level of program (two-year, four-year, graduate) for

Table 7b
Language Enrollments in Fall 1998 and in Fall 2002 for Those Institutions Responding in 1998

	1998	2002	Percentage Change
Spanish	656,590	710,347	8.2
French	199,064	191,996	-3.6
German	89,020	86,545	-2.8
Italian	49,287	58,774	19.2
American Sign Language	11,420	13,486	18.1
Japanese	43,141	48,258	11.9
Chinese	28,456	30,701	7.9
Latin	26,145	27,006	3.3
Russian	23,791	22,438	-5.7
Ancient Greek	16,402	17,520	6.8
Biblical Hebrew	9,099	10,212	12.2
Arabic	5,505	7,720	40.2
Modern Hebrew	6,734	7,179	6.6
Portuguese	6,926	7,057	1.9
Korean	4,479	4,730	5.6
Total	1,176,059	1,243,969	5.8

the 147 languages composing the other-languages category of tables 1, 2, and 6. (In table 8, of the 162 languages listed, 137 were taught in 1998, and 147 were taught in 2002.) There are 7.3% more languages in which students enrolled than were reported for 1998; 34 are indigenous to Europe, 38 to the Middle East or Africa, 41 to Asia or the Pacific and 34 to North or South America. Table 9 shows the proportion of enrollments for these different language groups. These numbers have not changed significantly since 1998, except for languages indigenous to Asia or the Pacific, of which 11 were added in 2002 to the 30 reported in 1998. Of these Asian languages, Vietnamese stands out as the largest gainer of the LCTLs with enrollments of 2,236, for a total increase of 148.7%. At the two-year level, Vietnamese went from 385 students in 1998 to 1,185 in 2002; at the four-year level, it grew from 491 to 1,003. Hindi also shows remarkable growth at 72.1%, up to 1,430 in 2002 from 831 in 1998. One LCTL of Middle Eastern origin—Aramaic, and one of African origin—Swahili, now have enrollments over 1,500 and appear to be gaining rapidly (Tables 8 and 10a).

North and South American native languages have experienced considerable expansion since the previous survey, as shown in the enrollments for the leading sixteen of these languages in 2002 (table 10b).

Table 8
Enrollments in 162 Less Commonly Taught Languages, 1998 and 2002

Language	Status	Enrollments in Two-Year Colleges		Undergraduate Enrollments		Graduate Enrollments		Total	
		1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002
Afrikaans		0	0	72	13	0	0	72	13
Akan		0	0	13	5	0	0	13	5
Akkadian		0	0	9	24	93	71	102	95
Albanian		0	0	1	10	0	0	1	10
Alutiiq		0	0	1	10	0	0	1	10
Amharic		0	0	7	12	0	3	7	15
Anishinabe	+	0	6	0	18	0	0	0	24
Apache	+	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	20
Aramaic		0	36	1,071	1,261	59	389	1,130	1,686
Arapahoe		4	112	0	0	0	0	4	112
Armenian		80	318	233	278	12	11	325	607
Assiniboine		5	12	0	0	0	0	5	12
Assyro-Babylonian	-	0	0	3	0	1	0	4	0
Athabaskan		0	0	10	14	0	0	10	14
Aymara	-	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0
Bambara		0	0	28	10	0	1	28	11
Basque		0	0	5	46	0	3	5	49
Bemba	-	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Bengali		0	0	31	50	4	4	35	54
Blackfoot		40	41	0	0	0	0	40	41
Bulgarian		0	0	7	17	4	3	11	20
Burmese		0	0	31	46	3	3	34	49
Cambodian	+	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Cantonese		0	47	39	128	0	5	39	180
Catalan		0	0	6	31	3	4	9	35
Cebuano	+	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
Chagatai	-	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0
Chamorro	+	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	11
Cherokee		28	7	147	111	0	0	175	118
Cheyenne	+	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Chichewa		0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2
Chinese, Classical		0	0	31	56	1	18	32	74
Choctaw		0	0	83	63	0	0	83	63
Coptic		0	0	0	2	3	9	3	11
Cree	-	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Croatian		0	0	1	15	0	1	1	16
Crow Indian		0	55	5	0	4	0	9	55
Czech		5	1	159	291	30	29	194	321
Dakota/Lakota		46	17	286	589	2	4	334	610
Danish		0	0	145	189	6	2	151	191
Dari	+	0	28	0	13	0	0	0	41
Deg Xinag		0	0	7	9	0	0	7	9
Dutch		0	0	260	357	28	18	288	375
Egyptian		0	0	13	16	39	31	52	47
Eskimo		0	0	46	99	0	0	46	99
Estonian		0	0	6	13	2	3	8	16
Ethiopic	-	0	0	2	0	1	0	3	0
Farsi	+	0	20	0	64	0	1	0	85

A plus sign in the Status column signifies a new program; a minus sign signifies a discontinued program. No sign means that the program continues.

Table 8 (continued)

Language	Status	Enrollments in Two-Year Colleges		Undergraduate Enrollments		Graduate Enrollments		Total	
		1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002
Finnish		2	6	103	151	9	5	114	162
Fula	+	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Gaelic, Scottish		0	0	47	4	3	0	50	4
Galician		0	0	0	0	6	5	6	5
Georgian		0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2
Greek, Modern		19	11	553	736	74	57	646	804
Gujarati		0	0	32	20	1	0	33	20
Gwich'in		0	0	0	18	2	0	2	18
Haitian Creole		0	0	116	121	8	7	124	128
Hausa		0	0	36	38	7	2	43	40
Hawai'ian		645	667	1,344	1,014	18	6	2,007	1,687
Hindi		0	0	767	1,374	64	56	831	1,430
Hindi-Urdu		0	0	417	393	31	34	448	427
Hittite		0	0	0	0	8	1	8	1
Hmong		2	89	13	194	0	0	15	283
Hungarian		0	0	53	97	5	5	58	102
Icelandic		0	0	2	12	0	0	2	12
Igbo	+	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	9
Ilocano		0	0	171	91	0	0	171	91
Indonesian		0	0	177	180	46	45	223	225
Inupiaq		0	24	22	27	0	0	22	51
Iranian		0	0	77	92	3	10	80	102
Irish		13	0	252	659	13	46	278	705
Irish, Modern	+	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	8
Irish, Old		0	0	35	0	13	3	48	3
Japanese, Classical	+	0	0	0	8	0	11	0	19
Kannada		0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2
Kazakh		0	0	1	8	0	8	1	16
Khmer		0	0	14	20	0	0	14	20
Kikuyu	+	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Kiowa		0	0	49	77	0	0	49	77
Koyukon		0	0	7	6	0	0	7	6
Kutenai	+	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	20
Latvian		0	0	12	8	0	0	12	8
Lingala		0	0	35	78	0	1	35	79
Lithuanian		0	0	37	54	14	5	51	59
Luganda		0	0	9	13	0	0	9	13
Macedonian		0	0	0	1	5	2	5	3
Malay		0	0	1	1	1	3	2	4
Malayalam		0	0	28	20	0	0	28	20
Manchu	-	0	0	1	0	6	0	7	0
Mandingo	+	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Maori		0	0	18	25	0	0	18	25
Marathi		0	0	6	0	0	2	6	2
Menominee		13	13	0	0	0	0	13	13
Meru	-	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Mohawk		0	0	16	29	0	0	16	29
Mongolian		0	0	4	27	2	8	6	35

A plus sign in the Status column signifies a new program; a minus sign signifies a discontinued program. No sign means that the program continues.

Table 8 (continued)

Language	Status	Enrollments in Two-Year Colleges		Undergraduate Enrollments		Graduate Enrollments		Total	
		1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002
Muskogee (Creek)		0	6	85	126	0	0	85	132
Nahuatl	-	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Navajo		169	526	127	257	1	0	297	783
Ndebele, Zimbabwe	-	0	0	7	0	0	0	7	0
Nepali		0	0	94	11	6	0	100	11
Nez Perce	+	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	9
Norse		0	0	4	2	1	9	5	11
Norwegian		0	0	638	772	2	5	640	777
Ojibwa		31	40	219	230	1	0	251	270
Omaha	-	19	0	0	0	0	0	19	0
Oromo	+	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Pali		0	0	0	0	1	11	1	11
Papago		27	36	5	13	0	0	32	49
Pashto	+	0	10	0	4	0	0	0	14
Persian		233	308	317	680	64	129	614	1,117
Pilipino	+	0	236	0	213	0	0	0	449
Pima		11	9	0	0	0	0	11	9
Polish		22	80	703	935	47	38	772	1,053
Punjabi		0	0	30	99	2	0	32	99
Quechua		0	0	53	43	5	8	58	51
Romanian		0	0	83	120	9	6	92	126
Sahaptin	-	0	0	10	0	0	0	10	0
Salish	+	0	56	0	0	0	0	0	56
Samoan		0	0	207	201	0	0	207	201
Sanskrit		0	0	275	329	88	158	363	487
Serbian		0	0	22	20	15	16	37	36
Serbo-Croatian		76	133	66	175	12	34	154	342
Setswana		0	0	19	10	0	0	19	10
Shona		0	0	7	2	0	2	7	4
Shoshoni		0	0	8	16	0	0	8	16
Sinhala	-	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Sinhalese	+	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Slavic, Old Church		0	0	7	9	23	0	30	9
Slovak		0	0	24	31	1	5	25	36
Sumerian		0	0	0	3	13	19	13	22
Swahili		1	47	1,199	1,483	41	63	1,241	1,593
Swati	+	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Swedish		0	0	678	727	6	9	684	736
Syriac		0	0	11	2	30	29	41	31
Tagalog		428	404	362	287	4	2	794	693
Tahitian		0	0	19	20	0	0	19	20
Taiwanese	+	0	0	0	34	0	13	0	47
Tamil		0	0	41	89	4	25	45	114
Telugu		0	0	11	3	0	0	11	3
Thai		17	16	240	302	15	12	272	330
Tibetan		0	0	59	43	21	35	80	78
Tibetan, Classical	+	0	0	0	8	0	20	0	28
Tlingit		0	0	17	108	0	0	17	108

A plus sign in the Status column signifies a new program; a minus sign signifies a discontinued program. No sign means that the program continues.

Table 8 (continued)

Language	Status	Enrollments in Two-Year Colleges		Undergraduate Enrollments		Graduate Enrollments		Total	
		1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002
Tonga		0	0	33	43	0	0	33	43
Turkic		0	0	15	15	0	6	15	21
Turkish		15	13	166	240	37	61	218	314
Twi		0	0	33	75	1	4	34	79
Ugaritic		0	0	0	0	33	14	33	14
Uighur	-	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0
Ukrainian		0	0	34	107	6	19	40	126
Urdu		0	0	22	140	13	12	35	152
Uzbek		0	7	0	5	4	11	4	23
Vietnamese		385	1,185	491	1,003	23	48	899	2,236
Welsh		0	0	16	30	1	2	17	32
Welsh, Early	+	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	6
Wolof		0	0	43	73	0	1	43	74
Xhosa	+	0	0	0	34	0	0	0	34
Yaqui	-	12	0	0	0	0	0	12	0
Yiddish		0	0	324	414	14	24	338	438
Yoruba		0	0	64	76	5	0	69	76
Yup'ik		0	0	55	10	0	0	55	10
Zulu		0	0	63	70	5	2	68	72
Total		2,348	4,662	14,227	19,257	1,196	1,797	17,771	25,716
Continued programs		122							
New programs		25							
Discontinued programs		15							
Total other languages		162							

A plus sign in the Status column signifies a new program; a minus sign signifies a discontinued program.

No sign means that the program continues.

Table 9
Enrollments in Less Commonly Taught Languages, by Region of Origin, 1998 and 2002

	1998			2002		
	Languages	Enrollments	Percentage	Languages	Enrollments	Percentage
Europe	32	4,126	23.2	34	6,636	25.8
Middle East and Africa	39	5,353	30.1	38	6,373	24.8
Asia and Pacific	30	4,477	25.2	41	7,996	31.1
North and South America	37	3,815	21.5	34	4,711	18.3
Total	138	17,771	100.0	147	25,716	100.0

Table 10a
Enrollments in Sixteen Leading Asian or Pacific Languages in Selected Years, with Percentage Change

Language	1974	1980	1986	1990	1995	1998	2002	Change from 1998 to 2002 (%)
Vietnamese	29	74	175	327	1,010	899	2,236	148.7
Hindi	313	197	300	306	694	831	1,430	72.1
Tagalog	122	263	88	146	680	794	693	-12.7
Sanskrit	384	265	250	251	377	363	487	34.2
Pilipino	203	–	132	196	–	–	449	NA
Hindi-Urdu	161	76	101	125	263	448	427	-4.7
Thai	71	80	108	192	278	272	330	21.3
Hmong	–	–	–	13	170	15	283	1,786.7
Indonesian	121	127	156	222	256	223	225	0.9
Samoan	0	18	56	69	179	207	201	-2.9
Cantonese	42	36	111	83	33	39	180	361.5
Urdu	41	23	49	90	88	35	152	334.3
Tamil	33	25	36	35	55	45	114	153.3
Punjabi	0	0	1	8	42	32	99	209.4
Ilocano	58	17	28	72	146	171	91	-46.8
Tibetan	61	56	50	75	67	80	78	-2.5
Total	1,639	1,257	1,641	2,210	4,338	4,454	7,475	
Percentage change	–	-23.3	30.5	34.7	96.3	2.7	67.8	

Table 10b
Enrollments in Sixteen Leading Native American Languages in Selected Years, with Percentage Change

Language	1974	1980	1986	1990	1995	1998	2002	Change from 1998 to 2002 (%)
Hawai'ian	570	610	441	913	1,890	2,007	1,687	-15.9
Navajo	587	225	273	186	832	297	783	163.6
Dakota/Lakota	112	109	168	158	465	334	610	82.6
Ojibwa	95	84	184	231	321	251	270	7.6
Muskogee (Creek)	20	0	0	0	0	85	132	55.3
Cherokee	15	29	22	57	73	175	118	-32.6
Arapahoe	0	0	15	15	9	4	112	2,700.0
Tlingit	0	5	0	0	0	17	108	535.3
Eskimo	0	0	0	0	0	46	99	115.2
Kiowa	0	0	0	0	0	49	77	57.1
Choctaw	12	0	0	8	0	83	63	-24.1
Salish	0	0	0	0	0	0	56	NA
Crow Indian	0	16	14	21	38	9	55	511.1
Inupiaq	30	0	32	48	0	22	51	131.8
Quechua	29	23	17	37	41	58	51	-12.1
Papago	15	0	0	5	39	32	49	53.1
Total	1,485	1,101	1,166	1,679	3,708	3,469	4,321	
Percentage change	–	-25.9	5.9	44.0	120.8	-6.4	24.6	

Following national trends, enrollments dipped in 1980 and began to climb slowly through the rest of the decade: a 5.1% increase from 1980 to 1986; 48.2% from 1986 to 1990; and, much more steeply, 119.6% from 1990 to 1995. Despite a slight decline of -8.5% from 1995 to 1998, these languages have increased since 1998 by 24.6% and have almost tripled since 1974. Though it has lost some enrollments, Hawai'ian still has the largest total enrollment (39%) of the top sixteen Native American languages taught; however Navajo and Dakota-Lakota made impressive gains of 163.6% and 82.6%, respectively.

The 2002 statistics on enrollments in foreign languages in United States institutions of higher education show that trends established in previous surveys are continuing: Spanish is still the language chosen by most students who study languages and is becoming ever more significant in the undergraduate curriculum. While the number of students studying other languages is slightly less than half the total, these students are pursuing a greater variety of languages. Some of the more commonly taught languages—French, German, and Russian—do not enjoy the enrollments they did during the 1970s but now have become stable or have increased slightly. While the 17.0% increase in total language enrollments (table 1) is substantial,² the proportion of modern foreign language (MFL) enrollments to every 100 institutional enrollments (table 4) has remained relatively constant over the years. The current proportion of 8.6 MFL enrollments per hundred institutional enrollments should be taken as a

good sign, not only because it is the highest since 1972 but also because the college population grew at a faster pace between the last two surveys than it had during the surveys of 1990, 1995, and 1998. The index of growth for institutional enrollments, showing increases in college student population since 1960, rose by 11.7% between 1990 and 1995, by 6.5% between 1995 and 1998, by 29.0% between 1998 and 2002. Considering that growth, the 0.7% increase in MFL enrollments per hundred institutional enrollments for the 2002 survey is significant: foreign language enrollments are keeping pace with and improving slightly in relation to the increase in the college student population.

Notes

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¹These figures are taken from the 2002 *Digest of Educational Statistics*, published by the National Center for Education Statistics. Projections for 2002 enrollments can be found at nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/proj2012/table_16.asp and nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/proj2012/table_18.asp.

²This percentage gain is the largest since 1990. Gains and losses of total enrollments in previous years are: -1.4% in 1970, -9.2% in 1972, -6.2% in 1974, -1.4% in 1977, -0.9% in 1980, 4.5% in 1983, 3.9% in 1986, 18% in 1990, -3.8% in 1995, 4.8% in 1998.

Appendix A

Regional Comparison of 2002 Undergraduate Enrollments in Sixteen Leading Languages

Language	Northeast	Midwest	South Atlantic	South Central	Rocky Mountain	Pacific Coast	National (Total)
Spanish	143,587	157,214	167,090	87,819	58,837	121,770	736,317
Percentage of national	19.5	21.4	22.7	11.9	8.0	16.5	100.0
French	46,540	44,680	48,065	19,088	11,452	27,549	197,374
Percentage of national	23.6	22.6	24.4	9.7	5.8	14.0	100.0
German	16,580	27,456	18,870	6,702	6,634	12,055	88,297
Percentage of national	18.8	31.1	21.4	7.6	7.5	13.7	100.0
Italian	26,192	10,459	9,350	2,813	3,101	10,937	62,852
Percentage of national	41.7	16.6	14.9	4.5	4.9	17.4	100.0
American Sign Language	8,818	11,613	7,744	4,989	6,882	20,614	60,660
Percentage of national	14.5	19.1	12.8	8.2	11.3	34.0	100.0
Japanese	9,132	9,980	6,582	2,320	4,023	19,271	51,308
Percentage of national	17.8	19.5	12.8	4.5	7.8	37.6	100.0
Chinese	8,822	5,166	4,228	1,431	1,933	11,639	33,219
Percentage of national	26.6	15.6	12.7	4.3	5.8	35.0	100.0
Latin	6,127	7,197	7,200	3,736	1,688	2,848	28,796
Percentage of national	21.3	25.0	25.0	13.0	5.9	9.9	100.0
Russian	6,034	5,198	4,159	1,442	2,289	4,029	23,151
Percentage of national	26.1	22.5	18.0	6.2	9.9	17.4	100.0
Greek	2,111	4,128	3,750	1,982	780	1,592	14,343
Percentage of national	14.7	28.8	26.1	13.8	5.4	11.1	100.0
Biblical Hebrew	5,732	1,242	1,132	357	135	452	9,050
Percentage of national	63.3	13.7	12.5	3.9	1.5	5.0	100.0
Arabic	2,184	2,219	2,246	652	692	2,060	10,053
Percentage of national	21.7	22.1	22.3	6.5	6.9	20.5	100.0
Modern Hebrew	4,091	1,491	1,207	280	339	793	8,201
Percentage of national	49.9	18.2	14.7	3.4	4.1	9.7	100.0
Portuguese	2,202	1,250	1,886	516	1,244	800	7,898
Percentage of national	27.9	15.8	23.9	6.5	15.8	10.1	100.0
Korean	1,147	592	393	152	323	2,493	5,100
Percentage of national	22.5	11.6	7.7	3.0	6.3	48.9	100.0
Vietnamese	113	45	97	117	36	1,780	2,188
Percentage of national	5.2	2.1	4.4	5.3	1.6	81.4	100.0

Appendix B

Status of Foreign Language Offerings at Institutions That Reported Undergraduate Enrollments in Fall 1998 or Fall 2002 but Not in Both

Table B1
Institutions Reporting Enrollments in 2002 but Not in 1998

Language	New Offerings since 1998	Language Available in 1998 but No Enrollments Reported	Status Not Reported	Total
Spanish	38	36	145	219
French	49	70	83	202
German	39	50	38	127
Italian	49	40	37	126
American Sign Language	187	24	240	451
Japanese	67	22	25	114
Chinese	84	24	20	128
Latin	25	62	21	108
Russian	28	24	13	65
Ancient Greek	20	48	49	117
Biblical Hebrew	20	33	38	91
Arabic	74	12	17	103
Modern Hebrew	13	7	15	35
Portuguese	35	13	8	56
Korean	11	10	4	25

Table B2
Institutions Reporting Enrollments in 1998 but Not in 2002

Language	Discontinued Offerings since 1998	Language Available in 2002 but No Enrollments Reported	Status Not Reported	Total
Spanish	3	13	90	106
French	46	69	54	169
German	60	62	34	156
Italian	16	24	11	51
American Sign Language	4	9	2	15
Japanese	40	34	26	100
Chinese	16	25	14	55
Latin	13	45	15	73
Russian	59	38	24	121
Ancient Greek	10	40	19	69
Biblical Hebrew	6	40	13	59
Arabic	8	11	8	27
Modern Hebrew	7	10	5	22
Portuguese	6	13	5	24
Korean	4	4	2	10

Reasons for lack of enrollments include changes in student demand, lack of faculty availability, courses offered on a staggered schedule, or a combination of these reasons. This category includes languages listed in the course catalogue but having no reported enrollments. The New Offerings column is for languages newly listed and offered at an institution since 1998. The Discontinued Offerings column is for languages that are no longer listed in the catalog, though they were available in 1998.