

College Faculty Perceptions About Foreign Language

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Abstract: *Most postsecondary institutions are committed to internationalization of their curricula, global awareness, and appreciation for multiculturalism. However, proficiency in a foreign language plays a marginal role, at best, in reaching these goals. In an attempt to understand the perceptions about the role of foreign language in postsecondary education, liberal arts faculty and administrators were polled regarding their beliefs about foreign language. Responses indicate that regardless of their support for foreign language, faculty members generally believe that learning another language means instruction in grammar and lexicon, with little attention to culture. Although faculty generally agreed that proficiency in another language is important, degree programs in the service professions were viewed as too prescriptive to allow students enough time to learn another language.*

Key words: *attitudes, college foreign language, faculty survey, foreign language requirement, perceptions,*

Languages: *English*

Background

The report of Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad characterized America's ignorance of the world as a national liability, and it urged the government to increase the number of college students who learn foreign languages (CNN, 2003). In its comments, the task force criticized America's stubborn monolingualism as feeding the confusion many Americans felt after September 11, 2001 (Lovgren, 2004). There is little wonder that postsecondary institutions have set goals to internationalize their curricula, to increase the number of American students who study abroad, and to facilitate students' appreciation of diversity within the United States. Proficiency in another language goes far to meet all these goals (ADFL, 2004; Calvin & Rider, 2004; National Standards, 1999). Nevertheless, Goldberg, Lusin, and Welles (2004) found that less than one-third of American colleges require foreign language study for admission, and Calvin and Rider (2004) have described the common practice of waiving college graduation requirements in foreign language for students with as little as two years of high school coursework, despite the fact that a study by the Council for Basic Education (2004) found that as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, instruction time in foreign language in American schools has decreased. This investigation was undertaken to understand

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