

WORLD LANGUAGES AND THE RUTGERS CURRICULUM

STUDENT SURVEY

This survey, prepared by the Language Requirement Task Force, perfected and administered by Research Analyst Victoria Porterfield of the Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning, and launched by the Office of the Chancellor, ran from March 6 through March 13, 2017.

In this document you will find (under separate paginations; the *pdf* pagination is indicated below):

- **The text of the survey** (the survey itself ran on Qualtrics, with scrolling features and choice menus)
[p. 2-11 of the pdf]
- **Charts** (and matching **tables**) created by the OIRAP from responses to **some** of the questions (excluding open-ended ones, unsuitable for quantitative analysis); preceded by a table of **response rates** according to various distributions.
[p. 12-40 of the pdf]
- **A qualitative review of the survey's results** by the Task Force's Research Assistant, Benjamin Kinsella. This review was based on a huge Excel file of "raw data" produced by the OIRAP and containing all the responses. We would be happy to share this file with anyone interested in studying it.
[p. 41-57 of the pdf]

WORLD LANGUAGES AND THE RUTGERS CURRICULUM: A SURVEY

SECTION I: ABOUT STUDYING A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH

The purpose of this first section is to learn about your general interest or disinterest in studying a language other than English. While we understand that timing and scheduling concerns may make such a study difficult, we ask that you respond with regard to your level of interest **despite** these concerns.

1a. Are you currently studying or have you recently studied a language other than English at Rutgers?

yes no

1b. If yes, what language(s) are you currently studying or have you recently studied? Check all that apply.

Akan (Twi)

American Sign Language

Arabic

Armenian

Chinese

Filipino

French

German

Greek (Ancient)

Greek (Modern)

Hebrew
Hindi
Hungarian
Italian
Japanese
Korean
Latin
Persian
Polish
Portuguese
Russian
Sanskrit
Spanish
Swahili
Turkish
Ukrainian
Urdu
Vietnamese
Yiddish
Yoruba
Other:

2a. *[If NO to question 1a]* Suppose that you **could** study another language without creating too much of a burden on your current schedule. **Why** might you choose to do so?

2b. *[If YES to question 1a]* **Why** are you studying another language?

3a. *[If NO to question 1a]* **How**, in your opinion, could the study of another language potentially merge with your academic interests and complement your current coursework in other fields?

3b. *[If YES to question 1a]* **How** does the study of another language merge with your academic interests and complement your current coursework in other fields?

4a. *[If NO to question 1a]* What, if anything, would another language add to your **degree**, in terms of educational value and employment prospects?

4b. *[If YES to question 1a]* What, if anything, does another language add to your **degree**, in terms of educational value and employment prospects?

5a. *[If NO to question 1a]* How, if at all, would taking another language negatively impact your educational experience at Rutgers?

5b. *[If YES to question 1a]* What negative effects, if any, has taking a second language had on your educational experience at Rutgers?

6. What **incentives** do you think would encourage you (or your fellow students) to add a second language to your (or their) current studies? (Check all that apply)

A language certificate or equivalent

“Living and learning” communities and facilities

Language instruction related to your field of study or envisioned profession

Addition of language course options to relevant minors

Credit for non-course language work (community outreach, tutoring)

Increased study abroad opportunities

Anything else you can think of:

SECTION II: ABOUT A LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

The purpose of this second section is to assess what you think of the kind of “second language” graduation requirement that exists in many universities (including Rutgers-Camden) – but not at Rutgers-New Brunswick, where, at the moment, only School of Arts and Sciences and Rutgers Business School students enrolled in **Honors** are subject to a requirement of this sort (these students are asked to achieve intermediate-level proficiency).

A common model of requirement mandates (except for exempted schools or programs) **elementary** or **intermediate** proficiency in a language other than English, meaning between **1 and 4 semesters** (3 to 12 credits) of coursework. Students are usually allowed to **place out** of the requirement by demonstrating that they have already achieved the mandated level.

7a. Please indicate your level of interest if such a language requirement were included in the Core Curriculum (or your School’s equivalent) without adding to the total number of required credits. This would make the fulfillment of the curriculum:

much more interesting

somewhat more interesting

somewhat less interesting

much less interesting

7b. Please indicate the level of difficulty you would experience if such a language requirement were included in the Core Curriculum (or your School’s equivalent) **without adding to the total number of required credits**. This would make the fulfillment of the curriculum:

much easier

somewhat easier

somewhat more difficult

much more difficult

8. If such a requirement were **added** to the Core Curriculum (or your School's equivalent), **increasing** its total number of required credits, how many added credits would you be prepared to tolerate for the purpose of language study?

0

1 or 2

3 or 4

6 to 8

9 to 12

9. A graduation requirement in a second language would also make the choice and completion of your **major(s)** and **minor(s)**:

much easier

somewhat easier

somewhat more difficult

much more difficult

10. Select up to four (4) of the greatest potential benefits you would foresee arising from such a requirement, **even** if you are skeptical about the feasibility of additional language study:

opportunity to enhance your understanding of a language you already know

opportunity to develop competence in or exposure to a new language

career advancement / competitiveness

exposure to a new way of thinking or new culture

encouragement to study abroad

encouragement to complete a minor or major in an area of interest

other:

11. Select up to four (4) of the worst potential problems you would foresee with such a requirement, **even** if you were to otherwise welcome further second language study:

the creation of scheduling complications

an increase in your time to graduation

an increase in the cost of your degree

pressure to drop a subject you are more interested in

pressure to take a subject (another language) you are not interested in

a drop in your GPA

other:

The next questions ask you to imagine **hypothetical scenarios** concerning a second language graduation requirement.

12. Suppose that Rutgers **had** a graduation requirement mandating **intermediate-level proficiency** (the equivalent of 4 semesters) in a language other than English, and allowing students who are already at that level to place out of it.

12a. Do you think you **would** have placed out of the requirement, having already achieved the required level in a language you know or have studied before?

yes no unsure

12b. If you placed out of the language requirement, you would rather :

continue studying that language at Rutgers

start learning another language instead

drop second language studies altogether

12c. If you were required to take courses to fulfill the language requirement, you would rather:

continue studying the same language at Rutgers

start learning another language instead

13. Suppose now that Rutgers had a graduation requirement mandating at least **one** semester of study in a language other than English, **with no placing-out allowed.**

13a. How would you feel about being required to take one course in a language you know or have studied before, or (if you so wished) in a new language?

I would welcome that

I would resent that

I would not care one way or the other

13b. Would you rather, in this scenario:

take the required course in a language you know or have studied before

start learning a new one

14. Suppose that you are free to imagine a language requirement that would work for you, bring you the benefits of being exposed to a language other than English, without creating too many difficulties. Describe in a few words what such a requirement would look like:

SECTION III: ABOUT YOU

Your responses to this final set of questions will help give us a better sense of your perspective on the subject of this survey.

15. Did you come to Rutgers from:

New Jersey?

another state?

another country?

16. Are you a native and fluent speaker of:

English?

a language other than English? If so, what language?

17. Do you consider yourself bilingual? yes no unsure

18. Do you consider yourself a heritage speaker? yes no unsure

19. Are you currently studying English as a second language? yes no

20a. What language(s), other than the one of which you are a native and fluent speaker, were you exposed to at any point in your life **outside of school**?

20b. Rate your level of proficiency in that or those language(s) (*to add another language, click here for another set of checkboxes*)

- listening	elementary	intermediate	advanced
- speaking	elementary	intermediate	advanced
- reading	elementary	intermediate	advanced
- writing	elementary	intermediate	advanced

21a. What language(s), other than the one of which you are a native and fluent speaker, did you study at any point in your life **at school**?

21b. Rate your level of proficiency in that or those language(s) *(to add another language, click here for another set of checkboxes)*

- listening	elementary	intermediate	advanced
- speaking	elementary	intermediate	advanced
- reading	elementary	intermediate	advanced
- writing	elementary	intermediate	advanced

22a. Are you a transfer student? yes no

22b. If so, from:

 a New Jersey Community College
 another 2-year institution
 a 4-year institution

23. Are you a commuter student? yes no

24. Your School at Rutgers-New Brunswick:

25. Your major(s) (actual or contemplated):

26. Your minor(s) (actual or contemplated):

27. Your graduating class: 2017 2018 2019 2020 Other

WORLD LANGUAGES
AND THE RUTGERS CURRICULUM
STUDENT SURVEY

CHARTS AND TABLES

REPORT TO THE LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT TASK FORCE

Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning

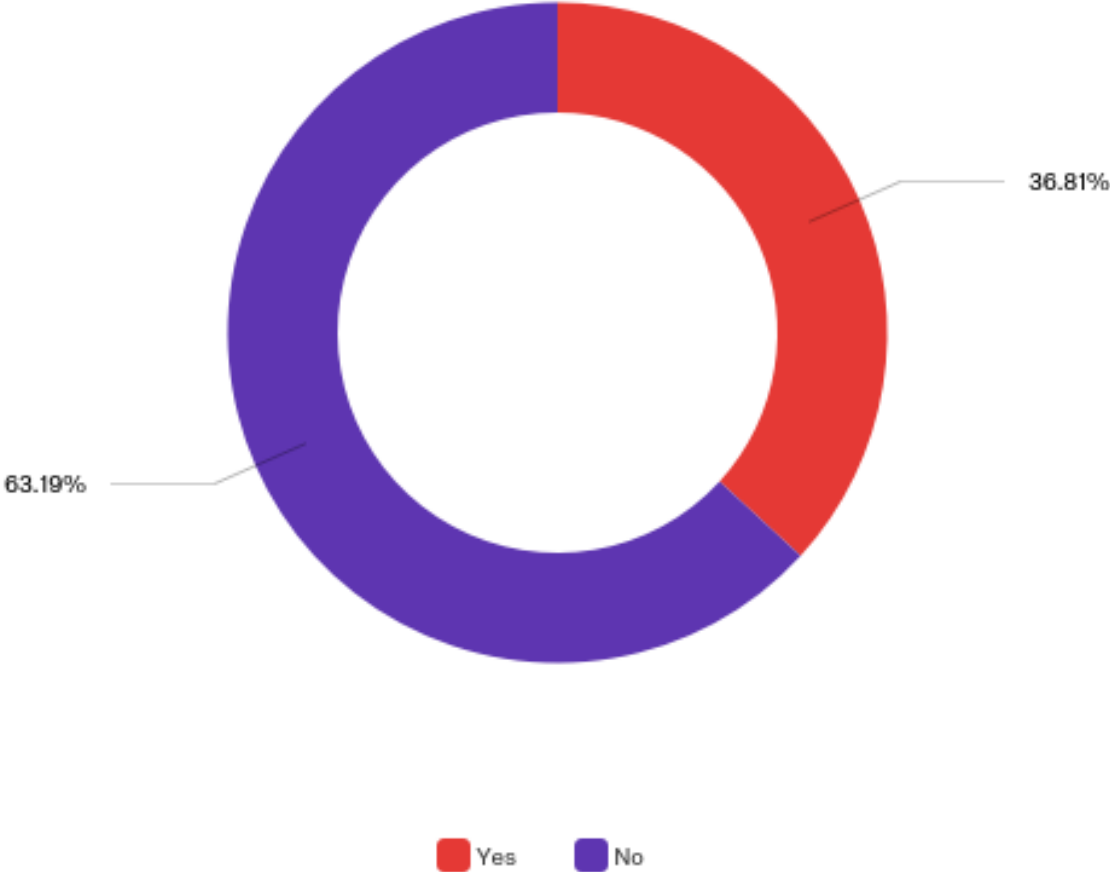
Spring 2017

March 15th 2017, 3:21 pm EDT

World Languages and the Rutgers Curriculum – Distribution of Survey Responses

	Total N	Percent	Response N	Response Rate
TOTAL	32,345		2,883	8.91%
College				
EJB Sch. of Planning & Public Policy - UG	234	0.72%	25	10.68%
Mason Gross School of the Arts - UG	745	2.30%	91	12.21%
Rutgers Business School - UG - New Brunswick	3500	10.82%	304	8.69%
School of Arts and Sciences	20527	63.46%	1841	8.97%
School of Engineering	3812	11.79%	272	7.14%
School of Environmental and Biological Sciences	3139	9.70%	303	9.65%
School of Management and Labor Relations - UG	388	1.20%	47	12.11%
Class level				
First year	4946	15.29%	460	9.30%
Sophomore	6467	19.99%	673	10.41%
Junior	7929	24.51%	679	8.56%
Senior	13003	40.20%	1071	8.24%
Race / Ethnicity				
African American	2384	7.37%	190	7.97%
Asian	8144	25.18%	774	9.50%
Hispanic	4222	13.05%	388	9.19%
International	2783	8.60%	203	7.29%
Other	1152	3.56%	112	9.72%
Unknown	606	1.87%	51	8.42%
White	13054	40.36%	1165	8.92%
Gender				
Male	16566	51.22%	935	5.64%
Female	15777	48.78%	1948	12.35%
Other	2	0.01%	0	0.00%

1a. Are you currently studying or have you recently studied a language other than English at Rutgers?



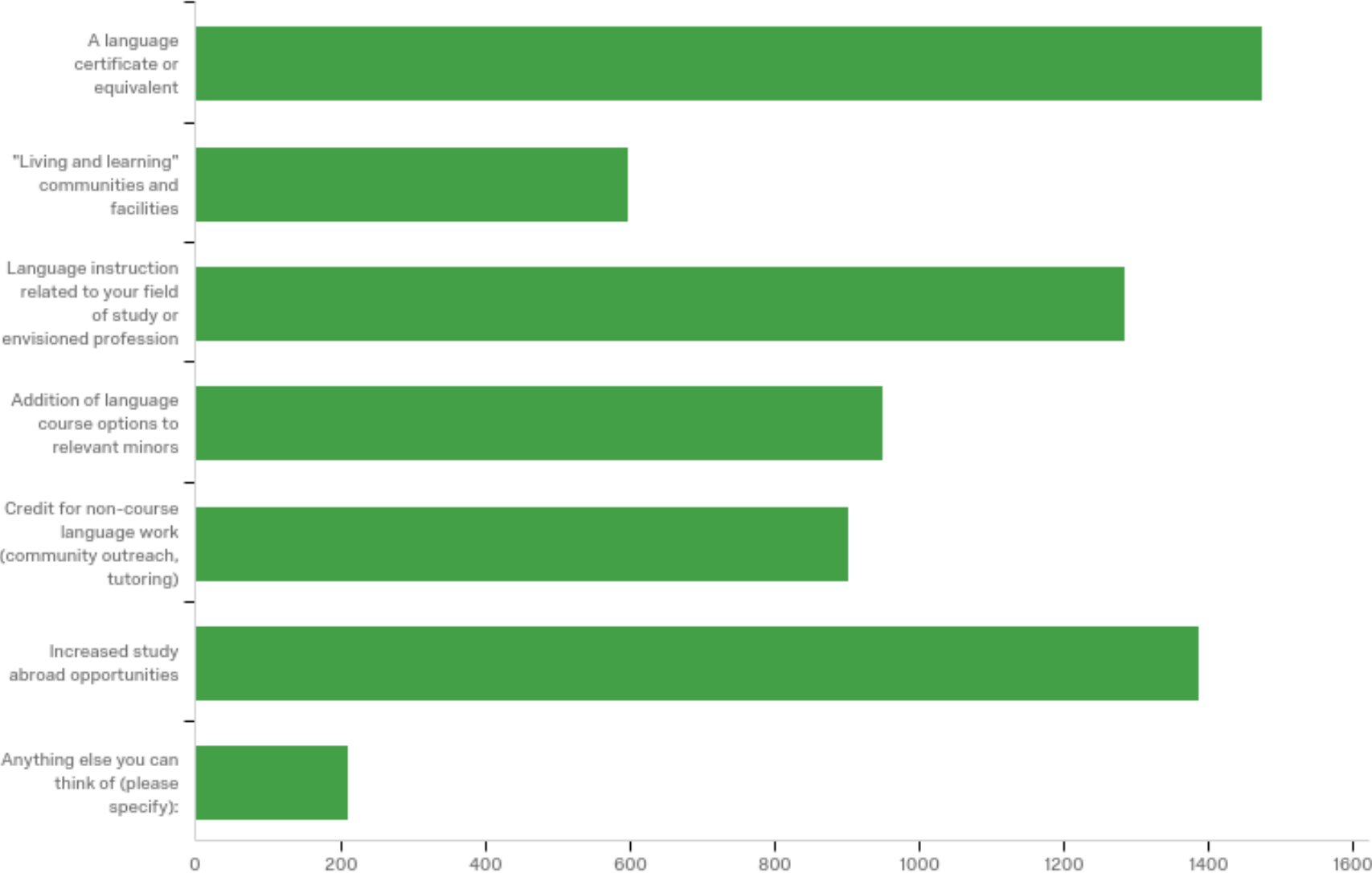
1a. Are you currently studying or have you recently studied a language other than English at Rutgers?

Answer	%	Count
Yes	36.81%	1060
No	63.19%	1820
Total	100%	2880

1b. Most (reported) languages taken at Rutgers

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Spanish	31.37%	330
2	French	20.44%	215
3	Chinese	11.12%	117
4	Italian	8.46%	89
5	Japanese	8.08%	85
	Total		1,052

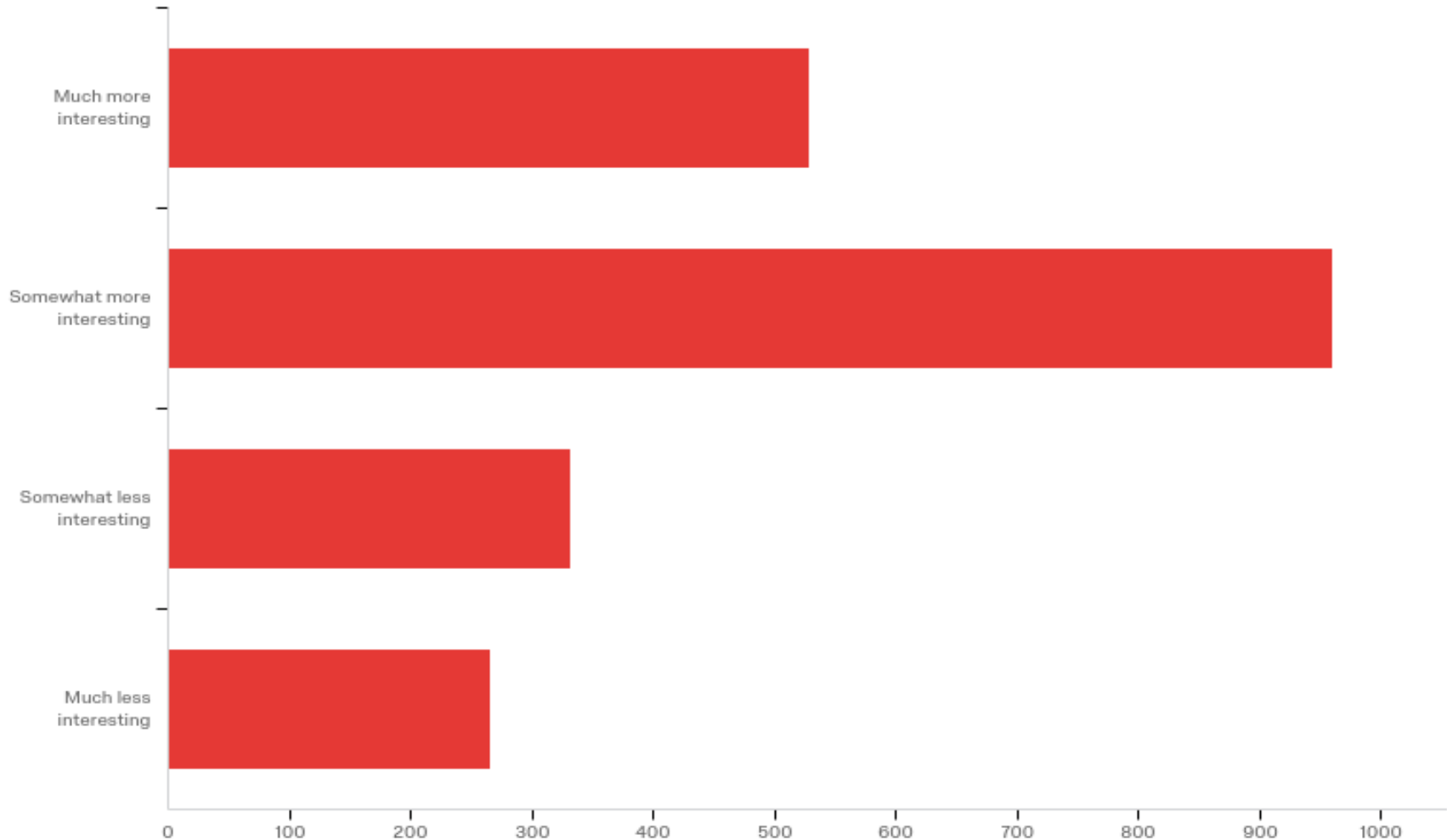
6. What incentives do you think would encourage you (or your fellow students) to add a second language to your (or their) current studies? Check all that apply



6. What incentives do you think would encourage you (or your fellow students) to add a second language to your (or their) current studies? Check all that apply

Answer	%	Count
A language certificate or equivalent	70.24%	1475
Increased study abroad opportunities	66.00%	1386
Language instruction related to your field of study or envisioned profession	61.14%	1284
Addition of language course options to relevant minors	45.29%	951
Credit for non-course language work (community outreach, tutoring)	43.00%	903
"Living and learning" communities and facilities	28.43%	597
Other	10.05%	211
Total	100%	2100

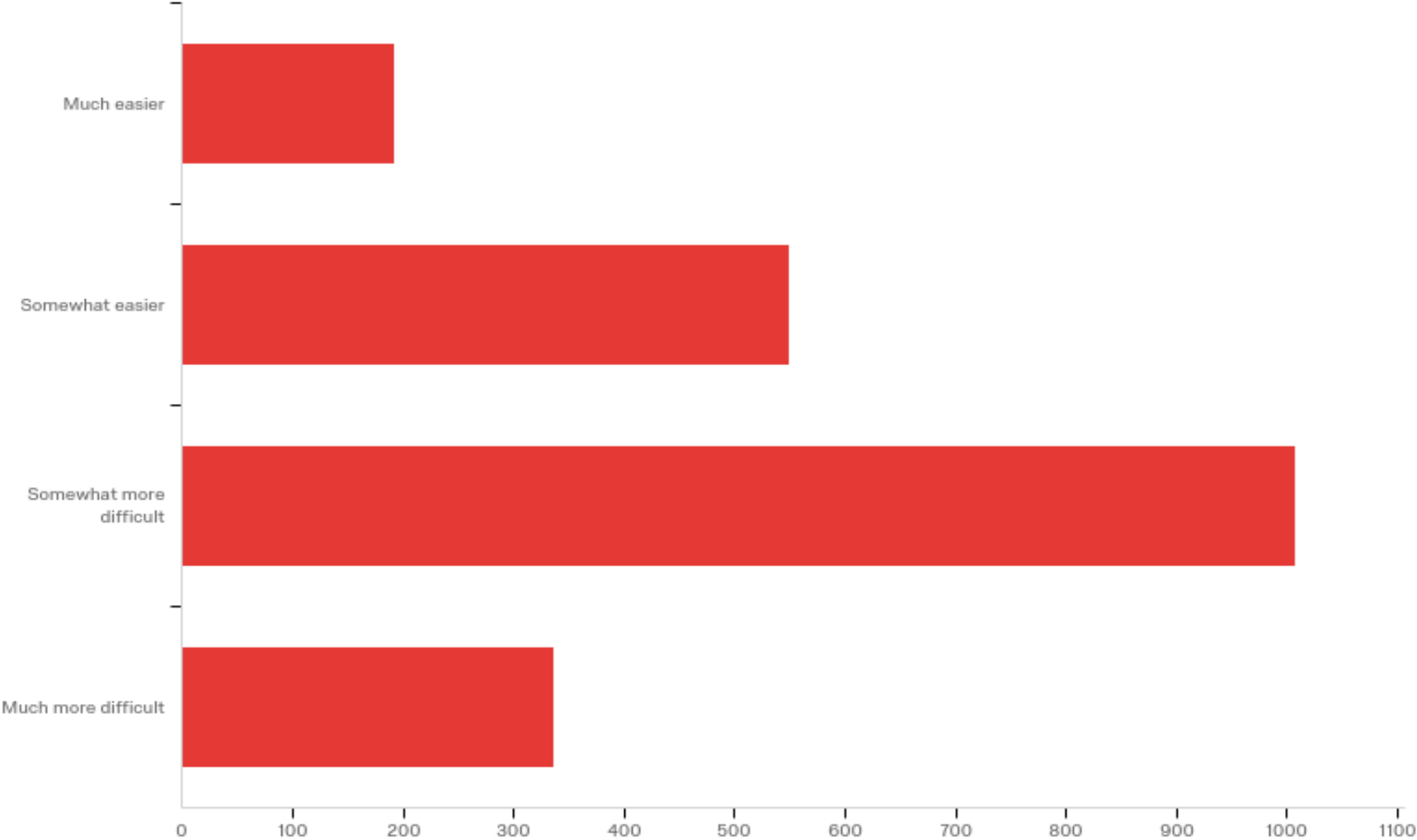
7a. Please indicate your level of interest if a language proficiency requirement (\approx between 1 and 4 semesters of coursework) were included in the Core Curriculum (or your School's equivalent) without adding to the total number of required credits. This would make the fulfillment of the curriculum:



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Answer	%	Count
Much more interesting	25.36%	529
Somewhat more interesting	46.02%	960
Somewhat less interesting	15.87%	331
Much less interesting	12.75%	266
Total	100%	2086

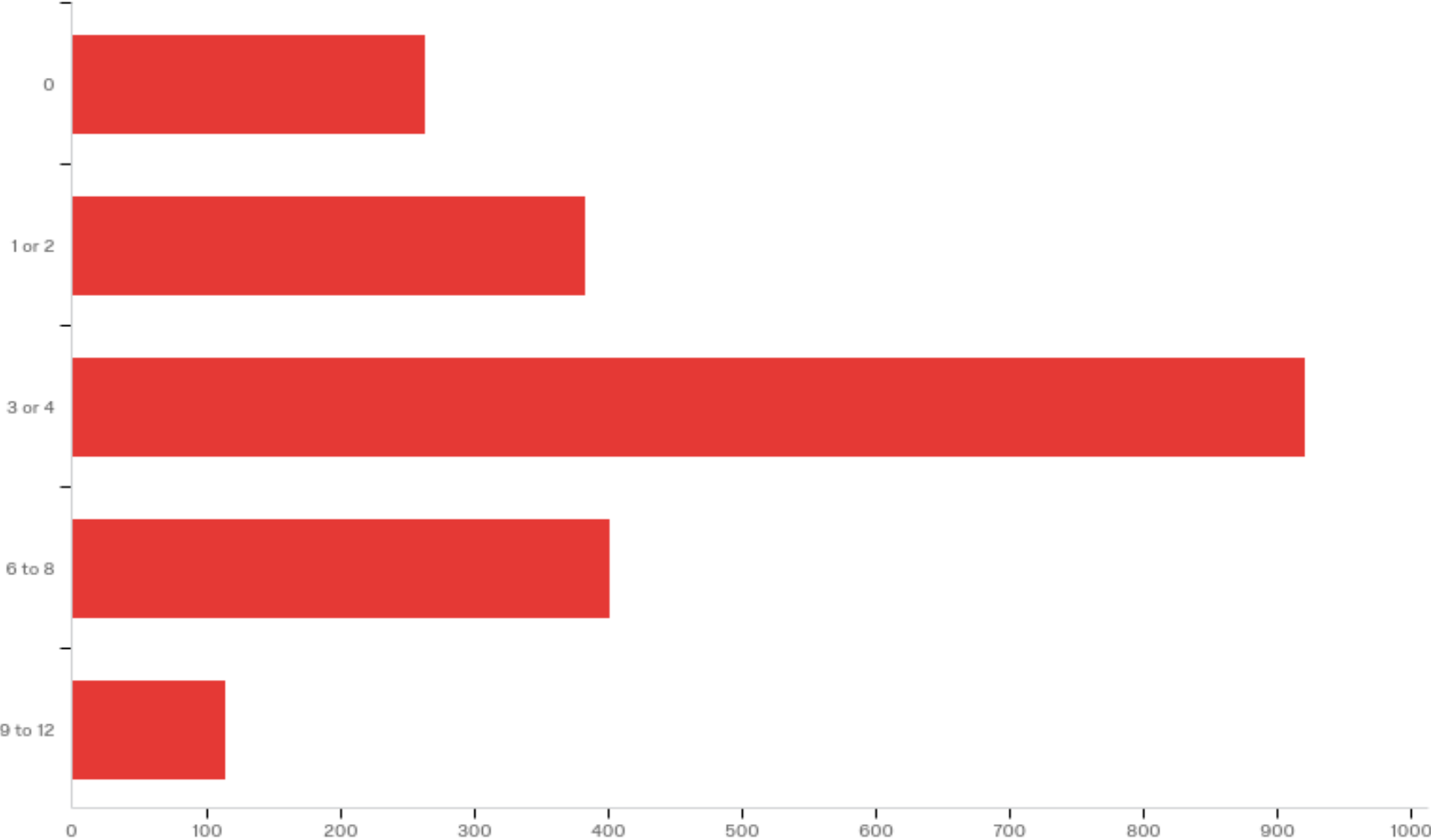
7b. Please indicate the level of difficulty you would experience if such a language requirement were included in the Core Curriculum (or your School's equivalent) without adding to the total number of required credits. This would make the fulfillment of the curriculum:



7b. Please indicate the level of difficulty you would experience if such a language requirement were included in the Core Curriculum (or your School's equivalent) without adding to the total number of required credits. This would make the fulfillment of the curriculum:

Answer	%	Count
Much easier	9.21%	192
Somewhat easier	26.33%	549
Somewhat more difficult	48.30%	1007
Much more difficult	16.16%	337
Total	100%	2085

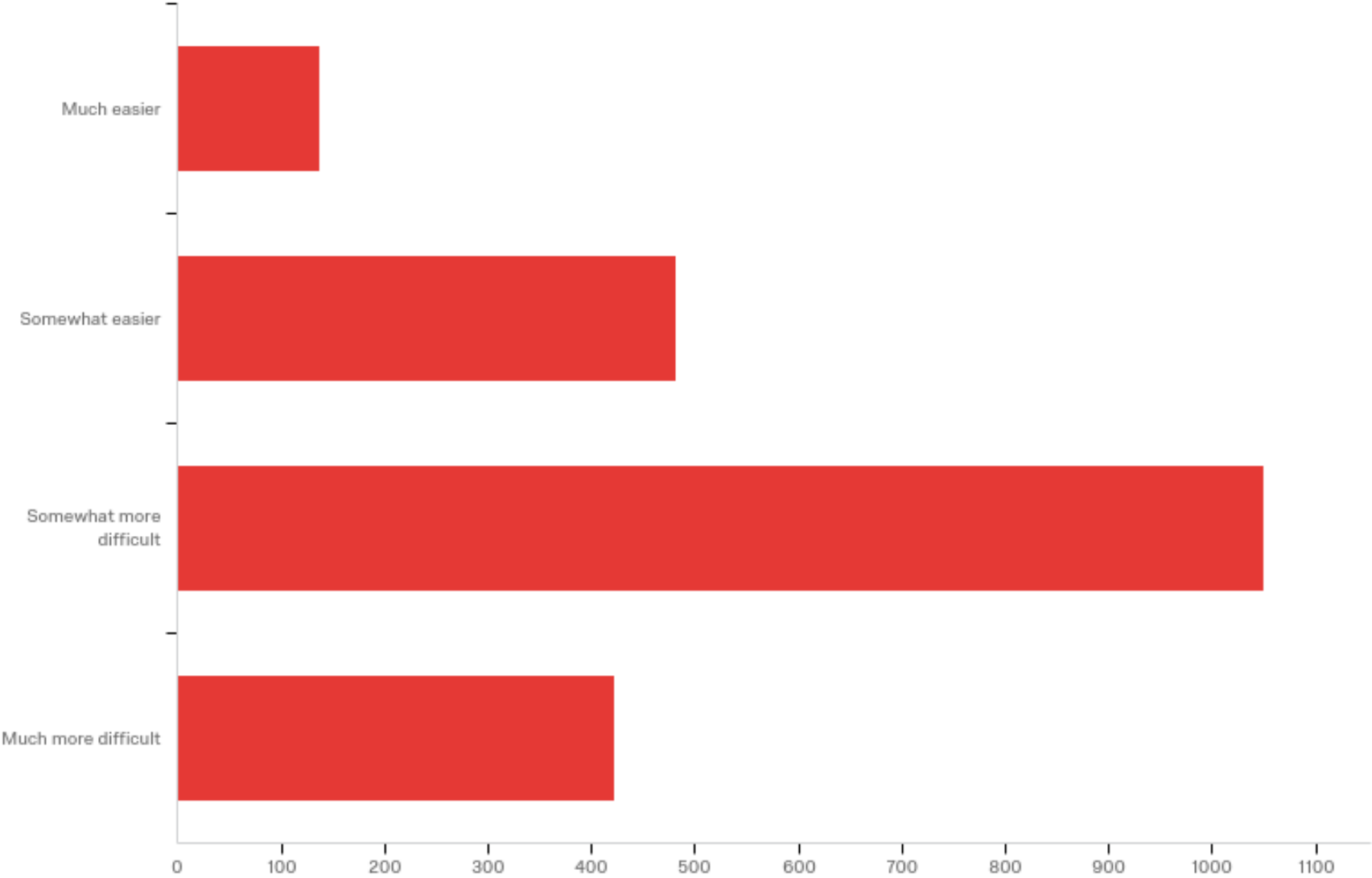
8. If such a language requirement were added to the Core Curriculum (or your School's equivalent), increasing its total number of required credits, how many added credits would you be prepared to tolerate for the purpose of language study?



8. If such a language requirement were added to the Core Curriculum (or your School's equivalent), increasing its total number of required credits, how many added credits would you be prepared to tolerate for the purpose of language study?

Answer	%	Count
0	12.66%	264
1 or 2	18.41%	384
3 or 4	44.15%	921
6 to 8	19.27%	402
9 to 12	5.51%	115
Total	100%	2086

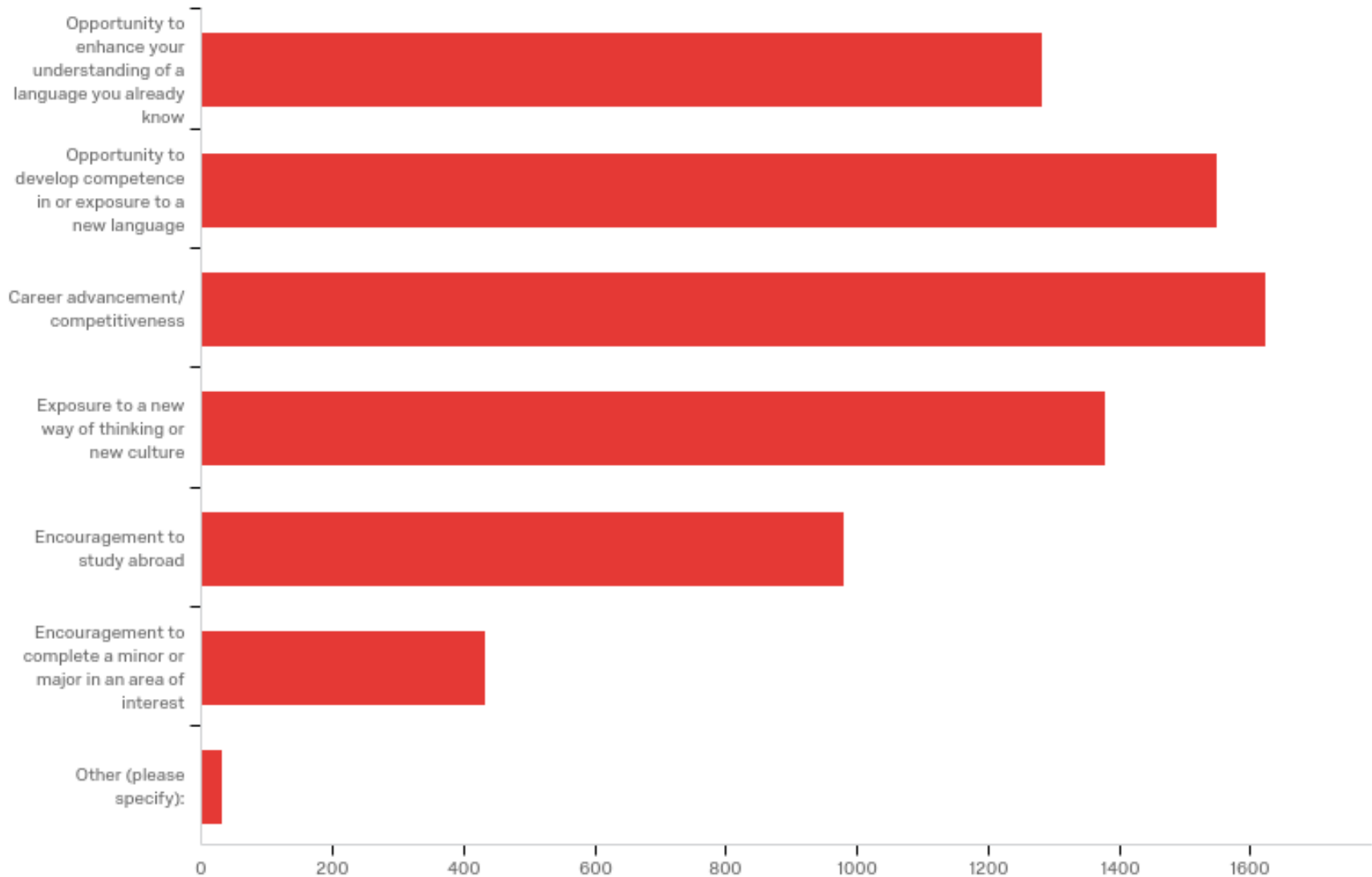
9. A graduation requirement in a second language would also make the choice and completion of your major(s) and minor(s):



9. A graduation requirement in a second language would also make the choice and completion of your major(s) and minor(s):

Answer	%	Count
Much easier	6.56%	137
Somewhat easier	23.03%	481
Somewhat more difficult	50.22%	1049
Much more difficult	20.20%	422
Total	100%	2089

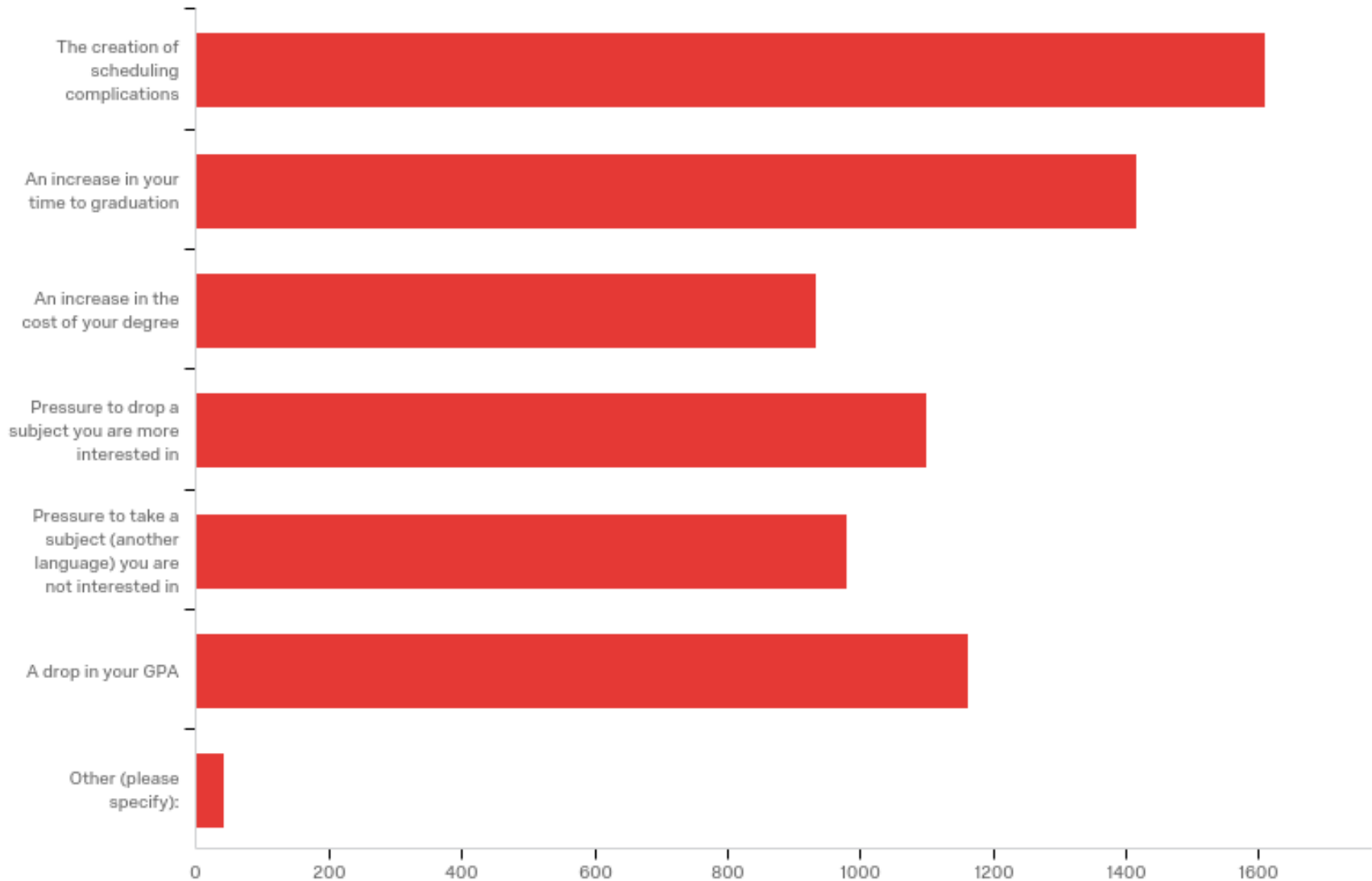
10. Select up to four (4) of the greatest potential benefits you would foresee arising from such a requirement, even if you are skeptical about the feasibility of additional language study:



10. Select up to four (4) of the greatest potential benefits you would foresee arising from such a requirement, even if you are skeptical about the feasibility of additional language study:

Answer	%	Count
Opportunity to enhance your understanding of a language you already know	61.62%	1283
Opportunity to develop competence in or exposure to a new language	74.40%	1549
Career advancement/ competitiveness	78.05%	1625
Exposure to a new way of thinking or new culture	66.28%	1380
Encouragement to study abroad	47.07%	980
Encouragement to complete a minor or major in an area of interest	20.85%	434
Other	1.49%	31
Total	100%	2082

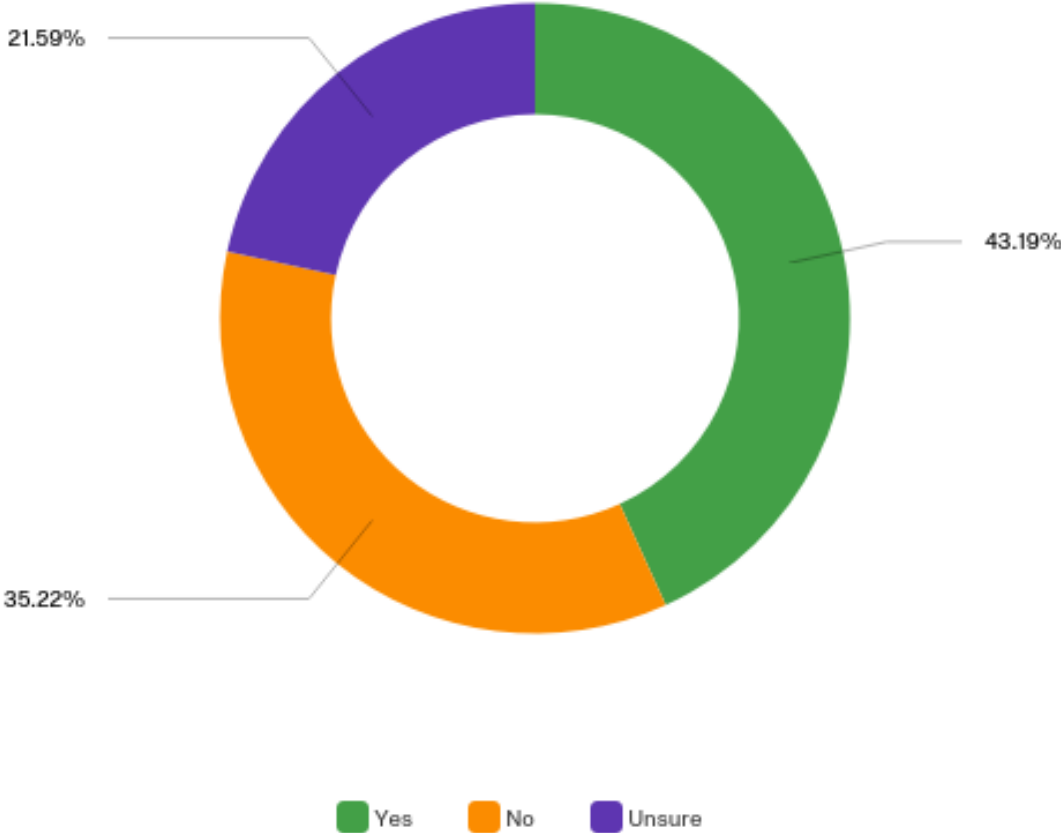
11. Select up to four (4) of the worst potential problems you would foresee arising from such a requirement, even if you were to otherwise welcome further second language study:



11. Select up to four (4) of the worst potential problems you would foresee arising from such a requirement, even if you were to otherwise welcome further second language study:

Answer	%	Count
The creation of scheduling complications	77.53%	1611
An increase in your time to graduation	68.14%	1416
An increase in the cost of your degree	44.90%	933
Pressure to drop a subject you are more interested in	52.89%	1099
Pressure to take a subject (another language) you are not interested in	47.16%	980
A drop in your GPA	56.02%	1164
Other	2.07%	43
Total	100%	2078

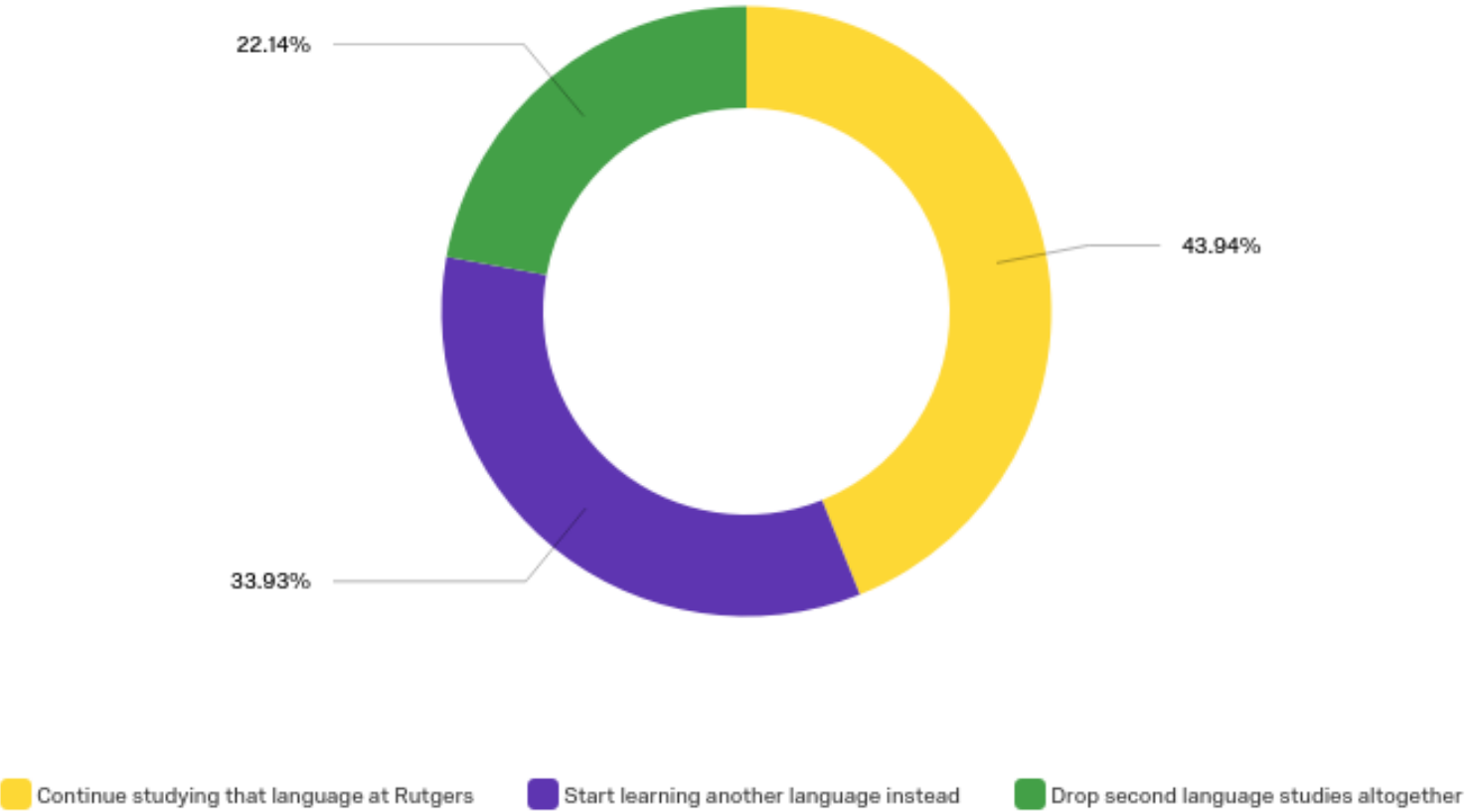
12a. Suppose that Rutgers had a language requirement mandating intermediate-level proficiency. Do you think you would have placed out of the requirement, having already achieved the required level?



12a. Suppose that Rutgers had a language requirement mandating intermediate-level proficiency. Do you think you would have placed out of the requirement, having already achieved the required level?

Answer	%	Count
Yes	43.19%	900
No	35.22%	734
Unsure	21.59%	450
Total	100%	2084

12b. If you placed out of the language requirement, you would rather...



12b. If you placed out of the language requirement, you would rather...

Answer	%	Count
Continue studying that language at Rutgers	43.94%	395
Start learning another language instead	33.93%	305
Drop second language studies altogether	22.14%	199
Total	100%	899

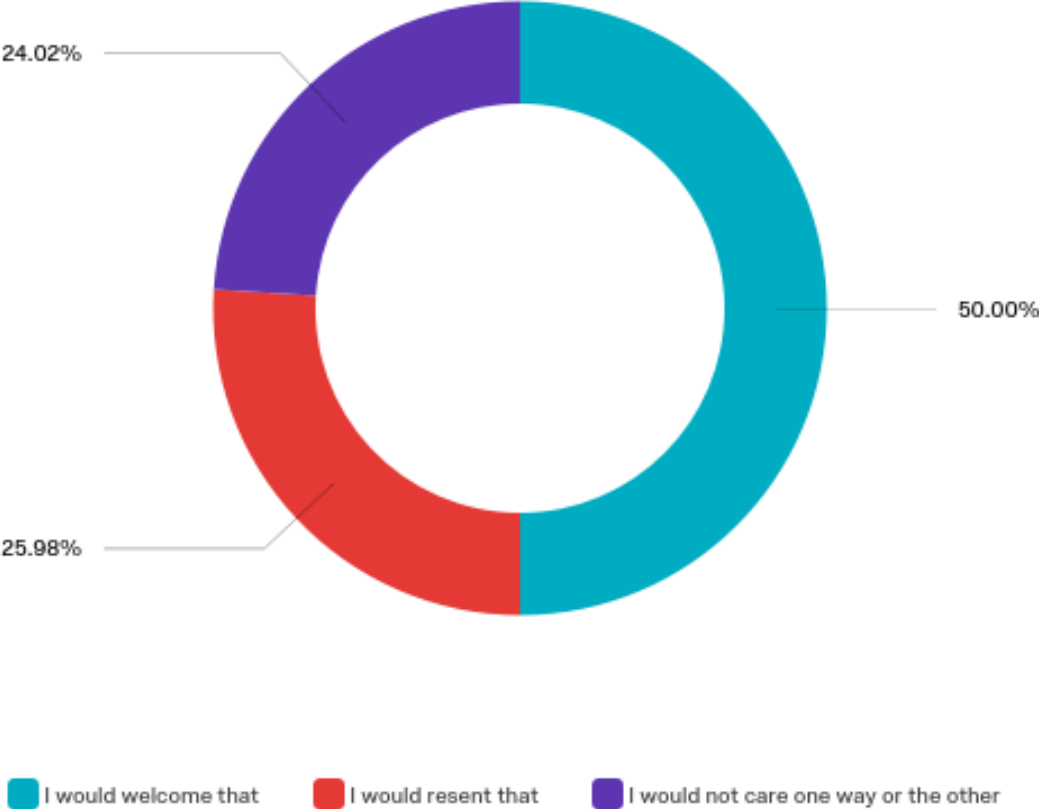
12c. If you were required to take courses to fulfill the language requirement, you would rather...



12c. If you were required to take courses to fulfill the language requirement, you would rather...

Answer	%	Count
Continue studying the same language at Rutgers	66.78%	786
Start learning another language instead	33.22%	391
Total	100%	1177

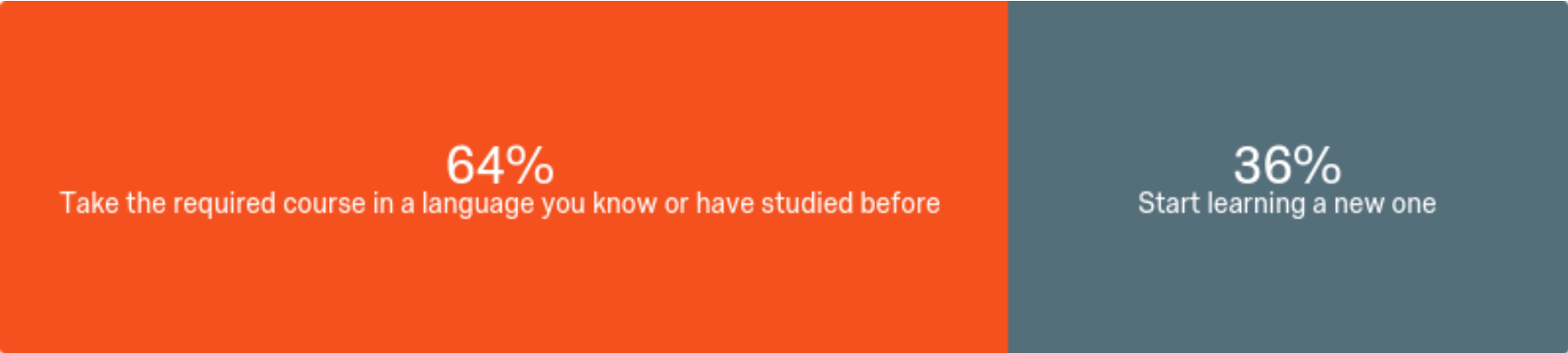
13a. How would you feel about being required to take one course in a language you know or have studied before, or (if you so wished) in a new language?



13a. How would you feel about being required to take one course in a language you know or have studied before, or (if you so wished) in a new language?

Answer	%	Count
I would welcome that	50.00%	1041
I would resent that	25.98%	541
I would not care one way or the other	24.02%	500
Total	100%	2082

13b. In this scenario (you are required to take a course) , you would rather



■ Take the required course in a language you know or have studied before ■ Start learning a new one

13b. In this scenario (you are required to take a course), you would rather

Answer	%	Count
Take the required course in a language you know or have studied before	64.20%	1334
Start learning a new one	35.80%	744
Total	100%	2078

A Qualitative Review of the World Languages and Rutgers Curriculum Student Survey

Benjamin Kinsella
PhD Candidate in Bilingualism and SLA

This analysis qualitatively examines student responses from the *World Languages and Rutgers Curriculum Student Survey*. The university-wide survey captured a number of themes concerning whether or not Rutgers should implement a language requirement. In this analysis, I choose to focus on two areas that raise important questions to consider, namely 1) why a student would choose to study a language other than English; and 2) what a requirement would look like from a student's perspective.

In section one, I first highlight those reasons expressed by Rutgers students as to why they would choose to study another language. Many of these themes highlighted in the qualitative data set intersect with quantitative results, such that students associate language learning with career competitiveness, identity formation, relevance to family background, or simply because of students' general interest in languages.

It is of interest to point out that the majority of survey respondents, 63.19%, indicated that they were not currently taking a language course at Rutgers and had not done so "recently" (although that adverb makes the response somewhat ambiguous: they may have done so two or three years ago, rather than never). For those who were enrolled in a language course, 36.81% of respondents, five languages dominated: Spanish, French, Chinese, Italian, and Japanese.

Further, as I will show, the majority of survey respondents indicated they would like to continue studying the same or a new language at Rutgers, despite the fact that many students indicated that they would be placed out of a requirement if a proficiency exam were to be used to determine placement.

The second section highlights what such a requirement would or should look like from the students' perspective, and reports on common themes associated with student responses. I again triangulate qualitative data with the descriptive data set highlighted by the survey.

SECTION I: WHY MIGHT YOU CHOOSE TO STUDY ANOTHER LANGUAGE?

An inductive reading of student responses generated a number of key themes and messages, which intersected with the survey results in many ways. Issues raised by students were predominantly associated with job competitiveness, relevance to family, and personal reasons for taking a language other than English at Rutgers. Below I list these themes and sub-themes in order of prevalence:

Reasons why students may choose to study another language

1. Career advancement and job competitiveness
2. Relevance to family
 - a. Improve heritage language skills
 - b. Cultural identity
3. Personal reasons
 - a. Interest in languages
 - b. Friendships and social networks

1. Career advancement and job competitiveness

As highlighted in the survey, the majority of students, 78.05% of survey respondents, assigned an economic value to the learning of another language, suggesting that they would be more competitive on the job-market with sharper language skills. Likewise, the word “global” and its derivatives consistently appeared in student responses (i.e., globalization, global society, competitive global market, global awareness, global compatibility, global business, etc.). A closer reading of these assertions shows that they do see the learning of a new or already-spoken language as an “increasingly important asset” in such a global world. A total of 102 responses including the word “job,” and 48 responses with “business,” were tallied under the question, *why might you choose to study another language?* Thus, a common theme emerged, with emphasis on “future opportunities after graduation.”

Consider one Hispanic female student, a senior in the School of Arts and Sciences. She disagreed that she is considered a heritage speaker, claiming that she is intermediate in Spanish. Thus, when asked why she might choose to continue studying a language at Rutgers, Spanish, she asserted:

Excerpt 1

If I could study another language without creating much of a burden for myself, I would study Spanish because it would help greatly with my current job and would help me communicate better with people who speak it [...] There are many patients who come into the office and could be assisted in another language when necessary. Academically it would not help me too much since none of my classes require another language but the knowledge of it can assist me at times. In terms of employment prospects, another language would definitely help me to be able to communicate with patients since I would like to be a nurse and patients who come in are from all background types. Having such a diverse community of patients coming into the current office where I work is important. Fortunately, we have language interpreters here so we can rely on them, but it is useful to have this secondhand knowledge.

Another Hispanic undergraduate in the School of Arts and Sciences reflected on his future career in human resources and how being “being bilingual gives such a strong advantage when it comes to the labor markets.” In the language background questionnaire, the student indicated that he spoke Spanish as a home language at an intermediate level in speaking and listening, and elementary in reading and writing. However, the student showed a critical awareness of the importance of languages other than English, highlighting the professional aspects of intercultural competencies:

Excerpt 2

Since my major is HR I know that in my field I am going to have to deal with all sorts of employees from different ethnic backgrounds and if English is not their best language, being able to communicate in their tongue is critical to helping all those involved in the company. It is important to learn a new language because the workforce has become highly competitive. Being bilingual or multilingual gives such a great advantage, as you are more versatile

In sum, there is an overwhelmingly emphasis on job competitiveness as part of students’ reasoning to take a language other than English. Next, I turn to the relevance of family when choosing to study a language other than an English at Rutgers, highlighting the diversity of the student population.

2. Relevance to family

The LRTF student survey corroborated previous records on the linguistic diversity in the state of New Jersey and Rutgers University (see U.S. Census, 2017). Accordingly, an abundance of student responses centered on the relevance of family and cultural heritage. Within this data, two key themes were identified. First, students expressed interest in taking courses to improve their heritage language skills, namely the functional and structural aspects of their linguistic competence. And second, survey respondents identified such courses a mechanism to bolster their own cultural identity, as they felt a yearning to learn more about their heritage.

2.1 Improve heritage language skills

With respect to the first theme, students overwhelmingly responded that they would like to take a course in the heritage language. According to survey data, a majority of respondents, 61.62%, indicated that they would take a course in a language they already knew, such as the heritage language they grew up speaking in the home. Such language courses would provide opportunities to build upon their conversational patterns with focus on reading and writing, as well as strengthen their grammatical and linguistic repertoires. For example, the following students maintained that a class could facilitate to their own personal growth, in that, for example, a focus on reading and writing would provide economic and social benefits:

Excerpt 3

In order to become more fluent in the first language my family speaks in and to be able to write and read in Polish fluently would be wonderful.

Excerpt 4

I would Spanish to learn how to write in Spanish.

Excerpt 5

I would choose to do so for personal growth because it would allow me to have an additional skill for future employment opportunities. I would study Urdu because it is my family's native language and this would allow me to better read and write, as I am already a native speaker.

On the other hand, many students evidenced linguistic insecurities as a result of their perceived weaknesses in the home language. These patterns were in no way divergent from current research in heritage linguistics (e.g., Coryell and Clark, 2009). Despite growing up in a house where a language other than English was spoken, it is very often the case that students do not gain or maintain proficiency in the heritage language, given the prevalence of English in the school domain. The following excerpts illustrate this theme and again highlight the rich diversity among the Rutgers student population:

Excerpt 6

My mom's side of the family is from Japan, and I would like to have a basic ability to talk and be somewhat self-sufficient when I visit them.

Excerpt 7

I'd like to learn Portuguese and French so that I can properly communicate with my family

Excerpt 8

I would study Chinese personally because my family is from Hong Kong and I can barely speak the language and cannot write in Chinese at all.

Excerpt 9

In order to become more fluent in the first language my family speaks in and to be able to write and read in Polish fluently would be wonderful.

Excerpt 10

I have family in Canada, and my uncle is from Quebec. He has a lot of family that have very basic English language, so I often struggle to communicate with them. Learning more French could open doors for our relationships to grow.

Excerpt 11

My family speaks Spanish, but I don't, so it'd be nice to be able to talk to them and participate more in my culture

Students who come from households where one or both caregivers spoke a heritage language were shown to express linguistic insecurities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing the home language. As observed, there is a diversity of linguistic skills with which student come to campus. Some students, like Excerpt 9, are able to communicate with family members in the

heritage language. Others, like Excerpts 8, 10, and 11, indicate that they struggle to communicate with family members. Taking a heritage language course would benefit their linguistic repertoire. Thus, what they bring into light is the opportunity universities face in serving otherwise underrepresented student groups in the classroom.

In sum, the complex and rich language backgrounds Rutgers students bring to the classroom is evidenced throughout the entire corpus of survey responses and briefly reflected in the aforementioned excerpts. Next, I turn my gaze to those themes associated with cultural identity and students' heightened interest to learn more on their families' heritage backgrounds.

2.2 Cultural identity

We have observed more than once how our diverse student population makes the university a unique institution. In this section, I highlight those excerpts exploring how students' cultural identity would motivate them to take a language course, such as the fact that their newly established cultural knowledge would make them feel closer to their families.

Consider one female student in the Mason Gross School of the Arts, a junior and heritage speaker of Arabic. The student showed an awareness that taking another language, specifically a European language like Latin, French, or Italian, would add to her studies in visual arts and art history. But she struggled, however, in reconciling how to learn a European language for job prospects with her identity as a heritage speaker of Arabic. Taking an additional language, or any language at all, would not count toward credits or major requirements, so it would be a difficult decision to make given that an additional fifth year would be a financial burden. But in terms of identity formation and group membership, the student expressed how a class in Arabic would be beneficial, as observed in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 12

Studying a language would allow me to come in closer contact with my family and my cultural background. Learning Arabic in school will allow me to properly understand the language I am obligated to know and understand. If I had the time, I wish I could learn a language appropriate to my culture, and in doing so help me figure out my identity crisis.

Literature, heritage language development, and identity are inextricably related, insofar as students who take heritage language courses evidence positive gains in ethnolinguistic identity and group-membership (e.g. Chinen and Tucker, 2009). Thus, as observed in Excerpt 12, the use of the term "identity crisis" provides further evidence that a language course in the heritage language would have sociocultural implications, not just linguistic ones, for heritage speakers attending Rutgers.

Another case can be observed in the story from one senior female in School of Planning and Public Policy. The student, born from Greek parents in Pennsylvania, identified herself as a heritage speaker of Greek, but indicated that her language skills were weak. And despite her belief that Greek would not necessarily add anything to her employment prospects, the student emphasized that studying the language would allow her to gain membership to the Greek community:

Excerpt 13

I don't believe that knowing Greek would add anything to my employment prospects, but as it is a language that English has been partially developed from, I think it would add to my educational value because I would have a greater understanding of our own language. I would choose to study Greek for two reasons. The first is that my family is from Greece, and I am unable to communicate with my extended family since I don't know the language. Similarly, it is very difficult to fit into the Greek community without knowing the language. Secondly, I would want to learn Greek because so much of the English language is rooted from Greek language. Therefore, I feel I would have a better understanding of English also.

These excerpts show the ways in which students may gain a greater appreciation of their cultural heritage by taking a heritage language course. Thus, in both the linguistic and cultural aspects of language development, students positively responded to the idea of taking a course in their heritage language.

3. Personal reasons

It could seem at this point that interest in taking a language other than English might be limited to heritage language students. However, a significant number of students who took the student survey responded that they did not speak any other language other than English in the home. In this section, I spotlight those students who would choose to take a language for personal reasons, which range from a general interest in language to those pursuing a language because of their social networks.

3.1 General interest in languages

Throughout the corpus of student responses, an overwhelming number of students indicated that they would like to take a language course simply because of a general interest. Many of these students, 66.28% of survey respondents, indicated that learning a language provides exposure to a new way of thinking. How students would gain such exposure of new knowledge comes from, for example, reading classical literature in its original text, watching foreign TV shows and movies, listening to music in other languages, among other examples.

Consider one male student, a junior in the School of Management and Labor Relations who learned Spanish as a second language in high school. This particular student did not see any negative effect on having such a requirement, although he mentioned that he never had taken a language course at Rutgers. But despite his uncertainty if he would have placed out of the requirement given his previously acquired knowledge, the student maintained that he would continue studying Spanish at Rutgers if such a requirement existed, as observed in Excerpt 14:

Excerpt 14

Without a doubt, I would be thrilled to engage in the study of another language, such as Spanish. Being fluent in another language is always seen as extra level of intellectual abilities. Even physiological studies have found that speaking two or more languages is a great asset to the cognitive process as this certainly rolls over into educational value and employment. I would choose to study another language because I really enjoy learning other languages and learning about other cultures. I also think it is important to know more than one language besides just your own native language (which mine is English) just because it can be useful in the workplace or in other parts of life; and knowledge is power

The same message was found in the response from another student, a senior studying human resources who identified herself as a heritage speaker of Chinese. She believed, like many others who took the survey, that students need to learn to be open to communicate with people from around the world. She wrote: “Having a cultural awareness is essential.” In her case, however, she would choose to take another language, rather than Chinese, as shown in Excerpt 15.

Excerpt 15

I would like to be exposed to different cultures apart from the ones I've experienced, namely Chinese and American. I would like to travel the world and would love to have basic at least pronunciation of other languages like Spanish, Korean, Japanese, Italian, and French, so that when I visit the country, I wouldn't have as much difficulty learning... Yes, as an HR major, it's very versatile and you must be able to communicate with all kinds of people. The world is becoming far more global and being able to keep an open mind and having cultural awareness is essential

Collectively, these excerpts evidence the general interest respondents have in languages. While an abundance of Rutgers students come from households where a language other than English was spoken, many students do not. It is within these diverse responses that we observe a common theme among the Rutgers student population, the belief that taking a language course would provide exposure to new ways of thinking.

3.2 Friends social networks

Given the nature of the Rutgers student population, many of the responses centered on personal relationships, including friends, significant others, and/or their families. This pattern again intersects with the rich diversity within the state of New Jersey and its reflection in the university student population. Many students suggested that they wanted to speak Korean, Spanish, or Chinese because of their personal networks. As one student concisely stated: *“I believe being multilingual can create some of the strongest connections between people. By studying another language, you bridge the gap between you and the native people's language you are studying, creating trust, loyalty and friendship.”*

Evidencing this belief, consider one female student, a native English speaker, in the School of Engineering. Though she is just a sophomore, she expressed that to date, she had never taken a language class at Rutgers due to time constraints. However, if she were to have the time, she would be very open to the idea, not only because of economic benefits, but also social ones: *“I would love to take a Spanish class. I know a little bit of Spanish and some of my friends speak it, so it would be nice to learn more.”*

In the same vein, another female student in School of Environmental and Biological Sciences maintained that she would be very interested in taking a course in Spanish for social reasons, namely that her boyfriend and his family are native-speakers:

Excerpt 17

One reason I would choose to study a different language is because my boyfriend's whole family is from a different country and struggles to speak English. So, I would learn the language in case I ever traveled there to meet his family.

Given students' friends, significant others, and/or their families, respondents positively received the idea of taking a language course. However, as previously stated, many of these students previously had not taken, nor even planned on taking, a language class at Rutgers, despite their positive attitudes toward language learning. This fact raises the question whether or not such students, namely heritage speakers in select language groups, are aware that classes and/or certificate programs are already in existence for non-majors. But before turning to section two, I would like to recognize responses, albeit few, which explain why students would be against taking a language other than English at Rutgers. The reasons mentioned focused on the perceived cost-benefit of forgoing other content courses, the global power of English, and financial constraints linked with taking more credits.

4. The case against

Students face many obstacles in adding a language course to their curriculum, as demonstrated in the student survey. Impediments include, for instance, scheduling complications (77.53%), time to graduate (68.14%), cost of degree (44.9%), or the fear of having a drop in GPA (56.02%). In this section, I briefly highlight these obstacles, embedding them in student responses.

The general case against the language requirement centers on students' core courses for their majors. As one junior in the School of Engineering indicated: "*[I'm] Not interested - don't want to pay for a class that is not required. Takes away from courses I need to graduate.*" Similarly, a sophomore mathematics major who took Spanish in high school expressed frustration, and a belief that a language course would not benefit his course of studies:

Excerpt 18

I wouldn't choose to do so because it would not benefit me or my major in any way. I don't see how learning another language would complement my current academic interests at all.

Interesting, too, was the belief that English is the lingua franca for scientific research even outside the U.S. One student, a white male who studies ecology, maintained that a strict top-down policy requiring students is not in tune with the reality of the workplace:

Excerpt 19

In case I decide to work in another country someday or want to present scientific findings in another country, but most likely other countries where I'd work would speak English. Also, American English is the language used in scientific community's and in scientific publications so, I don't believe it should be required for students to take two semesters of a foreign language when they're going to be using their own native language anyway. And many students are foreign and already fluent in multiple languages so, for them it seems pointless.

While the above two excerpts focused on the functional aspects of learning another language, other responses raised questions concerning the structural aspects, such that taking a language course requires a heavy workload. Consider one female student, a junior in the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences. As a native-speaker of English with only an elementary proficiency level in Spanish, she suggested that a requirement would make her studies much more difficult because of the time it takes to learn a second language:

Excerpt 20

Studying another language other than ours IS a burden on our schedule because it's a foreign language, but it's tough to learn a foreign language with a hefty workload. It would lower my GPA if I have trouble with it, since it is a foreign language. I would have to apply a large amount of time to study and understand it to pass.

In sum, we gather from answers that students indicate a general interest in taking a language other than English at Rutgers, reflecting both the social and ethnic makeup of the university, as well as common linguistic patterns among heritage language groups in the US. While the majority of responses viewed a language requirement positively, a small number expressed a disinterest in the idea. Concerns such as scheduling complications, added workload, a drop in GPA among others, deter some students from considering taking a language course. Such negative views need to be kept in mind as we transition to a discussion on what a requirement would or should look like.

SECTION II. WHAT WOULD SUCH A REQUIREMENT LOOK LIKE?

Efficiency and flexibility were taken into consideration among those students who responded to what an ideal requirement would look like. For those who thought they would be placed out of the requirement, 43.94% of survey respondents indicated they would continue studying that language at Rutgers. Only 22.14% indicated that they would drop language studies altogether. One female student, a senior computer science major, articulated that the number of credits she must complete is very intensive, and does not necessarily give her the time to complete a language course. However, she carefully outlined her view on what such a requirement would look like in order to reconcile her credit intensive major with her interest in languages:

Excerpt 21

Ideally, the level of difficulty / expectations of the class should match that of most CORE electives (classes designed for non majors, but still with some learning objectives). The language requirement should also not have a recitation, but instead would meet twice a week for 1 hour 20 min each. Additionally, there should also be some flexibility in when students can take this class (i.e. can take the language class as a first year, but also as a senior-- I know Elementary French classes do not allow seniors to register). Most importantly, the class should either count for an existing CORE requirement, such that taking a language class is an option to fulfilling the CORE, or be included in the CORE requirements as mandatory while maintaining the same number of total CORE credit requirements (so, take away a class / other requirement).

This individual's response introduces and highlights the myriad ways of reconciling the core requirements with students' interest in taking a language course. In what follows, I describe and provide evidence of the three most salient themes that students indicated in designing a language requirement: Pass-fail grading, curriculum changes, and learning outside the classroom.

1. Pass-fail

The majority of student responses concerning a language requirement make mention of a pass-fail grading procedure. Students would like to see a requirement that is flexible, economical, and unable to affect GPA scores. In these responses, many students, predominantly from science and engineering, expressed concern that a language course would be detrimental to their GPAs:

Excerpt 22

Students must complete at least 4 semesters of language study (any level) only as pass/fail. Pass/fail helps people complete the requirements, but also does not make students feel overwhelmed. Lastly, online options should be included because if language courses interfere with courses needed for one's major, online language classes would encourage them to learn languages

Excerpt 23

Open source textbooks and language material to defray costs. Also, if the language is in a department that is not giving you a degree, it should be possible to take the language pass/fail to prevent it from negatively impacting your GPA. (Ex: I am a classics major so any Latin/Greek I take is grades because the classes count for my degree, but if I took Japanese for a semester it would be pass/fail because it has no bearing on my degree and is just for the sake of learning.)

2. Curriculum modifications**2.1 More conversational**

The majority of responses concerning suggested changes to the curriculum requested the need to learn languages in an authentic way through conversation, rather than traditional exams or reading comprehension tests. Students envisioned many ways in doing so, but all fell within a three to four credit requirement that forewent textbooks and grammar. Consider Excerpt 24, which highlights that students would like a course covering practical aspects of language learning that would facilitate international travel:

Excerpt 24

For me it would be basic conversational language - it would not be a full blown, detailed study such as the breakdown of verbs, if the noun is female or male, etc. But just general conversation such as you can pick up books at a bookstore if you are getting ready to travel to a different country and need to know basic/main words.

2.2 Content in target language

A number of students maintained the need to take content courses in the target language, such as engineering, business, math, etc. 61.14% of survey respondents, indicated that language instruction related to their field of study or envision profession would provide an incentive to add a second language to their current studies. Students expressed interest in taking film, math,

business, and engineering courses, among others, with the hopes of satisfying both the language requirement and core requirements. We observe in Excerpt 25 one student in the School of Arts and Sciences who discusses the different possibilities in taking media, literature, history, and cultural courses in a given language:

Excerpt 25

One media class relating to news in foreign countries that use the chosen language; two classes relating to reading/writing/speaking in chosen language; one class devoted to studying history and cultural associated with chosen language

Next, we turn to the ways students envisioned language learning out of the classroom, namely opportunities abroad or among local communities.

3. Opportunities outside the classroom

3.1 Study abroad

As expected, opportunities outside the classroom were seen to be the ideal exposure to satisfy the requirement in an authentic and time-effective way. According to the student survey, 66% of respondents indicated that they would like to see increased study abroad opportunities offered. Accordingly, students overwhelmingly indicated that encouraging study abroad as a central mechanism to gain proficiency in the language would be one way to satisfy the requirement.

Students envisioned various models concerning study abroad being part of language requirement. One model fits the “pathway” approach, such that students would take an elementary language course with the end goal of studying abroad for a period of time:

Excerpt 26

Either as a self-fulfilling requirement. One way to satisfy it. Or as a pathway where you would take an elementary language course with the end goal of studying abroad.

Excerpt 27

If there is the necessity of a requirement, I think it should come in the form of a one or two semester class requirement, and it should perhaps facilitate admissions into study abroad or internship opportunities

Excerpt 28

As a follow-up for the class, it could promote the study abroad experiences by having students better prepare for a study abroad experience in a country where the language learned is dominant. Furthermore, an incentive could be giving students in the class priority to the study abroad programs, to make sure those who travel to that country can really contribute with the knowledge they obtained in the classroom and field trips.

Excerpt 29

Ideally, the language requirement would be more than minimal (more than 1 semester) but not absurdly strenuous (not 4 semesters, more like 2). This would be short/easy enough that people would not resent it, but would be long enough to give students a semester of initial exposure to the language as well as a semester to be immersed in the culture. The first semester of language might focus on the basics of learning how to speak the language, but the second semester ideally would be to become familiar with the culture and history of countries that speak that language. The second semester could possibly be paired with a study abroad during the winter/spring break as well.

In addition to the “pathway” model, some students envisioned the study abroad as being a way to satisfy the requirement altogether. There are, of course, challenges associated with studying abroad, such as tuition and program costs associated with traveling outside the U.S. One student, as shown in Excerpt 30, suggested that such a study abroad experience would be a more authentic experience, but is hard to achieve because of program costs:

Excerpt 30

Being able to study abroad and learn first hand about other cultures is such an awesome opportunity but a lot of people are deterred due to the cost or inability to find classes that work with their major. If Rutgers had programs like this for all majors and did not raise tuition for it, student would be much more inclined to do it and it would also teach students more about other cultures than making them study a language they may not even use in the real world

3.2 Community involvement

Similar to study abroad, a large group of students, 43% of survey respondents, suggested that community involvement, or “study away programs” should be a mechanism to satisfy a language requirement. Respondents maintained that the curriculum should incorporate a community engagement, service learning, and/or other flexible approach where students could put their

language skills to test. The following excerpts evidence this position and highlight the rich opportunities that exist in the New Brunswick community:

Excerpt 31

Requirement to start learning freshman year, choice of study abroad or community involvement with the language, or perhaps requirement to perform community outreach or perform an internship that utilizes knowledge of the language or culture of the country(ies) where the language is spoken

Excerpt 32

4-credit course one semester with conversational components/ service learning (e.g. Spanish in New Brunswick, conversational groups among students, etc.)

Excerpt 33

A requirement to take a language course, but one that has an integrative learning environment, such as volunteer in a school or community where students are forced to push themselves to speak the language. Learning a language in a classroom is not effective!

Excerpt 34

I would like a requirement with community involvement that can be flexibly arranged. Or a technology required workshop taught in French. Also, I wish there were more courses in the French department in art history to fulfill requirements.

In conclusion, this survey provides evidence of the myriad ways of reconciling core requirements with students' interest in taking a language course. First, students envisioned such a requirement as a pass-fail class, an incentive to take the course without the fear of a drop in GPA. Second, changes in the curriculum, namely the development of content classes in the target language, could help ease scheduling conflicts. And third, students agreed that learning outside the classroom was the most efficient way to gain proficiency in the target language, albeit through a study abroad or community involvement. Various models were suggested by students, such as (1) "pathway" programs that allowed students to satisfy the second half of the requirement in a study abroad environment; or (2) a study abroad program that satisfied the requirement altogether. While we do not know how representative these views are of the Rutgers student body as a whole, they do express, overall, positive attitudes toward the idea of a language requirement and emphasize the need to create a language curriculum that befits the Rutgers student population.

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