

Languages At UW-Madison: *A Fact Sheet for Advisors*



The University of Wisconsin-Madison is a world-class research university and international leader in foreign language education and research, offering instruction in over 80 modern and ancient languages. Over 40 modern languages are regularly offered in the academic year in 11 departments of language and literature; many others are offered through intensive summer study institutes coordinated by area studies programs.

Students at UW-Madison have the opportunity to study languages and cultures they wouldn't be able to study elsewhere, or at any other time in their lives. From the African language Akan-Twi, to the indigenous American language Yucatec Maya, UW-Madison students can choose from diverse offerings that span the globe.

Language courses and programs at the UW-Madison are enhanced by many on-campus extra- and co-curricular opportunities such as those offered by International Learning Communities and the French House, residential communities for language learners, as well as through study abroad. For extensive information about current language offerings, see the website for the Language Institute:



WWW.LANGUAGEINSTITUTE.WISC.EDU

Why should students study a foreign language?

Language learning is a critical part of a liberal education.

- Two of the essential learning outcomes of the LEAP Program (Liberal Education and America's Promise), adopted by Wisconsin, are met through language learning: "civic knowledge and engagement—local and global," and "intercultural knowledge and competence."
- "The study of a foreign language contributes in an important way to a broad education for today's students, who live in a world where the overwhelming majority of people do not speak or read English and where much of the knowledge that is disseminated may never appear in English. Knowledge of a foreign language is important for an appreciation of the culture of the people using that language, and it also helps students to understand the structure and complexities of their own native language."
- College of Letters and Science,
UW-Madison Undergraduate Catalog 2007-09

UW-Madison students need to become globally competent citizens.

- "Globalization—with emerging markets, 21st century technologies, and new patterns of immigration, has brought people around the world closer together...Our campus is strengthening, extending, and integrating international studies across every field of study...We are advancing new knowledge in key areas of research, forging new partnerships across campus and the world, and developing exciting opportunities for globally competent students in Wisconsin and beyond."
- Division of International Studies,
UW-Madison: A Global University.
- Promoting global competence is met through many campus priorities and initiatives to internationalize the curriculum, such as the University strategic priority to accelerate

- internationalization and the Self-Study for the campus Reaccreditation Report, which addresses the two themes *Creating an Impact and Shaping the Global Agenda* and *Preparing Global Citizens and Leaders of the Future*.

UW-Madison students and graduates have a tradition of study, service and living abroad.

- Over 1,500 UW-Madison students study abroad each year. Many students also participate in international internships.
- In 2007, UW-Madison was second in the nation in Peace Corps volunteers, with 99 undergraduate alumni volunteering abroad.
- 365,000 UW-Madison alumni currently live overseas.
- Knowing a language before studying or working abroad greatly enriches the experience by increasing a person's ability to communicate effectively.

Regardless of major, all students benefit from learning a second language.

- Language study is more than learning the grammar of a language. It includes intercultural learning, as well as study of the history, literature, arts and everyday life of a culture. Language study provides a student tools—both in speaking ability, cultural understanding and cross-cultural competences -- to effectively communicate with people from around the world and in diverse workplaces and communities in the United States.
- Languages complement many majors, deepening understanding of various fields of study.
- Students may choose to major in a language, double major with a language and another discipline, choose a certificate that contains a language component, or simply go as far as they wish with their language studies.

Languages enhance career opportunities.

- Languages help a student to stand out in job and other applications, strengthening an applicant's identity as a broad and independent learner.
- Languages help students to work in diverse communities and expanding markets, both in Wisconsin and beyond.
- U.S. companies need employees who can speak other languages, yet currently only 9% of Americans speak a second language well.
- *National Virtual Translation Center.*
- "In almost every line of work the ability to speak a second language makes you a valuable asset."
- "*Eight Industries Need Bilingual Workers,*"
CNN.com, September 10, 2008.
- Multinational companies look for applicants who have studied languages and lived abroad. Michael Eskew, chairman and CEO of United Parcel Service, for example, cites sensitivity to foreign cultures and proficiency in foreign languages among top traits UPS is looking for in future employees.

Wisconsin, and the United States more broadly, needs workers with language skills and understanding of diverse cultures.

- "In order to confront the 21st century challenges to our economy and national security, our education system must be strengthened to increase the foreign language skills and cultural awareness of our students. America's continued role as a global leader will depend on our students' abilities to interact with the world community both inside and outside our borders."
- *Education for Global Leadership: The importance of International Studies and Foreign Language Education for U.S. Economic and National Security,*
Committee for Economic Development (2006)
- In 2007, Wisconsin exported to 207 countries, the largest of which were Canada, Mexico, China, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan and Saudi Arabia. -Wisconsin Department of Commerce.
- Over 6,000 companies exported from Wisconsin locations in 2006. In 2006, foreign-controlled companies employed 87,200 workers in Wisconsin.
- U.S Department of Commerce.

- "As students learn other languages, beginning in elementary school, they gain keys for global understanding, future jobs, and influence within a broader global community."
- *Strategies for Achieving Global Literacy for Wisconsin Students,* Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.
- Americans need to speak a variety of language, including languages deemed critical to U.S. national security such as Arabic, Korean, Russian and Swahili.
- The *National Security Language Initiative*, a 2006 federal inter-agency effort coordinated by the White House, seeks to dramatically increase the number Americans learning, speaking, and teaching critical foreign languages.

What are UW-Madison language classes like?

- Language classes at UW-Madison are small and interactive. Students really get to know their instructor and classmates.
- Because of their interdisciplinary nature, language classes can spark an interest in other fields.
- Language and culture are inextricably linked. In a language class, a student learns about the cultural norms, customs, history and artistic traditions of other cultures.



The Language Institute is an initiative of the College of Letters and Science, with substantial support from the Division of International Studies.

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