

Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Summer 2016 and Fall 2016: Preliminary Report

Dennis Looney and Natalia Lusin

Web publication, February 2018

© 2018 Modern Language Association of America

All material published by the Modern Language Association in any medium is protected by copyright. Users may link to the MLA Web page freely and may quote from MLA publications as allowed by the doctrine of fair use. Written permission is required for any other reproduction of material from any MLA publication.

Send requests for permission to reprint material to the MLA permissions manager by mail (85 Broad Street, suite 500, New York, NY 10004-2434) or e-mail (permissions@mla.org).

Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Summer 2016 and Fall 2016: Preliminary Report

SINCE 1958, the Modern Language Association (MLA) has gathered and analyzed data on undergraduate and graduate course enrollments in languages other than English in United States colleges and universities. The previous census, the twenty-third, examined language enrollments in fall 2013. In 2016, the MLA conducted the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth censuses simultaneously, covering summer 2016 and fall 2016. This is the first time since 1971 that the MLA has gathered data on summer enrollments.

From 1958 through 2009, the MLA conducted its censuses with the support of the United States Department of Education. In 2013, the census was partially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Security Educational Program, and in 2016 it was partially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.¹

This report is the first of two that will analyze the findings of the 2016 MLA language enrollment censuses. This preliminary report presents our findings in broad terms; the fine-grained analysis will follow in the full, second report.

Between fall 2013 and fall 2016, enrollments in languages other than English fell 9.2% in colleges and universities in the United States; of the fifteen most commonly taught languages, only Japanese and Korean showed gains in enrollments (table 1).

Methodology

Beginning in October 2016, we contacted 2,669 postsecondary institutions in the United States, using the MLA database of institutions that offer languages other than English. We supplemented the MLA list of institutions with data from the National Center for Education Statistics and from the 2016 Higher Education Directory, to make sure that all accredited, nonprofit institutions were accounted for. Thirty institutions proved ineligible (this group includes institutions that merged, closed, or lost accreditation and branch campuses whose enrollment numbers were reported with those of the main campus), reducing the total number to 2,639. Over an eleven-month period, 2,547 AA-, BA-, MA-, and PhD-granting colleges and universities, or 96.5% of all eligible institutions, reported; 92 declined to participate. In addition, 20 institutions that held language courses in the summer only provided information about fall enrollments, making the summer 2016 response rate 95.8%. These response rates continue the high level of response that has been a goal of MLA language enrollment studies, allowing us to reaffirm that these numbers constitute censuses rather than surveys.²

Approximately one-third of the responses came from two-year colleges, and two-thirds from four-year institutions. Of the 2,547 institutions that responded, 219 had

*Enrollments in
Languages Other Than
English in United States
Institutions of Higher
Education, Summer
2016 and Fall 2016:
Preliminary Report*

no enrollments in languages other than English in fall 2016. Both two-year and four-year institutions had the same percentage, 8.6%, of responding institutions that reported no language enrollments in fall 2016. In 2013 the percentages were somewhat lower: no language courses were offered in 7.5% of responding two-year colleges and in 6.7% of responding four-year institutions. The percentages were considerably higher in summer 2016 than in fall 2016: 30.5% of responding two-year colleges and 42.7% of responding four-year institutions reported no language courses.

The data from all MLA enrollment censuses, from 1958 to 2016, are searchable online through the Language Enrollment Database (apps.mla.org/flsurvey_search), where the full data set is also available as a downloadable spreadsheet. Included in the database are lists of institutions that did not respond and institutions that reported no language enrollments in 2009, 2013, and 2016.

In conjunction with the update of the Language Enrollment Database, we will add the fall 2016 enrollment figures to the MLA Language Map (apps.mla.org/map_main), which uses data from the United States Census's American Community Survey to display the locations and concentrations of speakers of twenty-nine languages other than English spoken in the United States.³ Users of the Language Map will be able to locate language programs and detailed information about fall 2016 course enrollments in the region where these languages are spoken in the United States.

Overview of Fall 2016 Language Enrollments

Aggregated fall 2016 course enrollments in languages other than English were 1,417,921. In fall 2013, enrollments were 1,561,131. Thus, enrollments fell 9.2% between fall 2013 and fall 2016, suffering the second-largest decline in the history of the census (the largest decline, 12.6%, was in 1972). Fall 2013 enrollments had also declined, but by a smaller margin (6.7%). The results for 2016 suggest that the results for 2013 are the beginning of a trend rather than a blip; the decline between 2009 and 2016 is 15.3%. There had been sustained growth in language course enrollments since 1980 (with the exception of a dip of 3.9% in 1995), when numbers moved from 924,337 in 1980 to 1,673,566 in 2009 ([fig. 1](#)).

In terms of ranking, Spanish and French still lead as the two most studied languages. American Sign Language continues to be third, having displaced German in 2013. But there have been shifts elsewhere in the ranking of the fifteen most commonly taught languages. Japanese is now fifth, replacing Italian, which is now sixth. Korean has vaulted over Ancient Greek, Biblical Hebrew, and Portuguese to take the eleventh position. Portuguese and Biblical Hebrew have switched positions.

The enrollment numbers of the fifteen most commonly taught languages cover a wide range. Spanish is in a category all its own, with 712,240 enrollments. French and American Sign Language are in the 100,000 to 200,000 range, while German, Japanese, Italian, and Chinese are all between 50,000 and 100,000. Arabic, Latin, and Russian are in the 20,000 to 30,000 range, while Korean and Ancient Greek have enrollments that are approximately half that. The enrollments for Portuguese and Biblical Hebrew are almost 10,000. Modern Hebrew, with 5,521 enrollments, is in a different category, but its enrollments are significantly higher than those for the

*Enrollments in
Languages Other Than
English in United States
Institutions of Higher
Education, Summer
2016 and Fall 2016:
Preliminary Report*

sixteenth to twentieth most commonly taught languages (Aramaic, Farsi/Persian, Vietnamese, Swahili/Kiswahili, and Hawai‘ian), which have enrollments that are in the 1,500 to 2,500 range.

In fall 2016, two languages of the fifteen most commonly taught showed increases in enrollments. Japanese enrollments increased by 3.1%, from 66,771 in 2013 to 68,810 in 2016; Korean enrollments increased by 13.7%, from 12,256 in 2013 to 13,936 in 2016. The growth for Korean is particularly impressive when taking the long view: in the first MLA census, in 1958, 26 enrollments were reported for Korean.

The other thirteen languages of the fifteen most commonly taught showed declines in enrollments in fall 2016. For most of these languages, the 2016 decline follows a decline in 2013. Spanish enrollments, for example, dropped by 9.8%, after dropping by 8.3% in 2013. Spanish still lays claim to the majority of language enrollments (50.2%), but the percentage has been decreasing since 1998 (54.7%). A cluster of languages saw a decline of over 20%: Biblical Hebrew (23.9%), Ancient Greek (21.8%), Portuguese (20.8%), and Italian (20.1%). Another cluster had declines between 10% and 20%: Modern Hebrew (17.6%), Chinese (13.1%), and French (11.1%). Several other languages experienced what could be called, in this context, less radical decreases: Latin (8.6%), Russian (7.4%), German (7.1%), Arabic (5.9%), and American Sign Language (2.3%).

Some languages that had drops in enrollments between 2013 and 2016 show overall growth if we look at the decade-long span from 2006 to 2016. American Sign Language, Arabic, and Chinese all increased in enrollments in that time span, because of their robust growth in earlier censuses.

The less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), which, for the purpose of this study, are defined as all languages not included in the top fifteen, posted a tiny aggregated increase of 0.2%. LCTLs had a large increase (16.4%) between 2006 and 2009, followed by a moderate decrease (11.7%) between 2009 and 2013. LCTL course offerings can be fragile and transitory, since the programs tend to be small and may depend on a single instructor. In addition, they may not be taught every semester, and as a result our census may miss them. In 2016, one college in the West informed us that Navajo is taught only in the spring; if the course had been taught in the fall, approximately 20 additional enrollments would have been counted in the census.

In recent censuses, some institutions have begun to provide more finely grained reporting about LCTLs, listing language variants such as Levantine Arabic or Rabbinic Hebrew that they reported under Arabic or Biblical Hebrew in the past. Such detail is useful, but it also reduces the number of enrollments for the commonly taught languages Arabic, Ancient Greek, and Biblical Hebrew. As a way of balancing the benefits and disadvantages of aggregation and disaggregation, we have combined all variants of Arabic, Ancient Greek, and Biblical Hebrew in table 1 but will include disaggregated enrollment numbers in the table of LCTLs, which will be published in our long report; the disaggregated numbers are also available in the enrollment database.

Table 2 displays fall enrollments in 2009, 2013, and 2016 in each of the fifty states and the District of Columbia. Four states recorded increases in enrollments in 2016: Indiana (8.0%), Georgia (6.6%), Idaho (2.6%), and Rhode Island (2.2%).

Eight states and the District of Columbia had reported gains in 2013. Some state losses in 2016 were substantial: 28.0% in Oregon, 27.1% in North Dakota, 22.7% in Illinois, 20.2% in Wyoming, and 19.8% in Wisconsin.

Trends in Fall 2016 Language Enrollments

Table 3 shows the total number of fall enrollments in modern language courses in relation to the total number of students registered in postsecondary institutions in the United States. Students taking language courses, particularly majors, may enroll in more than one language class per semester and therefore be counted more than once in our census. Thus numbers of students attending institutions of higher education and enrollments in language courses are not equivalent groupings. Nonetheless, the ratio of language course enrollments to total students registered in postsecondary institutions is a figure that over time can serve as an important indicator of student involvement in the study of languages.

The 2016 ratio stands at 7.5, a decline from 8.1 in 2013 and a continuation of the decline from the 9.1 ratio in 2006 (see also [fig. 2](#)). The 2016 ratio is less than half of what it was in 1960 and approaches the lowest ratio recorded, 7.3, in 1980. **Table 3** also shows that while total postsecondary enrollments since 1960 have shown a growth index of 488.8, modern language enrollments in the same period have a growth index of 225.6. In other words, the growth in language enrollments has not kept pace with the increasing postsecondary population.

Table 4 presents fall language course enrollments in the fifteen most commonly taught languages for the fifty-eight-year span between 1958 and 2016. The percentage change between 1958 and 2016 for Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese is over 8,000%, but it is Korean, with a 53,500% increase, that has the highest percentage change. No percentage change can be calculated for American Sign Language, since it was not reported in 1958, or even as late as 1986. But from reported enrollments of only 1,602 in 1990, it has grown to become the third most commonly taught language in colleges and universities in the United States.

Ratio of Introductory to Advanced Undergraduate Enrollments in Fall 2016

Beginning in 2006, the census included questions that track the distinctions between enrollments in introductory and advanced courses. For the purpose of the census, we define introductory enrollments as those in first- and second-year courses and advanced enrollments as those in third- and fourth-year courses. Enrollments in introductory classes may include a variety of tracks. In some institutions, enrollments in introductory classes reflect the presence of a language or a linguistic or cultural general education requirement. Advanced undergraduate language enrollments may lead to language minors and majors and may also reflect courses taken as a part of professional preparation, such as Spanish for the health professions, French for business, German for engineering, and so on. Although different languages require different time frames for attainment of competency levels, enrollment in advanced classes should indicate the beginning of a functional level of proficiency for most European

*Enrollments in
Languages Other Than
English in United States
Institutions of Higher
Education, Summer
2016 and Fall 2016:
Preliminary Report*

languages. Languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and Russian require extended learning periods for most native speakers of English. Whichever language is under consideration, the census allows a longitudinal view that makes it possible to monitor relative changes in levels of ability for all languages. It is also possible to note institutional responses to students' changing interests in those languages.

One caveat should be noted in the discussion of introductory versus advanced enrollments: in most cases, numbers are reported to us not by language specialists but by institutional staff members responsible for maintaining records. Directors of institutional research, registrars, and designated staff members in the appropriate dean's office will generally distinguish introductory from advanced enrollments on the basis of course numbers; while these numerical designations are usually regularized, they are not universally transparent as an indication of the level. Languages taught at beginning levels in linguistics or anthropology departments, for instance, may not be assigned the numbers traditionally reserved for introductory courses (e.g., Linguistics 101 will be reserved for an introduction to linguistics). When introductory courses in American Sign Language are offered outside language departments, they may carry a course number that is associated with an upper-level course. In multilanguage departments, languages offered occasionally also may not receive the standard 101-102 or 201-202 designation.

Table 5 shows the fall 2016 undergraduate introductory and advanced enrollments for the fifteen most commonly taught languages and the aggregated LCTLs and provides a ratio of introductory to advanced enrollments. The 5:1 ratio for French, German, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish, for example, indicates that for every five introductory enrollments there is one enrollment in an advanced course at the undergraduate level. The table also shows, for comparison, the ratios for 2009 and 2013.

With the notable exception of Korean, the most commonly taught languages showed decreasing enrollments at the advanced level between 2013 and 2016. Advanced enrollments in Korean increased from 2,212 in 2013 to 2,329 in 2016. In addition, Arabic maintained almost the same number of advanced enrollments between 2013 and 2016. In 2016, five languages and the aggregated LCTLs had a 4:1 or better ratio of introductory to advanced undergraduate enrollments (i.e., advanced classes made up 20% or more of all undergraduate enrollments): Biblical Hebrew (2:1), Chinese (3:1), Portuguese (3:1), Russian (3:1), Ancient Greek (4:1), and the aggregated LCTLs (4:1). Biblical Hebrew also had the greatest proportionate number of enrollments at the advanced level in 2013.

Five additional languages had a 5:1 ratio of introductory to advanced enrollments: French, German, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish. Arabic (7:1), Latin (7:1), Modern Hebrew (7:1), American Sign Language (9:1), and Italian (10:1) had the lowest percentages of enrollments at the advanced level in 2016—not surprising in American Sign Language and Arabic, given the relative newness of programs in these two languages, whose solid enrollments at the introductory level will likely foster the creation of additional advanced courses in the years to come, if additional faculty members are hired to support the growth in these languages. Likewise, the steady decline in the proportion of advanced enrollments in Korean—from a 3:1 ratio in 2009 to a 4:1 ratio in 2013 to a 5:1 ratio in 2016—may simply be a reflection of the remarkable

*Enrollments in
Languages Other Than
English in United States
Institutions of Higher
Education, Summer
2016 and Fall 2016:
Preliminary Report*

recent growth in Korean enrollments: as large numbers of students begin to study at the introductory level, they skew the ratio, and in later years the ratio may readjust.

Comparison of the ratio of undergraduate enrollments at the introductory and advanced levels, moving from 2009 to 2013 to 2016, shows interesting trends. Only two have steadily increased the proportion of advanced enrollments over the eight-year period: American Sign Language and Chinese. In four, the ratio has decreased over this same period: Biblical Hebrew, French, German, and Korean, marking a downward trend in advanced enrollments for these languages. The proportion of advanced enrollments to introductory enrollments in Modern Hebrew grew between 2009 and 2013 but then decreased between 2013 and 2016. Italian and the aggregated LCTLs did the opposite, decreasing then increasing in the same time periods. In 2016, Italian returned to the same ratio that it had in 2009 (10:1). The Italian differential between introductory and advanced undergraduate enrollments is the most marked; as can be seen from the numbers given above, the differential varies widely from one language to another.

Two- and Four-Year Institutions and Declining Enrollment

Are four-year institutions reducing their language programs and sending their students to nearby two-year institutions to take language courses? The data disprove this notion. If that were the case, then enrollments at four-year institutions should have a disproportionately high drop in enrollments as compared with those of two-year institutions. [Table 6](#) compares fall enrollments over time and shows that, on the contrary, two-year institutions have taken a disproportionate share of the decline. In the early years of the census, enrollments at two-year institutions grew faster than they did at four-year institutions, but then the growth slowed and eventually reversed itself. Between fall 2013 and fall 2016, enrollments declined by 7.3% at four-year institutions while declining by 15.9% at two-year institutions. Over the wide span of time between 1959 and 2016, enrollments at two-year colleges increased by 546.8%, and those at four-year institutions increased by 128.9%. But over the last decade, enrollments at two-year colleges declined by 20.9%, while those at four-year institutions declined by only 6.7%.

There are, however, notable exceptions that are not visible when looking at these broad trends. When a four-year institution and a neighboring community college establish an articulation program, for example, both can end up with healthy enrollments with no noticeable drop.

Summer 2016 Enrollments

In 2016, for the first time since 1971, the MLA conducted a census of summer term enrollments ([table 7](#)). If institutions had more than one summer term, we asked them to report combined enrollments for all summer terms. The total number of enrollments was 200,688 (in 1969 and in 1971, the only other years in which the census covered the summer term, the total number of enrollments was 141,901 and 137,615, respectively). Summer language enrollments are not widespread: 981 institutions

*Enrollments in
Languages Other Than
English in United States
Institutions of Higher
Education, Summer
2016 and Fall 2016:
Preliminary Report*

reported that they had no language enrollments in the summer; in contrast, only 219 reported no enrollments in the fall. It may be that limited funding (or the lack of funding) for summer study keeps language enrollments low for the summer term.

The summer does not appear to be the time when students explore the less commonly taught languages. Only 1.8% of summer enrollments were in the aggregated LCTLs (in the fall, the percentage was higher, at 2.5%). Instead, enrollments skew heavily toward Spanish. The percentage of students studying Spanish in the summer was 61.6%, as compared with 50.2% in the fall.

The languages that make up the list of the most commonly taught in the summer are the same as for the fall, but the ranking is different. American Sign Language has the second highest number of enrollments, ahead of French; other languages that shifted position are Chinese, Ancient Greek, Biblical Hebrew, Italian, Korean, Latin, Portuguese, and Russian.

Names of Languages

Variations in usage by reporting institutions introduce occasional incongruities in the names of languages appearing in the censuses. Our practice has been to respect the choice of name under which a language is reported to us. In some instances, what might appear as a minor or insignificant difference in spelling in fact marks a significant social, cultural, or linguistic distinction to speakers or scholars of the language. But we do make exceptions when our specialists make a case that we should combine certain language terms into one. For example, some speakers and linguists consider Filipino, Pilipino, and Tagalog distinct languages; others do not. After much discussion with experts in the field, we decided to use the combined term, Filipino/Pilipino/Tagalog.

Specialists in American Sign Language, Arabic, Biblical Hebrew, Chinese, Farsi/Persian, French, Greek and Latin, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Hebrew, Filipino/Pilipino/Tagalog, Portuguese, Russian and other Slavic languages, Spanish, and Swahili responded to our requests to review data and nomenclature, and we have relied on their expert assistance to sort through the naming of languages.⁴

Notes on Methodology

Using the MLA database, augmented by the online 2016 Higher Education Directory and the National Center for Education Statistics data, we contacted 2,669 institutions of postsecondary education teaching languages in the United States. These included accredited two-year and four-year institutions, universities, and a number of accredited seminaries. The total number of institutions in the censuses has declined over the course of the last several censuses, in part because of the consolidation of administrative offices. More and more often, colleges and universities with branch campuses provide comprehensive figures for all their campuses; in the past, branch campuses often reported separately.

To collect the enrollment data, we started by contacting directors of institutional research or registrars. If they did not respond, we approached deans, provosts, or

*Enrollments in
Languages Other Than
English in United States
Institutions of Higher
Education, Summer
2016 and Fall 2016:
Preliminary Report*

presidents of institutions. If we were unsuccessful in getting enrollment numbers through them, we contacted chairs of departments. If all else failed, we took enrollments from official institutional Web sites.⁵ We asked respondents to provide enrollments in credit-bearing “language courses and in all courses in which teaching or reading is primarily in a language other than English.”⁶ (We specifically mentioned reading because instructors of courses in classical languages conduct class discussion in English.) Institutional representatives had the option to respond on our Web site or by e-mail, mail, fax, or telephone. Between mid-October 2016 and mid-December 2016, we sent four rounds of census requests (two by postal mail and two by e-mail), and we started follow-up telephone calls in early January 2017, when we had 1,700 nonrespondents remaining out of the 2,669 institutions contacted. The data collection process was closed at the beginning of September 2017.

In late spring 2017, we invited specialists in several languages and language groups to review the data, with an eye to identifying possibly anomalous numbers or missing programs or institutions. From July through September 2017, following the advice of these consultants, we contacted omitted programs and recontacted institutions to verify data when necessary.⁷

While we were conducting the summer and fall 2016 censuses, a number of institutions noted inaccuracies in their 2013 data (and, to a lesser extent, in their earlier data). We made these corrections, as well as other corrections, when we found discrepancies as we reviewed and analyzed the Language Enrollment Database (apps.mla.org/flsurvey_search). As a result, all tables and figures have been redone with the revised numbers, and the 2016 reports should be considered the definitive ones, superseding all previous reports. In the context of over 23 million enrollments in all the censuses from 1958 to 2016, the revisions were small, and the overall picture is not altered greatly.

It has been the policy of the MLA to exclude for-profit institutions from the census, and the current institution list does so, but over the years some were inadvertently included. Enrollments of for-profit institutions from earlier census years remain in the historical enrollments database, since the database includes all institutions reporting at the time of each census.

We are aware that undercounting of enrollments occurs in certain circumstances. Yeshiva students necessarily study both Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, but many yeshivas do not report enrollments in Aramaic. American Sign Language courses are often taught in departments other than traditional language departments, such as programs in special education, communication sciences, speech pathology, and social work. Registrars and directors of institutional research may not consider the data of such programs when they are completing our enrollment census.

In 2006 we began to collect enrollments separately for different levels of language courses. We defined the introductory level as first- and second-year language classes and the advanced level as third- and fourth-year classes.⁸ Although this differentiation by year is rudimentary and disregards variations in requirements, curricular design, and language difficulty, it illuminates an important aspect of language study. Advanced enrollments include majors and indicate potential graduate students, as well as individuals who have the capacity to use their language knowledge professionally.

*Enrollments in
Languages Other Than
English in United States
Institutions of Higher
Education, Summer
2016 and Fall 2016:
Preliminary Report*

This preliminary report includes two new tables (tables 6 and 7) and modified versions of some of the tables and figures from previous reports. Most notably, figure 1 has been changed to include Latin and Ancient Greek for the years that enrollments for those languages were included in the census; tables 1 and 4 now include all variants of Ancient Greek, Arabic, and Hebrew (see the notes to the tables for details).

Conclusion

The 2013 MLA census showed overall enrollments falling by 6.7%. At the time, it was not clear whether the drop represented an anomaly in the growth of language enrollments that had continued uninterrupted since 1998 or was the beginning of a sustained downward trend, something that had not happened since the 1970s. The 9.2% decline for fall 2016 clarifies any uncertainty.

The increases in Japanese and Korean enrollments are encouraging, but other indicators provide little reason for optimism. Most striking, perhaps, is that the total number of enrollments in modern language courses in relation to the total number of students at postsecondary institutions in the United States fell to 7.5, almost matching the low point in 1980.

But there are many avenues of investigation to pursue, and some of them will be addressed in the full report. In 2013, we looked at the percentage of programs by language that had increasing, decreasing, or stable enrollments and found that almost half had stable or increasing enrollments, despite the overall drop in enrollments in 2013. We will do the same kind of analysis for 2016 and compare the results with those from 2013.

One area of concern is the disproportionate drop in enrollments that has occurred at two-year institutions. The causes of—and solutions to—this trend are beyond the scope of the MLA enrollments reports, but we hope they will be explored by others in the field. Another potential area of investigation for researchers is whether the decline in enrollments for 2013 and 2016 may be attributable in part to the loss of government funding for international education. Combined funding for National Resource Centers, Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships, Title VI, and the Fulbright-Hays Program dropped from \$195,437,000 in 2010 to \$123,250,000 in 2016, a 36.9% decrease. This issue and others are still to be understood.

Notes

1. We thank the National Endowment for the Humanities for their grant and their support of our work. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

2. We are grateful to our chief research assistant, David Rodriguez, who applied his research abilities, organizational skills, and diplomatic talent to the complex tasks of collecting and organizing the enrollment data and following up with nonresponding institutions. We are indebted to Terri Peterson, who gathered online data, followed up on consultants' feedback, and reviewed the functioning of the language database, and to Judy Strassberg, who provided much-needed technical expertise and contributed to the analysis of the data. The difficult and repetitive task of contacting institutions was shared by Roy Chustek, Cindy Cohen, Raquel Cortés, Keith O'Dea, Michael Reilly, and Brenda Sample, and we thank them for their hard work and persistence. Thanks also to Christine Astor, Mara Naaman, and Annie Reiser, as well as to our interns, Dylan Bish and Tyler Walker.

**Enrollments in
Languages Other Than
English in United States
Institutions of Higher
Education, Summer
2016 and Fall 2016:
Preliminary Report**

3. The Language Map also displays the locations of speakers of four language groups designated by the United States Census: African languages, other Native North American languages (i.e., languages other than Navajo), other Pacific Island languages, and Scandinavian languages. Visitors to the map can view where languages in these groups are taught and enrollments in specific languages (e.g., under African languages, enrollments in Wolof, Xhosa, or Yoruba).

4. We extend our warm appreciation and gratitude to our consultants for their detailed review of the data and for their expert advice: Fabian Alfie, Kirk Belnap, Malcolm Compitello, Frederick Greenspahn, Raychelle Harris, Richard LaFleur, Ginger Marcus, Scott McGinnis, Pardis Minuchehr, Gilead Morahg, Alwiya Omar, Ben Rifkin, Kathleen Stein-Smith, Luiz Valente, and Hye-sook Wang.

5. Yeshivas do not have courses the way that most universities and colleges do, and all instruction includes Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic. As a result, some yeshivas give us their total enrollments when reporting Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic language enrollments. Given these circumstances, the Higher Education Directory numbers for total institutional enrollments are sometimes the most accurate way to represent how many students study Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic at small yeshivas. For 2016, when we could not get a response from an institution, we took enrollments for some yeshivas from the 2016 Higher Education Directory.

6. View the census instrument at www.mla.org/Enrollment-Report.

7. Before asking the consultants to provide their feedback, we conduct our own assessment of the data. After collecting an institution's enrollments, we check the submitted numbers for accuracy. We compare the current enrollments for each language with those reported in past censuses, and if the numbers show no dramatic increases or decreases and follow historical ratios of introductory-to-advanced enrollments, we confirm the reported enrollments. In the few instances where the numbers do not fall in line, we investigate further. If possible, we check reported enrollments against those available on an institution's Web site, contact the chairs of departments in which the target language is taught, and return to the original respondent with a request for clarification. Most departments and administrators are eager to ensure the accuracy of the reported enrollments and will respond variously with affirmations of the submitted count, updated numbers, and explanations for variations. When institutions do not respond to our follow-up queries, we accept the enrollments as originally reported.

8. In 2006, the census instrument asked for the number of enrollments "in 1st and 2nd year courses," "in all other undergraduate courses," and in graduate courses. In 2009, 2013, and 2016, the census instrument asked for the number of enrollments "in 1st- and 2nd-year courses," "in 3rd- and 4th-year courses," and "in graduate courses." This breakdown fits the course categorization of most but not all institutions. For example, undergraduate courses may be divided into a 1-2-3 rather than a 1-2-3-4 schema, intermediate courses may be counted variously as introductory or advanced, language instruction may begin at the 300 level, and 500-level courses may count both for advanced undergraduate and for graduate credit.

Works Cited

- "Table 1: Number and Percentage Distribution of Students Enrolled at Title IV Institutions, by Control of Institution, Student Level, Level of Institution, Attendance Status, and Other Selected Characteristics: United States, Fall 2016." *Enrollment and Employees in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2016; and Financial Statistics and Academic Libraries, Fiscal Year 2016: First Look (Provisional Data)*, by Scott A. Ginder et al., National Center for Education Statistics, 28 Dec. 2017, nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018002.pdf.
- "Table 303.10: Total Fall Enrollment in Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions, by Attendance Status, Sex of Student, and Control of Institution: Selected Years, 1947 through 2026." *Digest of Education Statistics, 2016*, National Center for Education Statistics, Feb. 2017, nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_303.10.asp.

Fig. 1
Fall Language Enrollments by Year

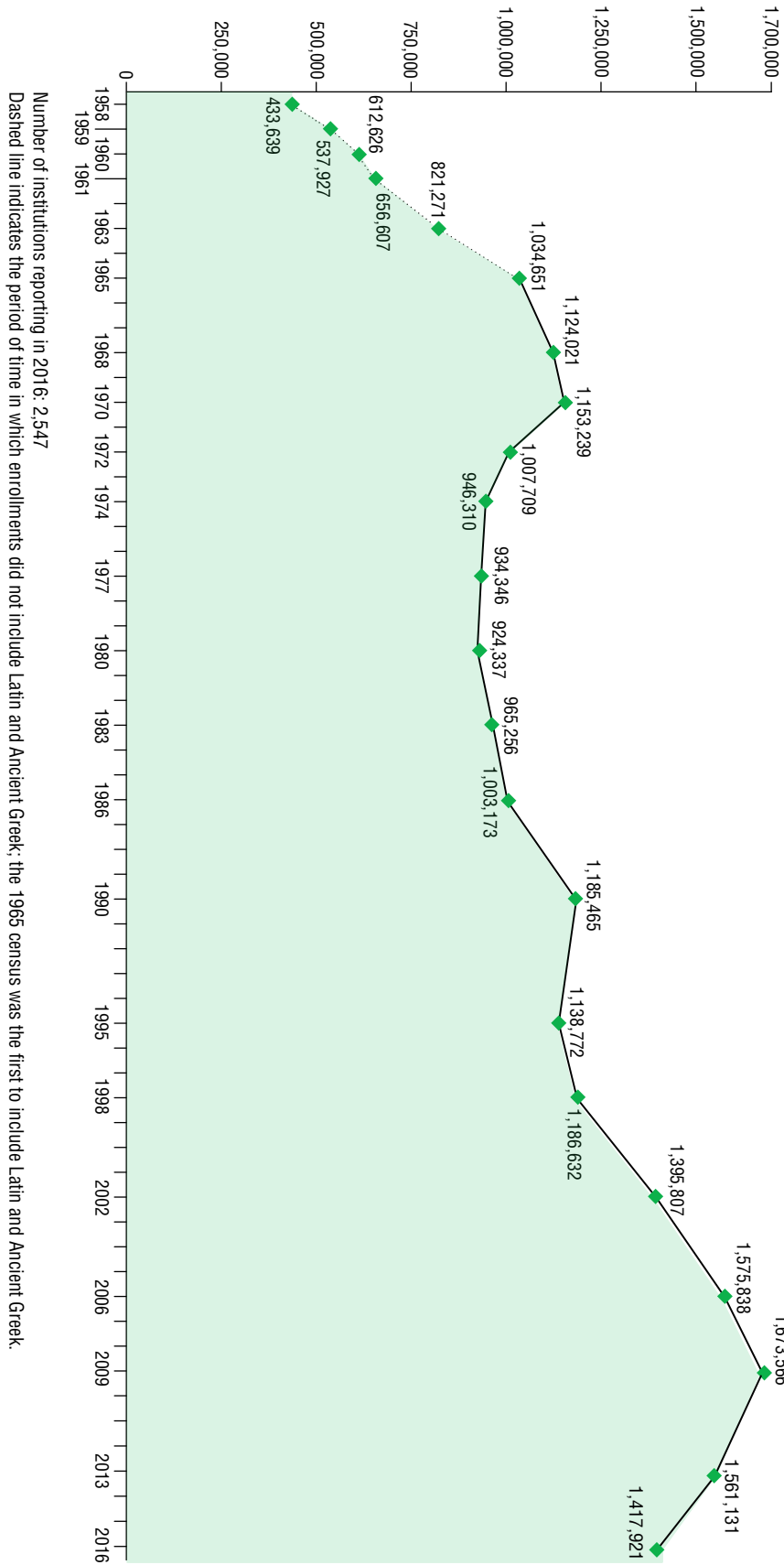


Fig. 2
Modern Language Course Enrollments per 100 Students Enrolled in Colleges and Universities in the United States

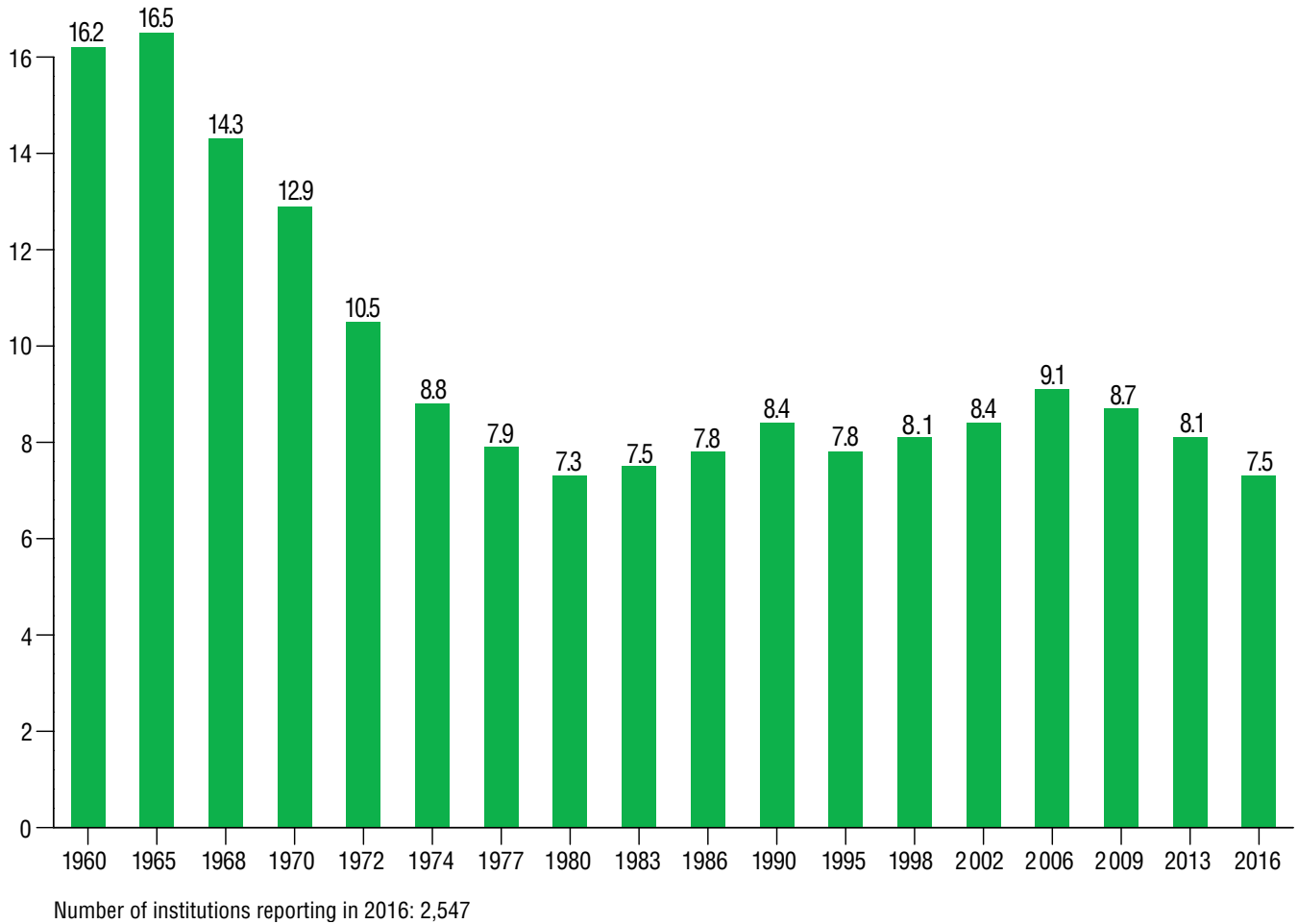


Table 1
Fall Language Enrollments and Percentage Change in United States Institutions of Higher Education (Languages in Descending Order of 2016 Totals)

	2006	2009	% Change, 2006–09	2013	% Change, 2009–13	2016	% Change, 2013–16
Spanish	822,148	861,015	4.7	789,888	–8.3	712,240	–9.8
French	206,019	215,244	4.5	197,679	–8.2	175,667	–11.1
American Sign Language	79,744	92,068	15.5	109,567	19.0	107,060	–2.3
German	94,146	95,613	1.6	86,782	–9.2	80,594	–7.1
Japanese	65,410	72,357	10.6	66,771	–7.7	68,810	3.1
Italian	78,176	80,322	2.7	70,982	–11.6	56,743	–20.1
Chinese	51,382	59,876	16.5	61,084	2.0	53,069	–13.1
Arabic ¹	24,010	35,228	46.7	33,526	–4.8	31,554	–5.9
Latin	32,164	32,446	0.9	27,209	–16.1	24,866	–8.6
Russian	24,784	26,740	7.9	21,979	–17.8	20,353	–7.4
Korean	7,146	8,449	18.2	12,256	45.1	13,936	13.7
Greek, Ancient ²	22,842	21,515	–5.8	16,961	–21.2	13,264	–21.8
Portuguese	10,310	11,273	9.3	12,407	10.1	9,827	–20.8
Hebrew, Biblical ³	14,137	13,764	–2.6	12,596	–8.5	9,587	–23.9
Hebrew, Modern	9,620	8,307	–13.6	6,698	–19.4	5,521	–17.6
Other Languages	33,800	39,349	16.4	34,746	–11.7	34,830	0.2
Total	1,575,838	1,673,566	6.2	1,561,131	–6.7	1,417,921	–9.2

Number of institutions reporting in 2016: 2,547

1. Includes enrollments reported under “Arabic,” “Arabic, Algerian,” “Arabic, Classical,” “Arabic, Egyptian,” “Arabic, Gulf,” “Arabic, Iraqi,” “Arabic, Levantine,” “Arabic, Modern Standard,” “Arabic, Moroccan,” “Arabic, Qur’anic,” “Arabic, Sudanese,” and “Arabic, Syrian.”
2. Includes enrollments reported under “Greek, Ancient,” “Greek, Biblical,” “Greek, Koine,” “Greek, New Testament,” and “Greek, Old Testament”; excludes enrollments reported under “Greek,” “Greek and Hebrew,” and “Greek and Latin.”
3. Includes enrollments reported under “Hebrew, Biblical,” “Hebrew, Classical,” and “Hebrew, Rabbinic”; excludes enrollments reported under “Hebrew” and “Hebrew, Biblical and Modern.”

**Enrollments in
Languages Other Than
English in United States
Institutions of Higher
Education, Summer
2016 and Fall 2016:
Preliminary Report**

**Table 2
Language Enrollments by State**

	2009	2013	% Change, 2009–13	2016	% Change, 2013–16
Alabama	16,999	16,581	-2.5	14,618	-11.8
Alaska	3,612	2,327	-35.6	2,056	-11.6
Arizona	39,673	33,890	-14.6	30,053	-11.3
Arkansas	11,499	11,475	-0.2	10,063	-12.3
California	220,837	200,250	-9.3	177,233	-11.5
Colorado	25,504	21,909	-14.1	20,585	-6.0
Connecticut	19,009	17,950	-5.6	16,818	-6.3
Delaware	5,949	6,688	12.4	5,507	-17.7
District of Columbia	17,902	23,906	33.5	19,390	-18.9
Florida	56,627	52,992	-6.4	51,940	-2.0
Georgia	44,258	42,763	-3.4	45,603	6.6
Hawai'i	9,657	9,985	3.4	8,198	-17.9
Idaho	7,161	7,142	-0.3	7,325	2.6
Illinois	58,767	50,372	-14.3	38,950	-22.7
Indiana	48,048	39,381	-18.0	42,522	8.0
Iowa	18,296	15,795	-13.7	15,717	-0.5
Kansas	12,453	11,027	-11.5	10,077	-8.6
Kentucky	21,333	20,530	-3.8	16,860	-17.9
Louisiana	19,372	17,007	-12.2	16,528	-2.8
Maine	4,660	4,236	-9.1	3,994	-5.7
Maryland	27,450	29,947	9.1	24,827	-17.1
Massachusetts	50,689	46,083	-9.1	41,652	-9.6
Michigan	53,372	46,958	-12.0	38,890	-17.2
Minnesota	33,134	28,912	-12.7	25,310	-12.5
Mississippi	13,830	13,081	-5.4	12,413	-5.1
Missouri	31,434	34,507	9.8	32,081	-7.0
Montana	3,933	3,518	-10.6	3,337	-5.1
Nebraska	8,727	7,770	-11.0	6,997	-9.9
Nevada	10,754	9,455	-12.1	8,832	-6.6
New Hampshire	5,847	6,177	5.6	4,978	-19.4
New Jersey	39,081	36,926	-5.5	33,398	-9.6
New Mexico	11,133	11,836	6.3	11,547	-2.4
New York	144,870	141,436	-2.4	134,052	-5.2
North Carolina	66,001	63,301	-4.1	59,101	-6.6
North Dakota	2,998	2,507	-16.4	1,827	-27.1
Ohio	58,450	57,792	-1.1	54,973	-4.9
Oklahoma	16,789	14,852	-11.5	13,253	-10.8
Oregon	31,595	28,985	-8.3	20,861	-28.0
Pennsylvania	82,269	71,211	-13.4	65,740	-7.7
Rhode Island	9,011	9,073	0.7	9,274	2.2
South Carolina	32,784	31,256	-4.7	28,906	-7.5
South Dakota	3,331	2,791	-16.2	2,330	-16.5
Tennessee	29,370	27,062	-7.9	24,578	-9.2
Texas	98,657	91,664	-7.1	84,615	-7.7
Utah	20,314	19,214	-5.4	17,140	-10.8
Vermont	6,099	5,884	-3.5	4,809	-18.3
Virginia	47,905	45,012	-6.0	41,472	-7.9
Washington	28,463	25,341	-11.0	22,696	-10.4
West Virginia	9,431	7,754	-17.8	6,233	-19.6
Wisconsin	31,132	31,730	1.9	25,457	-19.8
Wyoming	3,097	2,890	-6.7	2,305	-20.2
Total	1,673,566	1,561,131	-6.7	1,417,921	-9.2

Number of institutions reporting in 2016: 2,547

**Enrollments in
Languages Other Than
English in United States
Institutions of Higher
Education, Summer
2016 and Fall 2016:
Preliminary Report**

Table 3
**Modern Language (ML) Course Enrollments Compared with Total Number of Students
Enrolled in Colleges and Universities in the United States**

	Total Number of Students ¹	Total Student Index of Growth (%)	ML Enrollments ²	ML Index of Growth (%)	ML Enrollments per 100 Students
1960	3,789,000	100.0	612,626	100.0	16.2
1965	5,920,864	156.3	977,118	159.5	16.5
1968	7,491,863	197.7	1,070,759	174.8	14.3
1970	8,562,554	226.0	1,108,274	180.9	12.9
1972	9,193,880	242.6	962,840	157.2	10.5
1974	10,189,463	268.9	896,860	146.4	8.8
1977	11,233,645	296.5	884,105	144.3	7.9
1980	11,985,181	316.3	877,186	143.2	7.3
1983	12,271,921	323.9	921,754	150.5	7.5
1986	12,286,372	324.3	960,329	156.8	7.8
1990	13,604,944	359.1	1,140,873	186.2	8.4
1995	14,021,418	370.1	1,096,603	179.0	7.8
1998	14,142,694	373.3	1,144,106	186.8	8.1
2002	16,017,469	422.7	1,345,590	219.6	8.4
2006	16,692,999	440.6	1,520,847	248.3	9.1
2009	18,578,440	490.3	1,621,087	264.6	8.7
2013	18,718,238	494.0	1,521,074	248.3	8.1
2016	18,521,801	488.8	1,382,371	225.6	7.5

Number of institutions reporting in 2016: 2,547

In 2013, the total numbers of students were adjusted to exclude students in for-profit institutions and those in institutions granting a degree of less than two years, since the MLA enrollment census does not include those institutions.

1. The figures in the first column are derived from data in publications of the United States Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. The total enrollment for 1960 is an estimate. Statistics for 1965–2013 are drawn from *Digest of Education Statistics, 2016* ("Table 303.10"). We derived our figures by subtracting the numbers in the "For-profit" column from the numbers in the "Total enrollment" column. The figure for 2016 is derived from the provisional data presented in *Enrollment and Employees in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2016* ("Table 1").
2. Includes all languages reported in the census except Latin and Ancient Greek, which are excluded from this table because they were not covered in the 1960 census. To show comparable numbers over time, Latin and Ancient Greek were removed from all other enrollment numbers listed in this table.

Table 4
Enrollments in the Fifteen Most Commonly Taught Languages in United States Institutions of Higher Education in Selected Years

	1958	1970	1980	1990	1995	2002	2006	2009	2013	2016	% Change, 1958–2016
Spanish	126,303	386,617	378,952	534,143	606,286	745,215	822,148	861,015	789,888	712,240	463.9
French	157,900	358,494	248,303	273,116	205,351	201,985	206,019	215,244	197,679	175,667	11.3
American Sign Language ¹	—	—	—	1,602	4,304	60,781	79,744	92,068	109,567	107,060	—
German	107,870	201,766	127,015	133,594	96,263	91,100	94,146	95,613	86,782	80,594	–25.3
Japanese	844	6,620	11,516	45,830	44,723	52,238	65,410	72,357	66,771	68,810	8,052.8
Italian	9,577	34,236	34,793	49,824	43,760	63,899	78,176	80,322	70,982	56,743	492.5
Chinese	615	6,115	11,366	19,427	26,471	34,153	51,382	59,876	61,084	53,069	8,529.1
Arabic ²	364	1,333	3,471	3,683	4,444	10,584	24,010	35,228	33,526	31,554	8,568.7
Latin ³	—	28,422	25,019	28,178	25,897	29,841	32,164	32,446	27,209	24,866	—
Russian	16,042	36,369	23,987	44,476	24,729	23,921	24,784	26,740	21,979	20,353	26.9
Korean	26	101	365	2,375	3,343	5,211	7,146	8,449	12,256	13,936	53,500.0
Greek, Ancient ⁴	—	16,543	22,132	16,414	16,272	20,376	22,842	21,515	16,961	13,264	—
Portuguese	582	5,065	4,894	6,118	6,531	8,385	10,310	11,273	12,407	9,827	1,588.5
Hebrew, Biblical ⁵	—	—	—	5,695	5,648	14,183	14,137	13,764	12,596	9,587	—
Hebrew, Modern ⁶	3,014	—	—	7,271	7,479	8,619	9,620	8,307	6,698	5,521	83.2
Other Languages	10,502	71,558	32,524	13,719	17,271	25,316	33,800	39,349	34,746	34,830	—
Total	433,639	1,153,239	924,337	1,185,465	1,138,772	1,395,807	1,575,838	1,673,566	1,561,131	1,417,921	227.0

Number of institutions reporting in 2016: 2,547

1. Figures for American Sign Language are not available before 1990.

2. Includes enrollments reported under “Arabic,” “Arabic, Algerian,” “Arabic, Classical,” “Arabic, Egyptian,” “Arabic, Gulf,” “Arabic, Iraqi,” “Arabic, Levantine,” “Arabic, Modern Standard,” “Arabic, Moroccan,” “Arabic, Qur’anic,” “Arabic, Sudanese,” and “Arabic, Syrian.”

3. Latin and Ancient Greek were not included in the 1958 census.

4. Includes enrollments reported under “Greek, Ancient,” “Greek, Biblical,” “Greek, Koine,” “Greek, New Testament,” and “Greek, Old Testament”; excludes enrollments reported under “Greek,” “Greek and Hebrew,” and “Greek and Latin.”

5. Includes enrollments reported under “Hebrew, Biblical,” “Hebrew, Classical,” and “Hebrew, Rabbinic”; excludes enrollments reported under “Hebrew” and “Hebrew, Biblical and Modern.”

6. Before 1990, most censuses combined Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew enrollments under Hebrew.

Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Summer 2016 and Fall 2016: Preliminary Report

Table 5
Comparison of Introductory and Advanced Undergraduate Course Enrollments, 2009, 2013, and 2016

	Introductory Enrollments, 2016	Advanced Enrollments, 2016	Ratio of Introductory to Advanced Enrollments		
			2016	2013	2009
American Sign Language	94,599	10,636	9:1	9:1	11:1
Arabic ¹	26,888	4,114	7:1	7:1	7:1
Chinese	39,634	12,210	3:1	4:1	4:1
French	142,648	30,258	5:1	5:1	4:1
German	65,103	13,856	5:1	5:1	4:1
Greek, Ancient ²	7,229	1,951	4:1	4:1	4:1
Hebrew, Biblical ³	4,057	1,924	2:1	1:1	1:1
Hebrew, Modern	4,719	690	7:1	4:1	5:1
Italian	50,934	5,175	10:1	11:1	10:1
Japanese	57,616	10,715	5:1	5:1	5:1
Korean	11,409	2,329	5:1	4:1	3:1
Latin	20,954	2,880	7:1	7:1	7:1
Portuguese	7,169	2,299	3:1	3:1	3:1
Russian	15,052	4,777	3:1	3:1	3:1
Spanish	584,533	119,888	5:1	5:1	5:1
Other Languages	26,066	6,390	4:1	6:1	5:1
Total	1,158,610	230,092	5:1	5:1	5:1

Number of institutions reporting in 2016: 2,547

Numbers in the ratio column are rounded.

1. Includes enrollments reported under “Arabic,” “Arabic, Algerian,” “Arabic, Classical,” “Arabic, Egyptian,” “Arabic, Gulf,” “Arabic, Iraqi,” “Arabic, Levantine,” “Arabic, Modern Standard,” “Arabic, Moroccan,” “Arabic, Qur’anic,” “Arabic, Sudanese,” and “Arabic, Syrian.”
2. Includes enrollments reported under “Greek, Ancient,” “Greek, Biblical,” “Greek, Koine,” “Greek, New Testament,” and “Greek, Old Testament”; excludes enrollments reported under “Greek,” “Greek and Hebrew,” and “Greek and Latin.”
3. Includes enrollments reported under “Hebrew, Biblical,” “Hebrew, Classical,” and “Hebrew, Rabbinic”; excludes enrollments reported under “Hebrew” and “Hebrew, Biblical and Modern.”

*Enrollments in
Languages Other Than
English in United States
Institutions of Higher
Education, Summer
2016 and Fall 2016:
Preliminary Report*

Table 6
Percentage Change in Language Course Enrollments by Institutional Level, Selected Years

	Two-Year Colleges		Four-Year Undergraduate and Graduate Institutions	
	Enrollments	% Change	Enrollments	% Change
1959	44,609	—	493,318	—
1960	52,099	16.8	560,527	13.6
1963	72,737	39.6	728,892	30.0
1965	109,019	49.9	925,632	27.0
1968	129,852	19.1	994,169	7.4
1970	155,154	19.5	952,333	-4.2
1972	151,878	-2.1	855,831	-10.1
1974	154,713	1.9	791,597	-7.5
1977	163,464	5.7	770,882	-2.6
1980	162,716	-0.5	761,621	-1.2
1983	163,092	0.2	802,164	5.3
1986	161,683	-0.9	841,490	4.9
1990	227,625	40.8	957,840	13.8
1995	233,123	2.4	905,649	-5.4
1998	243,096	4.3	943,536	4.2
2002	337,304	38.8	1,058,503	12.2
2006	364,980	8.2	1,210,858	14.4
2009	393,050	7.7	1,280,516	5.8
2013	343,245	-12.7	1,217,886	-4.9
2016	288,530	-15.9	1,129,391	-7.3
1959–2016		546.8		128.9
1974–2016		86.5		42.7
1983–2016		76.9		40.8
1995–2016		23.8		24.7
2006–16		-20.9		-6.7

Number of institutions reporting in 2016: 2,547

Enrollments at institutions with no recorded institutional level are not included.

***Enrollments in
Languages Other Than
English in United States
Institutions of Higher
Education, Summer
2016 and Fall 2016:
Preliminary Report***

**Table 7
Summer 2016 Language Enrollments in United States Institutions
of Higher Education (Languages in Descending Order of Totals)**

	Number	Percentage
Spanish	123,672	61.6
American Sign Language	18,970	9.5
French	17,467	8.7
German	7,204	3.6
Japanese	6,419	3.2
Chinese	5,033	2.5
Italian	4,968	2.5
Arabic ¹	4,184	2.1
Russian	2,691	1.3
Greek, Ancient ²	1,588	0.8
Latin	1,434	0.7
Korean	1,136	0.6
Hebrew, Biblical ³	987	0.5
Portuguese	769	0.4
Hebrew, Modern	484	0.2
Other Languages	3,682	1.8
Total	200,688	100.0

Number of institutions reporting: 2,527

1. Includes enrollments reported under "Arabic," "Arabic, Algerian," "Arabic, Classical," "Arabic, Egyptian," "Arabic, Gulf," "Arabic, Iraqi," "Arabic, Levantine," "Arabic, Modern Standard," "Arabic, Moroccan," "Arabic, Qur'anic," "Arabic, Sudanese," and "Arabic, Syrian."
2. Includes enrollments reported under "Greek, Ancient," "Greek, Biblical," "Greek, Koine," "Greek, New Testament," and "Greek, Old Testament"; excludes enrollments reported under "Greek," "Greek and Hebrew," and "Greek and Latin."
3. Includes enrollments reported under "Hebrew, Biblical," "Hebrew, Classical," and "Hebrew, Rabbinic"; excludes enrollments reported under "Hebrew" and "Hebrew, Biblical and Modern."