

Higher enrollments limit language class offering

By Patty Pryor

Enrollment in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at UNL has grown steadily during the last five years, but the increase has meant tighter classes and fewer teachers, David Gitlitz, department chairman said.

"The demand for languages runs ahead of our ability to offer sections to meet it," he said.

Enrollment has increased about 3.5 percent every year since 1976, Gitlitz said. This increase began earlier and has kept up at a rate faster than at the national level, he said.

Although the popularity of languages is encouraging, the increased demand has forced the department to tighten its belt and turn away students when class size limits are stretched, Gitlitz said.

Initially, 300 students were bumped out of sections at the end of pre-registration for the spring semester, he said.

However, additional funding was made available last Friday, he said, which will allow the addition of more sections at the 100- and 200-level but will still not quite meet the need.

Overflowing classes at the beginning level have taken a bite out of upper-level offerings as well, Gitlitz said.

Only essentials remain

"We've met the expanding need at the 100- and 200-level by cutting electives and enrichment courses at the 300- and 400-levels," he said. "We've had to pare back to a core of just essential courses."

The masters' program, which includes training for high school teachers, also has been trimmed, he said.

"We've just had to put funds into meeting the press at the beginning level."

The greater enrollment at UNL is due to a number of factors, Gitlitz said, including upgraded teacher quality and more tightly coordinated beginning classes.

The department also works with the high schools through a variety of programs, he said, including an annual Foreign Language Fair which brings 1,600 to 1,700 students from across the state to UNL for a day.

"The department works real hard to foster a sense of language community among the different levels of education around the state," he said.

The increase in enrollment also has been associated with an interest in international business careers, Gitlitz said.

Language is success?

"As the trade deficit grows and the value of our dollar falls, one key to personal success becomes a knowledge of language," he said. "Interest in languages has developed a pro-business slant the last three years."

The increased enrollment also has reduced the availability of minor language classes, Gitlitz said.

"We continually have requests for languages which we can't afford to teach," he said.

Classes which formerly were offered on a sporadic basis can be offered now only if the instructor is willing to volunteer his time, Gitlitz said.

"They were classes that did meet a need, but it just became almost impossible to meet those needs except on a voluntary basis," he said.

Five or six teachers will be hired to help with the added sections this spring, Gitlitz said, but these will not all be full-time positions.

"There are two or three graduate assistants who will now be able to begin their graduate program this spring," he said. "Before, we didn't have any sections to let them teach."

Budget cut hurt

Gitlitz said the department's ability to anticipate demand and work out solutions in advance was hindered this semester by the state's 3 percent budget reduction.

"The 300 (which were initially turned away) is considerably more than usual, but we still had anticipated that demand when we planned our budget last spring," he said.

The state budget cuts passed in November, however, forced the department to eliminate more sections than they had planned, he said.

"We, of course, try to accommodate as many students as possible," he said, "which usually means shoe-horning people into sections which are already above the recommended limits."

This could detract from the quality of the class and the instructor, he said.

"Research shows that the optimum beginning class size is 15," he said. "We run ours at 25."

Gitlitz said a recent survey showed UNL had the highest average beginning class size among Colorado University, Purdue, Washington State, Iowa State, Penn State, Iowa University and Michigan State.

When these factors are taken into account, he said, the popularity of foreign languages could serve a self-defeating purpose.

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UNL student brings home judging rank

UNL student Dave Oldfather of Lincoln, placed sixth among 94 individuals in halter judging in the World American Quarter Horse Association Collegiate Quarter Horse Judging Contest at Oklahoma City recently.

Oldfather placed 14th overall among 94 in-

dividuals in overall judging at the contest, and ranked 16th in individual reasons.

Two NU teams competed in the contest. One team placed 12th in the halter division and 16th in the performance division judging enroute to a 14th place finish from a field of 20 teams.

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