

- Higher education is being urged to do its part in a national effort to overcome the United States' **language deficit**, the fact that this country, where languages other than English are being spoken by over 65 million people, has trouble getting the rest of the population to learn those languages: a serious liability in a world where the assumption that "English is enough" finds itself increasingly challenged, **both globally and locally**.
- While college students are not, as adults, best equipped to learn another tongue quickly, college language learning has **specific merits**: the ability to be infused with **cultural knowledge** and to be developed **in connection with other fields**. What our students are best placed to acquire along with language skills is a lot of information **about** languages, resulting in a deeper **awareness** of their **practical, social, and cultural value**.
- As a **microcosm of the country's linguistic diversity**, the State University of New Jersey is ideally armed to make languages a cornerstone of the education it provides. Yet **the opposite is true**: our students' tapestry of **linguistic competences** remains an untapped resource, and the **absence of a graduation requirement** in world languages at Rutgers-New Brunswick (beyond the SAS/RBS Honors Program) is a glaring **anomaly** that makes our language programs **smaller and more vulnerable** than they are at most comparable institutions.
- One way to repair this anomaly would be to create a traditional **"proficiency requirement" (2 to 4 semesters** of language study, waived for applicants who match this level, with exemptions for credit-intensive programs). However, the **creation ex nihilo** of such a requirement (NB- or SAS-wide) would:
 - have a **disproportionate impact** on applicants from **disadvantaged high school districts** (with poor preparation in languages), while their more privileged counterparts would place out;
 - have **little to no impact** on our large population of **heritage speakers and multilingual students**, who would simply place out – and whose skills and potential would continue to go unheeded;
 - force the **disproportionate creation**, in many language programs, of **low-level language sections** to accommodate large numbers of students who would not go on once the requirement is met;
 - force **the addition of 6 to 12 credits to the Core Curriculum**, which would make it unsustainable in financial, curricular, scheduling, and time-to-degree terms; or **the replacement of a substantial portion of the Core**, which would be destructive and generate complications (and infighting) across SAS and beyond.
- Instead, RU-NB should seize this opportunity to develop truly **innovative requirements** that:
 - encourage not only beginners or semi-beginners, but **students at all levels** to take on world languages and **improve their own linguistic competences**, whatever they may be;
 - bring RU-NB's amazing **linguistic diversity** to the forefront of campus life, and transform it into the **academic, intellectual, cultural resource** it deserves to become;
 - **foster interdisciplinarity**, in the form of **partnerships and synergies** between language studies and **a variety of fields** that have an interest in developing them **for their own reasons**;
 - offer, instead of a one-size-fits-all structure, a set of **dynamic** ones that can **grow organically over time** across our institution, without inflicting **too much pressure on curricula**, Core Curriculum included.
- Accordingly, the Task Force is proposing:
 - 1) a very small, **one-credit language requirement, added to the Core**, which should ideally be adopted by **all RU-NB schools and units** (no exemptions, no place-out) and would be met in a variety of ways: traditional language courses, 1-credit **language modules** added to courses in other subjects or set within other structures (such as Study Abroad), **mini-courses** on languages and language learning, new forms of student interaction in languages other than English (such as **conversation and tutoring**) supervised by a new **Council on Linguistic Diversity**. The 1-credit requirement works as a spark; it triggers **linguistic discoveries**, fosters **linguistic awareness**, and helps promote a diversified, interactive **language culture** across RU-NB.
 - 2) a larger, **6-to-8-credit language requirement, independent from but coordinate with the Core**, and earning a **Seal of Multilingual Competence**. This second requirement – **only for those divisions and units that adopt it** and commit to developing it – **does not allow place-out or exemptions** either (as a rule, though it is cut in half for **transfer students**). It can be fulfilled **within or beyond** the Core, **at any level**, including the most advanced. Its content (e.g. **language modules, field-specific** language courses, **interdisciplinary minors**) should be developed before the requirement itself is put in place. The 6-to-8-credit requirement can also **optionally** be met (and the Seal earned) by **individual students** in the programs that do not adopt it.
 - 3) a number of detailed language-related **initiatives and programs**, which are meant to serve as content and incentives for the two requirements, but can (and should) also be **developed on their own**.