

The Workplace
Intercultural
Competence
Certificate: Showcasing
How Language Study
Does Work in the
World
Christine
Garst-Santos

in an increasingly complex, interconnected, and ever-changing world, even right here in South Dakota—we determined that our problem was not and is not the value of our skills. On the contrary, our problem seemed to be that very few people—both inside and outside the academy—understood what we do in language programs or that language study develops these valuable skills. This, therefore, is not another story of the humanities in crisis. Rather, this is one example of a multipronged strategy to push back on that narrative and to showcase that “our humanistic studies do [much-needed] work in the world” (Lubar). Through a combination of curricular innovations and a robust marketing campaign on the role language study plays in upskilling graduates, we have managed to raise the number of bachelor of arts degrees on campus by a full percentage point, or eighty-six students, in a matter of two years; stabilize or grow enrollment in all language programs; raise the profile of language study on campus and in the community through a new Workplace Intercultural Competence certificate; and brand the new School of American and Global Studies as the intellectual and cultural core of SDSU (see “School of American and Global Studies”).

South Dakota State University

South Dakota State University is the state’s Morrill Act land-grant university and its largest comprehensive institution of higher education. In fall 2017, SDSU had an enrollment of 12,527 students from all fifty states and from eighty-five countries. The university offers 175 undergraduate majors, minors, and specializations as well as twenty-nine master’s, thirteen doctoral, and two professional programs. Like

e Workplace
Intercultural
Competence
Certificate: Showcasing
How Language Study
Does Work in the
World
Christine
Garst-Santos

exam for graduating majors. To this end, in the spring of 2017 we designed a shared



e Workplace
Intercultural
Competence
Certificate: Showcasing
How Language Study
Does Work in the
World
Christine
Garst-Santos

previously untapped 97% who had no programmatic incentive to study a language. As such, any new certificate would need to be palatable to both faculty members and students in the target programs. In other words, we needed to design something that would be comprehensive enough to truly upskill students yet light enough in terms of credit hours that departments would actually get behind the initiative and encourage these bachelor of science students to add the new certificate to their plan of study.

For these reasons, we decided to build the certificate around the university's two-course Humanities and Arts/Diversity general education requirement, starting from the premise that any language study was better than no language study. Although we certainly recognized that a language minor or double major would provide the



the Workplace
Intercultural
Competence
Certificate: Showcasing
How Language Study
Does Work in the
World
Christine
Garst-Santos

components and make clear our intention of teaching these skills. Additionally, we wanted to ensure that we could easily assess this content to demonstrate course effectiveness. The faculty members agreed on the following four culture modules:

1. What is culture?

Working definitions of culture and intercultural competence
Cultural-self awareness
Cultural-other awareness
Domestic subcultures, generational cultures, etc.
Culture-general models (individualist versus collectivist cultures, etc.)

2. What is language?

Language and perspective
Language-specific points of view
Second language acquisition

3. Nonverbal communication and intercultural communication

Culture-general knowledge
Culture-specific knowledge
Communicative conflicts that come from cultural differences (and how to navigate them)

4. Culture-specific historical contexts (and conflicts)

Exploration of global issues (migration, immigration, globalization)
History of the United States' interactions with target-language countries
Target cultures' history in the United States (arrival, key cultural encounters, cultural

the Workplace
Intercultural
Competence
Certificate: Showcasing
How Language Study
Does Work in the
World
Christine
Garst-Santos

communication studies department. The fourth and final course was a management elective from the collaborating majors in agricultural economics, business economics, dairy science, animal science, hospitality management, construction management, operations management, and human-resource management. Our thinking behind each element was as follows. First, we posited that by taking two semesters of a modern language (French, German, or Spanish) students would gain a basic understanding of the challenges of second language acquisition, develop empathy, and gain insight into a culture different from their own. Second, this knowledge could then be expanded with overt course work in intercultural communication, which provided the basic theoretical tools to compare and contrast different cultural frames

the Workplace
Intercultural
Competence
Certificate: Showcasing
How Language Study
Does Work in the
World

Christine
Garst-Santos

(the SPCM 480: Intercultural Communication course is outside the department). However, we also wanted to expand the course beyond the theoretical component of intercultural communication to a theoretical exploration of intercultural competence in all its dimensions. In the current iteration, students can pursue the certificate in the classroom, online, or using a mix of these two delivery options. They also have a choice now for the intercultural component, which allows for scheduling flexibility. The certificate's evolution can be seen in tables 1 and 2.

References

The trends and demands at South Dakota State University reflect the trends seen at the national level. Like many of our colleagues, SDSU saw a decline in language majors and minors from roughly fall 2012 to fall 2017. In the years since then, however,

e Workplace
Intercultural
Competence
Certificate: Showcasing
How Language Study
Does Work in the
World

Christine
Garst-Santos



ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
act.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/

