

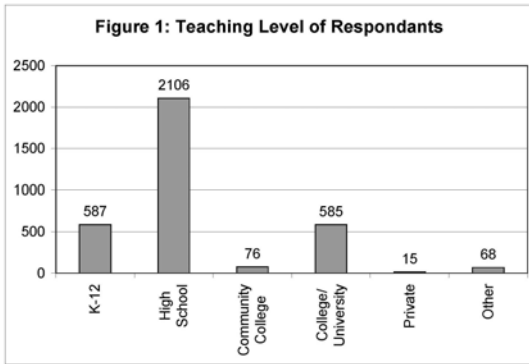
AATF 2005 MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

The results of the 2005 AATF questionnaire on membership trends offer some interesting and somewhat reassuring numbers. The questionnaire is a repeat of the same questionnaire which we gave in 2000 and appeared on the back of the dues renewal invoice for 2005. There were 3460 AATF members who responded to the questionnaire which was mailed to 8820 people for a return rate of 39%, a significant drop in response rate from 2000. While the statistics given here do not have the scientific rigor expected of a formal study, they do give a snapshot of the state of French enrollments and suggest possible avenues for further research.

Respondent profile

Members from all 50 states as well as a number of foreign countries, including



Canada, responded in roughly representative proportions relative to the population of AATF members in each state. The majority of those who filled out the questionnaire teach at the high school level, followed by college and university faculty (see Figure 1; a number of respondents indicated that they teach at both levels which explains why these figures are lower than those shown in some of the more specific questions in Figures 5 and 6). The percentage of respondents teaching in public and private schools was exactly the same as in 2000: 69% teach in public schools and 31% in private schools, again underlining the strong presence of French in private schools. The size of the institutions was fairly evenly distributed from small (less than 500 students) to very large (more than 2000 students).

School Setting

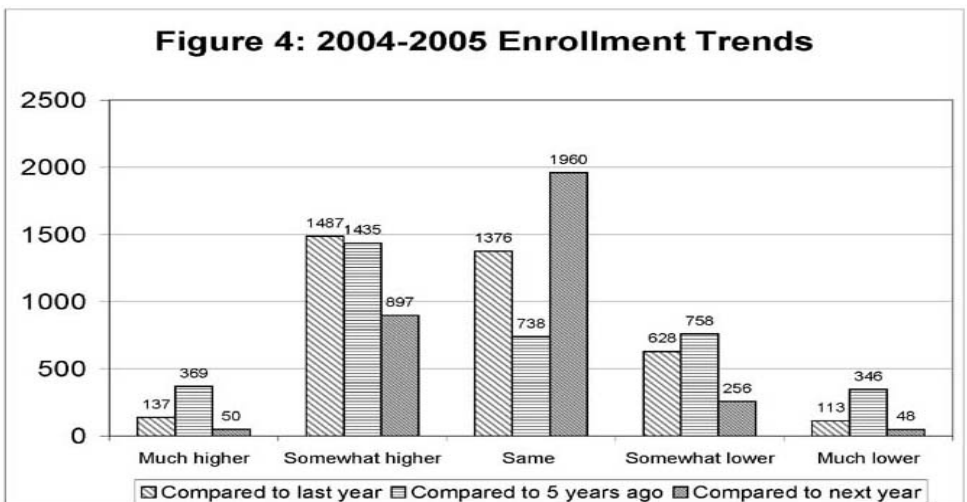
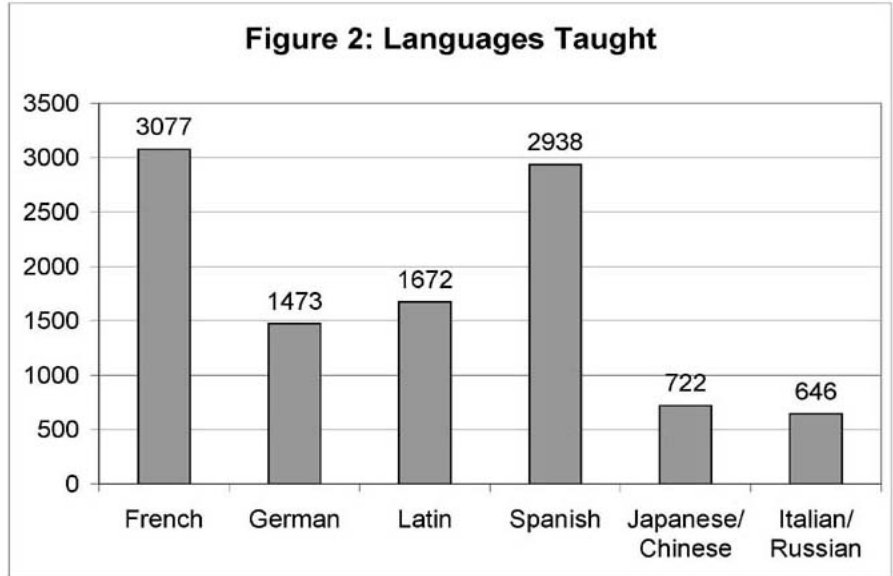
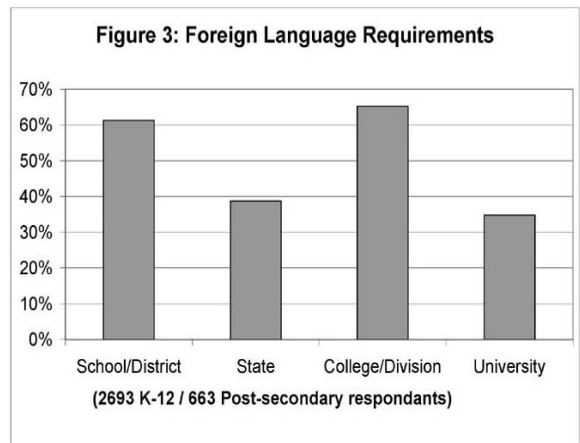
As might be expected, a variety of other foreign languages was taught in most schools. Figure 2 shows the breakdown. The responses suggest that where French is taught, multiple languages are often taught. In addition to those listed specifically

in the figure, other languages mentioned included American Sign Language and less commonly taught languages which often serve a local population such as Korean, Arabic, Armenian, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, native-American languages, etc. Over one hundred respondents (113) indicated that only French was taught at their school. It would be interesting to have comparable figures for Spanish-only schools.

Average class size may have increased, since AATF members told us they taught an average of 89 students at any given time in 2000 and now teach 112 students. According to the figures they gave, their schools had an average of 2.52 French teachers, 1.53 German teachers, 1.5 Latin teachers, and 4.9 Spanish teachers. All of these

averages have decreased (including Spanish) since 2000. However, teachers of other languages, who averaged less than one per school in 2000, now average six per school.

The questionnaire also asked for information regarding foreign language require-



ments. The number of respondents indicating a requirement was divided by the number of responses at that level to obtain the percentages plotted in Figure 3. Among our members, the percentages for requirements at the school or district, state, and university institutional level have increased significantly since 2000, although the study of a foreign language is still optional for many students whatever the level, and it means that French teachers must continue their efforts to convince students, parents, and administrators of the value of learning French.

Enrollment Trends

The questionnaire asked members to estimate enrollment trends for the current year (2004-2005) compared to the previous year, compared to five years earlier, and compared to what they thought enrollment would be for the next year (2005-2006). Figure 4 plots these numbers. While any decrease is of concern, the number of "Much higher" and "Somewhat higher" responses is nonetheless encouraging. In the future, it might be beneficial to link these increased enrollment figures to specific recruitment and retention efforts.

The second half of the questionnaire at-

tempted to ascertain what course offerings were available as well as what sort of extracurricular activities students could participate in. These sections were separated for K-12 teachers and university faculty. Figure 5 shows the results for the K-12 level. Although the number of schools which offer advanced courses tapers off as one would expect, the number does not drop significantly until Level V and Advanced Placement (AP). Even the numbers for those levels remain quite large.

Again not surprisingly, the most popular of the extracurricular activities is foreign travel. However, with 2693 respondents, many of whom checked multiple activities, it is somewhat disheartening that barely half or less mention French Clubs, the *Société honoraire de français*, or the National French Contest as activities available at their school. All of these have been shown to help motivate students to undertake and continue the study of French.

At the post-secondary level, there were 661 respondents. Nearly all indicated that beginning and intermediate French courses were offered (see Figure 6). Over 80% said that their institutions had a major and minor in French. More than half men-

tioned the presence of courses on Francophone literature and culture, French Clubs or honorary societies, and study abroad programs, all important factors in recruiting and retaining students. The large number of respondents who also indicated business French courses and internship opportunities reflects an effort to make foreign language study relevant to students' needs and professional goals.

Conclusion

While many of the numbers and percentages mentioned above are encouraging, they also reveal several areas where French teachers need to remain vigilant: (1) to ensure that multiple languages are offered in schools and that students have adequate information and exposure to decide which language to choose; (2) to lobby for language requirements for all students at all levels while being careful to maintain the presence of multiple languages; and (3) to work to establish additional chapters of the *Société honoraire de français*, to achieve greater participation in the National French Contest, and to sponsor more student exchanges as a means to recruit and retain students. The close correlation between responses from AATF members at the K-12 and the post-secondary levels clearly demonstrates that we are working toward the same goal—promoting the study of French—using the same tools—wider course offerings, travel and exchanges, and clubs and honor societies. We need to continue to work together and to cooperate with our colleagues who teach other languages to ensure the future of French. Most importantly, however, these figures suggest that the situation of the study of French is perhaps not as dire as is often suggested.

Figure 5: K-12 Course Offerings and Activities

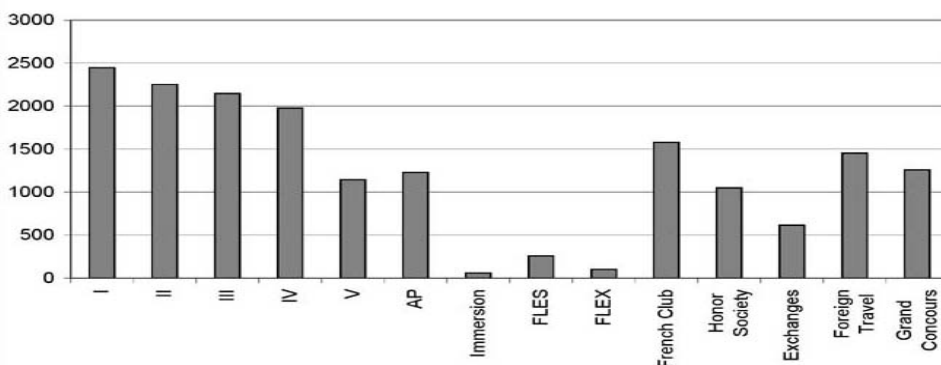


Figure 6: Post-Secondary Offerings and Activities

