

BACKGROUND

- The Center for World Languages and Cultures (CWLC) offers a three-term beginning sequence that fulfills DU's language requirement
- Daily contact, small classes, and a consistent cohort set these courses apart from most required courses
- The community this creates has not yet been systematically studied

10

languages

750-800

students per quarter

Top 3

most valued Common Curriculum component, 2018-2024 (Colby, 2025)

INITIAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1

Mindset

How do students' mindsets about language learning evolve across the first-year sequence?

2

Belonging

How do first-year language courses contribute to students' sense of belonging?

3

Well-being

How do first-year language courses contribute to students' well-being in the first year?

4

Persistence

Do first-year language courses motivate students to continue their college studies? (preliminary indicator)

HYPOTHESES

- On Day 1, students will mostly name linguistic and cultural skills, not transferable ones
- Mindsets toward language learning, often tied to a requirement at the start, will be more positive by the end of the sequence

PILOT: LANGUAGE LEARNING IS 4D LEARNING

A 2025-26 pilot led by Kate Rice (4D Teaching Faculty Fellow) connected first-year language courses to DU's 4D Experience.

Deepen Intellect

critical thinking, navigating ambiguity, problem-solving in a new language

Develop Well-Being

positive working relationships with classmates, a growth mindset

Discover Character

listening with empathy, considering intercultural perspectives

Design Careers and Lives of Purpose

knowledge integration, reflective practice, daily objectives

Phase 1: faculty teaching circle (Fall 2025)

- Faculty from four languages observed each other's classes using a 4D observation template
- All four dimensions were identifiable in daily instruction

Phase 2: student surveys (Winter 2026, n = 165)

128 of 165

students pointed to Deepen Intellect at Day 1, the most of any dimension

60%+

agreed that end-of-quarter reflection helped them recognize the value of language learning

74%

agreed or somewhat agreed the course helped them connect the 4D dimensions to their DU experience

What the pilot showed

Students filed most skills under Deepen Intellect, yet their written examples spanned all four dimensions. The link between skills and dimensions needs clearer scaffolding.

"I was encouraged to make mistakes and learn from them. I made plenty of mistakes, but over time it really helped me develop my language skills."
Russian student, Winter 2026

THIS YEAR'S STUDY: FALL 2026

Rationale for Blending Projects

- New Project: "From Required to Inspired: Why Language Learning Matters"
- Use this project as a program assessment, including 35 sections from 9 languages
- Underscore the alignment of first-year language instruction with the holistic vision of the DU 4D framework

DAY 1

Pre-survey, all 1001 sections

- Anonymous survey
- Open-ended and multiple-choice questions
- The survey does not categorize students by language

WEEK 2

Framing

- In-class presentation about transferable skills by instructor
- Presentation identities transferable skills as framed by the NACE report and the 4D Framework

WEEK 10

Exit survey

- Skills checklist and open-ended questions asking students to provide specific examples

NEXT STEPS

RESULTS

In compliance with IRB rules, access to data will only be available after final grades are officially released to students. Our expected timeline is:

- Winter quarter 27 : Data Analysis
- Spring quarter 27: Presentation of results to the FYLP faculty

YOUR TURN

Name three transferable skills you gained from learning a language

REFERENCES

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