Students’ and instructors’ perceived value of language and content curricular goals

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Abstract: Universities across the country are experiencing a decline in the number of undergraduates choosing to major in the humanities in general, and similar trends have been observed specifically in the study of foreign languages (FLs), cultures, and literatures. The educational and social psychological literature has explored uptake, or a student’s decision to enroll in a course, by evaluating how beliefs can guide both thoughts and actions (Jarvis, 2009; Omrod, 2011; Taylor & Mardsen, 2014). To explore this topic, undergraduates who were enrolled in FL courses and instructors teaching those courses were asked to rate the value of language and content-oriented goals to determine the learning outcomes that students valued and how they converged or diverged from instructors’ course goals. The findings reveal areas of alignment and misalignment in students’ and instructors’ perceptions of the value of particular learning outcomes. Compared to instructors, students more greatly valued learning about cultural practices, discourse competence, grammar, and interpretive communication skills. Students who were enrolled in and instructors who were teaching advanced courses valued different goals than did their counterparts in introductory courses. Implications for departments and educators are discussed.

Key words: content-related curriculum, evaluation of curriculum, perceptions, postsecondary

Introduction
Universities across the United States are experiencing a decline in the number of undergraduates choosing to major in the humanities, and the drop in enrollments has been attributed to a number of factors. For example, in an essay in the Chronicle

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Drakeman (2013) claimed that trends in humanities enrollments have been largely related to periods of economic growth and decline, with more students pursuing courses of study that they believe will offer increased career opportunities and advancement during difficult financial times. Drakeman stated, “[w]hen the Bears dominate Wall Street, there is an accompanying Bear market for the humanities” (p. 6). Economic competition, rising tuition and fees, and increasing levels of student debt may have also contributed to the belief that university study is a means of career preparation as opposed to a mechanism for educating the whole individual. Declines have also been attributed to decreased research funding: The overwhelming emphasis on government funding for science and engineering research and development has resulted in a steady decline since 2009 in financial support for humanities research; in 2013, the U.S. Senate passed an amendment limiting the use of funding from the National Science Foundation only to research that promoted national security or growth of the U.S. economy (Delany, 2013). Societal attitudes also have an impact on enrollments: A Florida task force recommended that students pursuing courses of study in nonstrategic disciplines, such as the liberal arts, pay higher tuition, and students’ perceptions that English has emerged as a “global language” within today’s society further exacerbate the problem.

In an article entitled “It’s the End of the Humanities as We Know It,” Greteman (2014) described two opposing camps of humanists: on the one hand, “out of touch traditionalists who refuse to adapt to a changing world” and on the other, those who are “chasing new trends and succumbing to the ‘language of salesmanship’ instead of defending the tradition” (n.p.). Scholars have proposed two approaches to dealing with the crisis. Some have advocated that we reassess and reinvigorate our mission and unify our message, while others have recommended that we actively and deliberately display the value and meaning of a humanities education to the appropriate stakeholders (Mulholland, 2010; Panza & Shur, 2014). In an interview in the New York Times, for example, an English professor stated that “the humanities raise issues about equity and well-being. They raise issues about the quality of life. These issues are at the heart of the sciences, social sciences, and business and technology” (Delany, 2013, n.p.). Among others, Leon Botstein, the president of Bard College, emphasized the intrinsic value and practical relevance of a humanities education—that is, helping one to understand what it means to be human, understanding the foundations of one’s own cultural heritage, challenging worldviews, and navigating the world around us—in his statement that “many do not understand that the study of the humanities offers skills that will help them sort out values, conflicting issues, and fundamental philosophical questions” (Lewin, 2013, p. A1).

Encouraged by Mulholland’s (2010) proposal that humanists stop mourning the crisis and actively answer the question of the role of the humanities in higher education through the use of data and metrics, the Arts and Humanities Division at Harvard University examined the teaching of the arts and humanities at Harvard College (Harvard University, 2013). Results of the report revealed that the percentage of students concentrating in the humanities was declining, corroborating nationwide data, and found that when students arrived at the university they showed interest in majors based on intellectual curiosity, high school experiences, and the opportunity to contribute positively to society. However, more than half of the incoming freshmen who intended to major in the humanities decided to pursue other areas of study during their freshman year and majored in a different division. Following this larger college- and nationwide trend, the number of majors in foreign languages (FLs) also declined.

Within the profession, a number of high-profile reports and position statements
have emphasized the value of FL/cultural/literature education and have offered recommendations for appropriate pathways to confront the language crisis. In 2004, the Modern Language Association (MLA) challenged a task force that included specialists in literature, comparative literature, linguistics, and second language acquisition and who had backgrounds in various FLs to examine the language crisis. Their report recommended that academic departments restructure the teaching and learning of FLs and cultures in a way that would allow Americans to more readily and effectively confront the complex political challenges in today’s world. The MLA’s 2007 report, entitled Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World, highlighted the challenges within the standard undergraduate FL curricula in the United States and addressed in particular the way in which the focus on “language” in lower-division courses and “content” in upper-division courses creates a two-tiered configuration that does not allow for a unified language-and-content curriculum across the 4 years of undergraduate study. To address these challenges, the MLA report recommended the creation of a more coherent 4-year curriculum in which “language, culture, and literature are taught as a continuous whole” (p. 3). According to the task force, the establishment of a unified language-and-content curriculum, as well as a stronger emphasis on interdisciplinary courses, multiple paths to the major (i.e., literature, cultural studies, linguistics, etc.), and the integration of language and content in course design at all levels could reinvigorate FL departments and further highlight the central value of FL study in undergraduate education.

In 2014, the ACTFL also produced a position statement that describes the central role of languages and cultures in today’s globalized world. It states:

The ability to communicate with respect and cultural understanding in more than one language is an essential element of global competence. This competence is developed and demonstrated by investigating the world, recognizing and weighing perspectives, acquiring and applying disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, communicating ideas, and taking action. (p. 1)

In this position statement, ACTFL (2014) provides a rationale and an imperative for learning languages and cultures with an emphasis on cultural perspectives, communication, and interdisciplinary knowledge. Although there are numerous pathways to global competence, the position statement proposes that instructors ground learning experiences in “languages and all subject areas from pre-kindergarten through post-secondary” (p. 2). The emphasis on language and interdisciplinary learning highlights both language and content-oriented goals.

Framed by conflicting beliefs about the value of the humanities and language learning, in light of nation- and college-wide declines in enrollment in the humanities in general and in FL learners and majors in particular, and in response to repeated calls for curricular change within the profession, this study aimed to determine the extent to which language and content-oriented learning outcomes were valued by students and how those goals converge or diverge from instructors’ stated course goals.

Literature Review

Language Learners’ Beliefs and Motivations

The educational and social psychological literature has explored learners’ motivation as a means of understanding declining enrollments. In particular, investigations into uptake, or a student’s decision to enroll in a course, have shed light on how beliefs guide both thoughts and actions (Jarvis, 2009; Omrod, 2011; Taylor & Mardsen, 2014). In an effort to explore uptake, or attitude-driven behaviors, some researchers have investigated self-determination theory, which focuses on individual agency and
the related concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the motivation to engage in an activity as a result of a personal interest, enjoyment, or inherent satisfaction received from that activity, whereas extrinsic motivation reflects the motivation to engage in an activity as a means to an end, such as a reward, praise, parental pressures, or career requirements (Schunk, Meece, & Pintrick, 2014). Self-determination refers to the use of one’s willingness to accept strengths and weaknesses, recognize the surrounding forces, make choices, and ultimately satisfy one’s needs and desires (Deci & Moller, 2005; Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2009). Because individuals derive more pleasure from the feelings of enjoyment that stem from choosing an activity voluntarily, research suggests that both intellectual challenge and choice, or in this context uptake, may be closely associated with intrinsic motivation (Katz & Assor, 2007).

Researchers have used the tenets of self-determination theory to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship among language learning, learner autonomy, and motivation (Benson, 2000; Ushioda, 1997). Busse (2013), in particular, conducted a longitudinal study that explored the motivational changes of first-year German students who were enrolled in universities in the United Kingdom and found that students’ intrinsic motivation to learn German was connected to the type of classroom tasks, the accompanying student engagement, and the level of challenge associated with these tasks. The study concluded that the appropriate level of intellectual challenge and genuine engagement with learning tasks was the “lynchpin of intrinsic motivation” (Busse, 2013, p. 965) and that language programs should accommodate student choice and agency so as to encourage persistence and uptake in language learning.

Dörnyei, Henry, and Muir (2016) claimed that vision can be a predictor of motivation, effort, and dedication to language learning. Vision involves mental imagery in which students imagine or simulate experiences. Examples could include students envisioning their future selves functioning as linguistically proficient and globally competent speakers in professional and real-world contexts. According to Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014), instructors can help students envision their future selves by incorporating activities that (1) create the vision, (2) strengthen the vision, (3) substantiate the vision, (4) transform the vision into action, (5) sustain the vision, and (6) counterbalance the vision.

Vision can also play an important role in what is known as a directed motivational current; that is, “a conceptual framework which depicts unique periods of intensive motivational involvement both in pursuit of and fueled by a highly valued goal/vision” (Dörnyei, Muir, & Ibrahim, 2014, p. 9). This framework suggests that surges of motivation energize students’ visions and help them move toward their ideal FL selves. Dörnyei et al. (2014) described the way in which these moments of intense motivation can inspire students to engage in long-term pursuits, such as FL learning. The directed motivational current framework draws from various mainstream motivation theories in psychology, including expectancy-value theory. According to expectancy-value theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), students are motivated when they expect to be successful and they value the content or subject matter. The “expectancy” of expectancy-value theory refers to expectancies for future success (i.e., how well will you do on your next French assignment?), whereas “value” refers to how important, interesting, and enjoyable an activity or academic subject is perceived to be. Students’ judgments of the degree to which the academic subject is important to their future achievement and career goals, their interest in learning about the subject, their enjoyment experienced when engaging with the content, and the perceived costs associated with learning the subject all contribute to their conceptualization of its value. Such value conceptualizations have been found
to be associated with academic performance, persistence, and choice (Britner & Pajares, 2001; Eccles, 2005; Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2007). Unsurprisingly, students are thus more apt to engage in activities in which they value the outcome and are less willing to engage in those activities in which the outcome is not valued (Pajares, 1996). Eccles (2005) suggested, therefore, that values may be important predictors of course enrollments, choice of college major and career fields, and long-term motivation for continued learning.

Researchers who study motivation in language learning have attributed uptake to a variety of sources. Taylor and Mardsen (2014) found that personal relevance, or the importance of FLs for one's own purposes, was the most important predictor of uptake in middle school students in the United Kingdom. Societal relevance, or the importance of FLs for others, was also positively correlated to personal relevance. Fisher (2001) found that students’ “enjoying learning” predicted choice in future FL courses, whereas Stables and Wikeley (1999) found that students’ perceived value of the FL learning process was largely connected to its perceived future career relevance. A suggested approach to increasing uptake among students is the consistent presentation of the value of FL learning from a variety of sources, such as university-level language ambassadors, who describe the benefits of language study to their peers (Fisher, 2001). Another recommendation includes the development of both cognitively and motivationally meaningful teaching materials that enable learners to appreciate the value of FL learning and its potential applications outside of the classroom (Brophy, 1999). Likewise, drawing from research in expectancy-value theory, Schunk et al. (2014) suggested that instructors may develop students’ positive values for an academic subject by offering rationales for assignments, discussing the importance and utility value of assigned work, modeling personal interest in the content, and providing opportunities for students to exercise control and choice while engaging in the learning process.

In an effort to explore postsecondary students’ beliefs, goals, and values, Magnan, Murphy, and Sahakyan (2014) conducted a large-scale study that assessed the extent to which undergraduate students’ desire to study a language was aligned with the five goal areas established by the ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language Learning (National Standards, 1996). The majority of the students responded affirmatively regarding the importance of the goals set out by the standards, with the learners placing the most value on the Communities and Communication goal areas and, although it was still valued, less value on the Cultures goal area. Students perceived social relationships and interactions with different groups of people, community involvement, travel, and language partners all as largely valuable. Important goals of language study also included an instrumental orientation, such as career advancement, opportunities to participate in internships, or the fulfillment of a language requirement.

Intersection Between Student and Instructor Beliefs

In the field of FL teaching, Borg (1998) has suggested that “the beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes that teachers hold about all aspects of their work have an impact on teachers’ instructional decisions” (p. 9). Instructors’ belief systems may thus substantially influence their pedagogical choices including their choice of curricula, materials, content, and instructional approaches. Learning about the intersection between student and instructor beliefs, therefore, may have important ramifications for instructional practices, whereas mismatches in expectations could result in student disillusionment (Brown, 2009). Schulz (1996) stated that “students whose instructional expectations are not met may consciously or subconsciously question the credibility of the teacher and/or the instructional approach . . . and such lack
of pedagogical face validity could affect learners’ motivation” (p. 349). Due to instructors’ profound influence on learner motivation, one could then conjecture that student beliefs about the effectiveness of curricular and pedagogical choices could influence students’ perceptions of the value of, and thus the level of intrinsic motivation associated with, the academic subject and ultimately their decision to pursue further studies in that discipline. Educators therefore need to understand the important interrelationship between beliefs and actions when making instructional and curricular decisions (Barclos, 2003). Brown (2009) suggested that transparent discussions of perceptions and goal expectations will allow students to feel that their beliefs are validated by instructors and will allow instructors to feel that students fully comprehend their goals and expectations. The implications of such transparency and dialogue could include increased satisfaction for both instructors and students.

If the overarching goals of FL, culture, and literature courses at all levels should be to achieve global competence; examine cultural artifacts; critically interpret language and discourse; develop insights into global, cross-cultural, and historical perspectives; and acquire strategies for effective communication, how then do the goals of our beginning, intermediate, and advanced courses align with the language-and-content curricular goals advocated by the ACTFL (2014) global competence position statement and the Modern Language Association (MLA, 2007) report? How do the goals of our courses align with the goals of our students, and how should we articulate or reevaluate our goals, construct our curricula, and evaluate our progress in order to build programs that encourage students to continue to study FL, culture, and literature? This study demonstrates one approach to learning about a program’s strengths and weaknesses, finding the intersection between students’ and instructors’ values and goals, and demonstrating a program’s value. By offering a statistical description of the “crisis,” this study aimed to highlight both the challenges of the current context as well as the opportunities to enact positive change. Given the impact that students’ perceptions of the value of learning goals have on their interest in the continued study of FLs, cultures, and literatures, this study investigated the following research questions:

1. Which language and content goals do students value?
2. Which language and content goals do instructors value?
3. Which factors moderate students’ and instructors’ values?

Methods
Participants and Institutional Context
All 993 students who were enrolled in undergraduate first-, second-, and third-year courses in the Romance Languages and Literatures (RLL) program were invited to participate in the study. Of these, 464 students (47%) agreed to participate. Students who completed the surveys described in “Procedures and Instrumentation” below in less than 5 minutes (48 participants), those who provided the same response to all the survey items (25 participants), or those who provided the same response to the last 30 items (14 participants) were removed from the data analysis, leaving 377 eligible survey respondents. Almost half of these participants (48%) were studying Spanish, 32% French, 10% Italian, 5% Portuguese, and 5% multiple other languages. Sixty percent were taking language courses as an elective option, while 40% were enrolled to meet a program requirement. Fifty-nine percent were female; 73% were freshmen or sophomores (43 and 30%, respectively) while 14 and 13% were juniors and seniors. Sixty percent of the participants were enrolled in first- and second-year courses (41 and 19%, respectively). These courses included substantive content related to language and culture through the exploration of various text types including art, film, media,
and literature. The remaining 40% of the students were enrolled in third-year, fourth-year, or content courses (18, 12, and 10%, respectively), which included topics associated with literature, film and society, performance and theater, seminars on specific content topics, or surveys or panoramas of periods and topics within a literary tradition. Approximately one third of the participants (30%) had declared majors in the social sciences, 28% in the sciences, 20% in humanities, and 3% in a foreign language. Two percent of the participants had not declared a major, and 17% did not provide a response to this question.

In the RLL program at this institution, courses in the first, second, and third year are coordinated by non-tenure-track faculty with doctoral degrees in applied linguistics, literature, and film and are taught largely by teaching assistants, course coordinators, and adjuncts. The upper-level content courses are taught by tenured or tenure-track faculty with doctoral degrees in literature, film, or related fields. All 120 RLL instructors received an e-mail invitation to participate in the study and 73, all of whom were teaching undergraduate courses in an RLL department, agreed to participate. No instructor participants were removed due to issues with the way in which they responded to the survey. The majority of instructors were female (57%), teaching assistants (74%), and taught first- or second-year courses (33 and 21%, respectively). Languages taught mirrored the courses in which student respondents were enrolled: 44% Spanish, 36% French, 14% Italian, and 7% Portuguese.

**Procedures and Instrumentation**

The two surveys were voluntary and were made available online for 4 weeks. As an incentive to students, a raffle gift certificate was offered to the university bookstore. The surveys were announced at the RLL department meeting, but a raffle incentive was not offered to the instructors. The surveys included three sections: (1) an informed consent form, (2) demographic questions, and (3) perceived-value items in a Likert-scale format where the students were asked to evaluate what they perceived as valuable in their study of FL, culture, and literature while the instructors were asked to evaluate what they perceived as valuable in their course goals.

Instructors were specifically asked to reflect on the goals of the courses that they were teaching at the time of the survey administration, making it possible to differentiate between what instructors personally valued and what they valued specifically within the courses they were assigned to teach.

All participants provided judgments using a five-point Likert-type scale: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). To measure the perceived value of language and content goals in the RLL department, a questionnaire measure used by Mills et al. (2007) was adapted. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of 63 learning goals, 25 pertaining to language and 38 pertaining to content. For the purposes of the current research study, language-oriented goals were aligned with the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication goals within the Communication standard of the ACTFL’s Standards for Foreign Language Learning (National Standards, 1996). Other items were not aligned with the standards but addressed discourse competence goals (strategic and sociolinguistic competence) and grammar goals. Content-oriented goals were divided into various subcategories including (cultural) perspectives, cultural practices, and cultural symbols or products. Although similar in name to the ACTFL’s Culture standard, the (cultural) perspectives category instead referred to the MLA report’s (2007) emphasis on metaphors and key terms that inform culture; major scientific and scholarly paradigms; the deconstruction of stereotypes; the understanding of cultural subsystems; and the promotion of social, historical, and political consciousness and understanding. The cultural practices category emphasized
the instruction of cultural practices, activities, and major competing traditions and the cultural products category highlighted the instruction of cultural symbols including historical figures, monuments, and literary and artistic canons. The categories of language and content were then applied to the development of the perceived-value survey. See Table 1 for the subscales and sample items by category and the IRIS database for the complete survey (https://www.iris-database.org/iris/app/home/detail?id=york%3a933159).

Face validity was established through the review of the instrument by the director of language programs; the chair of the RLL department; and a course head in Spanish, French, and Italian. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of the perceived value of language scales and the perceived value of content scales for this study were 0.96 and 0.95, respectively.

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<th>TABLE 1</th>
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<td>Perceived-Value Instrument: Sample Items</td>
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<td>Sample item</td>
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<td>Students: It is important for me to ... Instructors: It is an important course goal for students to ...</td>
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<td><strong>Perceived Value of Language Goals</strong></td>
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<td>Interpersonal communication</td>
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<td>Grammar</td>
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<td>Strategic and discourse competence</td>
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<td><strong>Perceived Value of Content Goals</strong></td>
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<td>(Cultural) perspective</td>
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<td>Cultural products</td>
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factor, subscale as a within-participants factor, and survey responses (coded 1–5, with 1 as “strongly disagree” and 5 as “strongly agree”) as the dependent variable. This ANOVA revealed a main effect of group, $F(1,448) = 14.2, p = 0.0002$, with students tending to value items more than instructors, as well as an interaction between group and subscale, $F(6.6,2940) = 16.5, p < 0.00001$, indicating that this group difference varied across subscales. To interpret the interaction effect, the subscale means for each group were plotted (see Figure 1) and $t$ tests were conducted for each subscale, using Holm’s sequentially rejected Bonferroni method (Holm, 1979) to control the family-wise error rate. Both students and instructors valued language-oriented goals more than content-oriented goals, and most valued interpersonal communication and grammar. They did not differ in their responses to five subscales: interpersonal communication, cultural perspectives, presentational communication (speaking), presentational communication (writing), and cultural symbols and products. They did differ, however, in their ratings of the five other subscales—cultural practices, discourse competence, interpretive communication (listening), interpretive communication (reading), and grammar. However, students valued these subscales more than instructors. These results are presented in Table 2.

For exploratory purposes, item-level results were examined to better understand these student-instructor differences. Significant differences with large effect sizes, after controlling for multiple comparisons using Holm’s (1979) method, were found for 20 of the 63 items shown. By convention, $d$ values of 0.2, 0.5, and 0.8 are interpreted as small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively. Of these 20 items, 19 showed greater student than instructor valuations. The seven items below showed medium to large effect sizes (Cohen’s $d > 0.54$), suggesting that
<table>
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<th>Variable Group</th>
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<td>Students</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.36</td>
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<td>Students</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.00006*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>&lt;0.00001*</td>
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<td>Students</td>
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<td>3.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.93</td>
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<td>0.37</td>
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<tr>
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<td>388</td>
<td>4.23</td>
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<td>0.46</td>
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<td>&lt;0.00001*</td>
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*Note: Asterisked p values indicate significantly different mean values for student and instructors; in the case of subscale comparisons, we adjusted our significance thresholds using Holm’s (1979) method. Positive mean differences and effect sizes indicate higher student than instructor valuation.*
there was a medium to large magnitude in the difference between students’ and instructors’ perceived value for these items. Some of these items included:

- follow the reporting of national and international televised news in the target language ($d = 1.09$);
- learn how to interpret practices, customs, and “intangibles” in the target culture’s business and professional world ($d = 1.20$);
- learn how to read and translate texts as they relate to my professional field of interest ($d = 1.21$);
- follow a lecture on a subject within my field of study ($d = 0.80$);
- read professional articles in the target language in my field of study ($d = 0.54$);
- learn about cultural practices such as eating and shopping customs, leisure activities, and national holidays ($d = 0.66$); and
- participate in target culture community organizations and interact with individuals from these communities within the area ($d = 0.94$).

Only one item was more highly valued by instructors than by students: to interpret various forms of visual media from the target culture (including paintings and photography). Table 3 includes the items with the highest and lowest means for students and instructors.

Factors Moderating Students’ and Instructors’ Values
To examine whether course level moderated respondents’ values, a 2 Course Level (lower, upper) $\times$ 10 Subscale ANOVA was conducted, with course level as a between-participants factor, subscale as a within-participants factor, and survey responses as the dependent variable. Course level was dichotomized into beginning/intermediate vs. advanced/content courses based on data from the registrar. For the sake of interpretability, separate ANOVAs were conducted for students and instructors after an initial analysis with group (student, instructor) included as a between-participants factor. This revealed a significant three-way interaction among group, course level, and subscale. For both ANOVAs, the main effect of course level and course level $\times$ subscale interaction were significant, $p < 0.05$, but varied considerably in size between the respondent groups. For students, the course level effect was more than five times larger than the course level $\times$ subscale interaction effect ($partial \eta^2 = 0.096$ and $0.018$, respectively). For all subscales, students in upper-level courses gave higher ratings than students in lower-level courses (mean difference = 0.36) with relatively little variation in this course level effect across subscales (SD of mean difference = 0.13). The largest effects of course level for students were for presentational communication (writing) and interpretive communication (reading), and the smallest effects were found for cultural practices and grammar. For instructors, however, the course level $\times$ subscale interaction effect was nearly three times larger than the course level effect ($partial \eta^2 = 0.160$ and 0.056, respectively). Instructors teaching lower-level courses valued two subscales (grammar and cultural practices) more than instructors in upper-level courses, and there was a relatively large variation in this course level effect across subscales (SD of mean difference = 0.45), more than three times larger than that for students. The topics that were most valued by upper-level instructors relative to lower-level instructors were presentational communication (writing) and interpretive communication (reading).

Discussion
Students’ emphasis on language-oriented goals in the current study corroborates data from Magnan et al.’s (2014) findings that learners placed the most value on the Communities and Communication goal areas and, although it was still valued, less value on the Cultures goal area. The
findings from both studies seem to suggest that FL learners may tend to place value on goals that emphasize an instrumental orientation toward language learning. Magnan et al.’s (2014) study supported this notion with their findings that undergraduates tended to learn languages for career advancement, internships, or the fulfillment of...
of a language requirement. In contrast, however, the findings from this study also revealed that students placed significantly more value on cultural practices and products than instructors valued in their course goals. Such findings indicate that students may believe that this body of knowledge will help them navigate cultural encounters across the globe. One could therefore speculate that students may attribute less value to culture and content overall, in comparison to language, because instructors are not reinforcing students’ values in the classroom. Nevertheless, students’ emphasis on communication and their comparative de-emphasis on content and cultural learning is surprising, since language proficiency alone may not lead to success in future career opportunities and advancement in today’s globalized and professional world.

Findings also revealed differences in the value that students in lower-level and upper-level courses placed on various skills and bodies of knowledge. Students in upper-level courses valued all language and content subscales more than did students in lower-level courses. The two goal areas with the largest magnitude of difference were presentational communication (writing) and interpretive communication (reading), with upper-level students valuing these goals more than did lower-level students. These results suggest the positive finding that students who elect to continue their studies at the upper levels possess values and goal orientations that are in alignment with the course content valued and targeted in the upper-level courses.

However, if departments wish to recruit more students into advanced-level courses, they may wish to consider the differing goal orientations and fields of interest of the students who are enrolled in lower-level courses. Recognition of students’ different profiles and their diverse goals in the study of FLs, cultures, and literatures may be a first step toward diversifying and realigning course offerings and increasing student uptake. In the current study, students valued goal items associated with their professional fields of interest, cultural practices, and community engagement while instructors reported that these goals were less valued in their courses. Since goals that are associated with professional fields of interest and community engagement were among instructors’ least valued, course designers should begin by reframing curricula, course offerings, and/or requirements for majors and minors to emphasize diverse cultural practices, create interdisciplinary connections, and interact more readily in the community. This reframing may take into consideration the value that students place on opportunities to make connections between their language/culture/literature courses and their targeted academic fields of study outside of the department as well as their desire for opportunities to interact and engage with professional communities and organizations.

Recalling that Taylor and Mardsen (2014) found that personal relevance, or the importance of FLs for one’s own purposes, was the most important predictor for middle school students, addressing the diversity of students’ goal orientations within university departments aligns well with the recommendation from the MLA (2007) report that called for multiple paths to the major and the establishment of “creative ways to cross disciplinary boundaries” (p. 3). By including multiple paths to the major such as literature, linguistics, and history as well as opportunities for interdisciplinary collaborations with other departments, increased numbers of students may begin to make the important interdisciplinary connections that lead them to recognize the essential value gained from language/literature/culture course content and its relationship to their professional future.

Note that these recommendations do not necessarily imply that departments adapt entirely to students’ needs, values, and expectations. Faculty possess a critical understanding of the field and comprehend the depth of knowledge, cultural understanding, and critical thinking skills that courses in language, culture, and literature
can afford students. In the face of societal attacks on the humanities and evolving societal attitudes that favor “usefulness” over knowledge in the popular press, the critical question is whether students are able to make these same connections independently and, as suggested by Botstein, see the intrinsic value of humanities courses and how these courses may offer tangible skills that allow them to navigate the world’s conflicting issues and challenging philosophical questions (Lewin, 2013) without thoughtful attention, direction, and guidance from faculty. To help bridge these connections, instructors may wish to explore the important interrelationship between beliefs and actions when making instructional and curricular decisions (Barcelos, 2003). For example, Schunk et al. (2014) suggested that faculty offer rationales for assignments, discuss the importance and utility value of assigned work, and provide opportunities for students to exercise choice while engaging in the learning process to foster students’ positive valuing of an academic subject. To this end, faculty may wish to frame course content within clearly defined goals and learning outcomes so that students may clearly see how the content, cultural understanding, and higher-order thinking skills gained from the course are critical to their professional and personal pursuits in today’s world.

Faculty should continue to develop students’ ability to question and challenge worldviews, sort out conflicting issues, and address fundamental questions within the humanities while at the same time emphasizing the importance and relevance of the course content to current and future global contexts. Brown (2009) suggested that transparent discussions of expectations and goals may allow faculty to feel that students fully comprehend the importance of the course goals as well as the more global value and meaning of a humanities education. Since perceived value is an important predictor of course enrollments, choice of college majors and career fields, and long-term motivation for continued learning (Eccles, 2005), critical reframing of and attention to students’ beliefs may be advantageous to the health and longevity of departments of FLs, cultures, and literatures. With a clear understanding of what students need, want, and expect out of their education, language educators may be better equipped to think critically about our curricula, actively display its value and meaning to students and other stakeholders, and ultimately confront the crisis.

The limitations of this study should be kept in mind when interpreting these results. The self-report instruments used in this study may not appropriately capture the entirety of participants’ perceptions and feelings. Moreover, participants may sometimes report what they believe is expected rather than their true beliefs. The assurance of anonymity in reporting aggregate data as well as the utilization of reliable empirical self-belief measurements, however, minimizes these issues. Furthermore, because the survey included 63 items and background questions, participants may have experienced survey fatigue, resulting in waning motivation to invest time in their responses in later sections of a survey. Future studies may also wish to include students in the validation of the instrument and to compare the beliefs of students who are enrolled in language/literature/culture courses to the beliefs of those students who intended to major in languages and literatures as incoming freshmen and later decided to major in a different division.

Conclusion
In conclusion, beliefs are closely linked to one’s identity and sense of self and can guide both thoughts and actions (Borg, 2001; Woods, 2003). Because beliefs may serve as a guide to behavior, students’ perspectives may be of critical importance in furthering an understanding of student uptake and enrollment. Because they often hold firm beliefs about their educational goals, undergraduate students are essential
stakeholders in the educational mission (Magnan et al., 2014) and students may have a tendency to pursue courses of study that they believe will offer increased career opportunities and advancement during challenging financial times. With rising tuition fees and student debt, it is critical that faculty, instructors, and curriculum and course coordinators emphasize the relevance of the humanities in the real world and that they lead students to recognize the essential value gained from course content and its relationship to their future, professional and personal needs, and expectations. This study posited that, once equipped with a clear understanding of what students need, want, and expect out of their education, program designers, coordinators, and instructors may be better equipped to think critically about curricula, actively display its value and meaning to students and other stakeholders, and ultimately confront the crisis.

Notes
1. To ensure that this sample was an accurate representation of the RLL student and instructor population, the respondents were compared to the full populations of data in the department. From the 993 enrolled students in the department, the response rate was 38%, including 35% of the male students and 40% of the female students. The response rate included 33% of the Spanish students, 46% of the French students, 54% of the Italian students, and 23% of the Portuguese students. Note also that 21% of the participants were nonnative speakers of English. At the university, international students generally constitute approximately 12% of the student population. From the 97 instructors teaching in the department, 75% responded to the survey. The response rate included 51% of the male and 61% of the female instructors as well as 64% of the Spanish instructors, 68% of the French instructors, 53% of the Italian instructors, and 42% of the Portuguese instructors. The response rates for instructors based on instructor status were 58% for teaching assistants and 51.4% for faculty.

2. Although we recognize that the goals advocated by the profession are the unification of language and content and that this division in the articulation of variables creates an artificial separation, the inclusion of both language and content-oriented goals in single survey items would create double-barreled questions. Double-barreled questions assess more than one construct in a single survey item and make it challenging to understand how the respondent weighs the various elements involved. The creation of separate variables allowed us to acquire a more nuanced understanding of both students’ and instructors’ perceived value of the profession’s language and content-oriented goals.

Acknowledgments
We express gratitude to our collaborators, Stacey Katz Bourns and Virginia Maurer, and to the Harvard Initiative for Learning and Teaching for their support of this project.

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Submitted June 14, 2017
Accepted September 29, 2017