



# **Analysis Report: Survey on the Needs of SHSU's Hispanic/Latinx Student Population**

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**Center for Multicultural and Rural Development**

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## Contributor Biographies



**Dr. Leif French** is Senior Associate Dean in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Director of the Center for Multicultural Rural Development at SHSU. He earned his MA and PhD in Psycholinguistics and Second Language Acquisition from Université Laval (Québec City, Canada). His research expertise includes bilingual and heritage language education, linguistic barriers to bilingual healthcare (French and Spanish), and the sociocultural effects of bilingualism. He has supervised bilingual teacher education and has consulted for the Québec and New Brunswick (Canada) Ministries of Education on the implementation of intensive ESL programs.



**Dr. Maria Hasler-Barker** is Interim Chair of the Department of World Languages and Cultures at SHSU. She earned her MA and PhD in Hispanic Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition from Indiana University. Her research expertise includes cross-cultural communication and linguistic politeness, interlanguage pragmatics, and language pedagogy. At SHSU, she has supervised Spanish teacher candidates and is responsible for World Languages teacher preparation program accreditation. Together with Montse Feu, she was Co-Director of the Spanish MA program.



**Dr. Tatiana Artamonova** is Assistant Professor of Spanish in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at SHSU. She earned both her MA in Applied Linguistics and MA in Bilingual Education from Texas Tech University and her PhD in Hispanic Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition from Purdue University. Her research expertise includes attitudes toward language learning, code-switching, and Spanish as a heritage language.



**Dr. Montse Feu** is Associate Professor of Hispanic Studies in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at SHSU. She earned her PhD in Hispanic Studies from the University of Houston with a certificate in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She earned graduate certificates from Cornell University's School of Criticism and from Universitat de Barcelona. Her research expertise includes Latino print culture and literature and Spanish as a heritage language. She is a board member of the Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Digital Collection and has actively participated in the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Conference. At SHSU Dr. Feu has organized numerous Hispanic Heritage Month events as chair of the Latinx Working Group of the CHSS Diversity and Inclusion Committee and advises or co-advises a variety of Hispanic and Latinx student organizations, including Ballet Folklórico, the Latinx Club, Latinx Graduate Student Organization, and SHSU's chapter of LULAC. She is advisor of the Latin American and Latinx Studies minor and the MA Spanish program.



Dr. Edna Velásquez is Assistant Professor of Spanish in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at SHSU. She earned her PhD in Spanish Linguistics from the University of Houston. Prior to earning her PhD, she was a bilingual education teacher with the Houston Independent School District. She has trained and supervised pre-service teachers in bilingual education, English as a Second Language, and Spanish language in school districts throughout Texas. Her research expertise includes Spanish as a heritage language and bilingual and heritage language education. As Co-Advisor of the SHSU Latinx Club, she coordinates events to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month with *Radio Universidad de Guadalajara*. She also serves as a workshop facilitator with TeCHS @ COERRLL (Texas Coalition for Heritage Spanish at the Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning). She supervises Spanish teacher certification at SHSU.

Matthew T. Roberts earned his BA in Psychology from Gonzaga University, studied in the Specialist in School Psychology MA Program at Sam Houston State University, and is currently a PhD student in School Psychology at the University of Utah. His research interests include behavioral intervention program development, transition services for adolescents with developmental disabilities, and remote delivery of services for marginalized groups. He has expertise in statistical analysis, psychometrics, and psychological assessment.

For their helpful insights during the conceptualization, development, and administration of the survey, we would like to give special thanks to Ms. Jeanine Bias, Interim Chief Diversity Office, Dr. Kenneth Hendrickson III, Dean of Graduate Studies, Ms. Tracy Richardson, Graduate Analyst, and Dr. Heather Thielemann, Senior Vice President for Strategic Enrollment and Innovation.

# Snapshot: SHSU's Hispanic/Latinx Students

**80%** are female

**18-24**

81% are aged 18-24

**2/3** live in Huntsville



80% have Mexican heritage

**1st**

71% are first-generation students



81% would like a HLX resource center, office, or division at SHSU

**≥ 90%**

- are proud of their language and cultural heritage
- want to see their culture represented on campus
- like hearing Spanish and think it's beautiful
- want to be bilingual
- want their children to speak Spanish



**≥ 91%** want to improve their Spanish vocabulary, speaking, and writing



## Introduction

### Our Purpose

The purpose of the CMRD Hispanic/Latinx (HLx) Survey and report is to deepen our understanding of the profile and needs of Sam Houston State University's (SHSU) unique HLx student population. Rather than extrapolating information about our HLx population from broader demographic data and trends in higher education, we have dedicated resources to collect a comprehensive and detailed survey corpus from nearly 700 SHSU undergraduate and graduate students who self-identify as HLx. The high participant response rate is indicative of this population's desire for their voices to be heard as a key constituency at SHSU. We are confident that our findings about students' backgrounds, experiences, and needs will be important to providing the best possible support and services to HLx students as this population continues to grow at SHSU.

The HLx population at SHSU has increased significantly, both in terms of individual students and in terms of the overall student population share. Since 2003, the number of HLx students has increased by 58.19% (from 3372 to 5,334 students). This growth has contributed to an important demographic shift at SHSU. In 2003, the HLx student population comprised just 18.24% of the campus population. This share of the population has increased by nearly 40% to comprise 25.53% of the total student population. By exceeding the federally-mandated 25% HLx population, SHSU is eligible for Hispanic-Serving Institution classification.

The data and analysis contained in this report are intended to provide campus decision-makers and community stakeholders with concrete information about the specific background and academic, cultural, and linguistic needs of SHSU's HLx student population. We believe that SHSU can use these findings as a powerful tool to welcome HLx students and their families into the diverse SHSU campus community, help HLx students to find the resources that they need as they pursue post-secondary education, and increase HLx students' ultimate attainment as Bearkat alumni.

### Survey Methodology

The survey was designed in the Center of Multicultural Rural Development by a team of applied linguistics researchers from the Department of World Languages and Cultures, including Dr. Tatiana Artamonova, Dr. Leif French, and Dr. Edna Velasquez. We capitalized on their research expertise to develop an in-depth survey using Qualtrics. Questions included multiple choice questions, Likert-scale ratings, and open-response questions. Distribution of the survey was approved by SHSU stakeholders in Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion, and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The survey was then distributed during January 2021 by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences through targeted messaging. The overall survey response rate was 23%, indicating high interest in the survey.

### Report Organization

This report is organized as follows. First, we define the HLx student population at SHSU through their demographic information, including gender, age, country of origin, academic classification, and area of study. Next, we describe how HLx students use Spanish (if at all) and their perceptions of their linguistic abilities. We then give an overview of the way students feel about their linguistic and cultural heritage. We share students' responses about their academic, cultural, and linguistic needs and interests. Finally, we make key recommendations based on the survey findings and in consultation with HLx students, faculty, and staff from across SHSU's campus.

\*Note: Some survey items allowed respondents to select or report more than one response. This increased the overall response count for each of these questions. These survey items are noted as allowing more than one response. Percentages are described in terms of the number of respondents who reported a given item rather than relative to total response count.

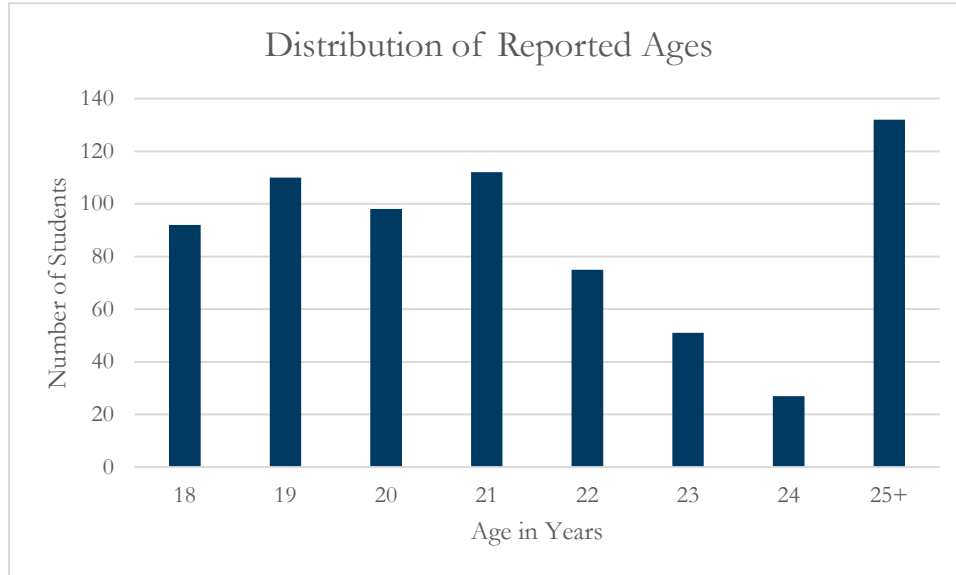
## Demographics

### Gender and Age

Six hundred and ninety-seven (697) HLx students, mostly female (79.77%) responded to the survey. The number of female respondents in our survey exceeded the data reported in the SHSU Factbook for Spring 2021. It is unclear why the survey response rate skewed to female participation, though there is some evidence that women may be more inclined to complete surveys (e.g., Smith, 2008<sup>1</sup>).

Gender	CMRD HLx Survey	SHSU Factbook – HLx
	<i>Number (%)</i>	<i>Number (%)</i>
Female	556 (79.77%)	3483 (68.09%)
Male	137 (19.66%)	1632 (31.91%)
Other	4 (0.57%)	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>5115</b>

A total of 81% of respondents reported ages between 18 and 24, while 19% reported that they were 25 years of age or older.



<sup>1</sup> Smith, G. (2008). Does gender influence online survey participation?: A record-linkage analysis of university faculty online survey response behavior. *ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 501717*.

## Familial Origins

All respondents reported at least one traditionally Spanish-speaking country of origin, including regions of what is now the United States. Ninety-one respondents (13.06%) reported more than one country of origin. A total of 562 respondents reported Mexico as one or more of their countries of origin (80.63%). This finding is of particular interest because it contrasts with frequent anecdotal reports that HLx students at SHSU most frequently trace their origins to Central America. In fact, only 15.20% of respondents (n=106) reported Central American origins, with El Salvador as the most frequently reported (n=56, 8.03%).

Country	Number (% of 697)
Mexico	562 (80.63%)
El Salvador	56 (8.03%)
Spain	30 (4.30%)
Honduras	23 (3.30%)
Puerto Rico	21 (3.01%)
Colombia	17 (2.44%)
Guatemala	16 (2.30%)
Cuba	11 (1.58%)
United States (Spanish-speaking)	10 (1.43%)
Venezuela	9 (1.29%)
Dominican Republic	8 (1.15%)
Ecuador	6 (0.86%)
Nicaragua	6 (0.86%)
Costa Rica	4 (0.57%)
Argentina	2 (0.29%)
Peru	2 (0.29%)
Bolivia	1 (0.14%)
Chile	1 (0.14%)
Panama	1 (0.14%)
<b>Total</b>	697

## Our HLx Sample as SHSU Students

The majority of survey respondents live on (n=189, 27.12%) or near campus (n=272, 39.02%) in Huntsville. Just over one third of the sample report that they live at home and commute to campus (n=92, 12.20%) or take exclusively online classes (n=144, 20.66%), which contrasts with anecdotal reports that HLx students more frequently live at home and commute. This information may be particularly helpful for stakeholders wishing to plan on-campus activities that target HLx community members. An important caveat is that our survey did not include questions about when and where respondents work, nor whether they remain in Huntsville on weekends.

SHSU is well known for attracting first-generation students, who currently make up more than 45% of the student body (<https://www.shsu.edu/students/firstgen/>). In Spring 2021, SHSU reported that 64% of all Hispanic students were first generation. Our survey sample reported an even higher rate of





first-generation status (n=496, 71.16%). Among survey respondents, as we will share below, there was high interest in first-generation resources specifically designed for HLx students.

The majority of respondents (n=389, 55.81%) reported upper-division classification, while just under one-third (n=207, 29.70%) reported lower-division classification. The remaining respondents (n=101, 14.49%) classified themselves as graduate students. The student classifications reported by our survey did not differ significantly from the data reported in the SHSU Factbook for Hispanic student enrollment in Spring 2021.

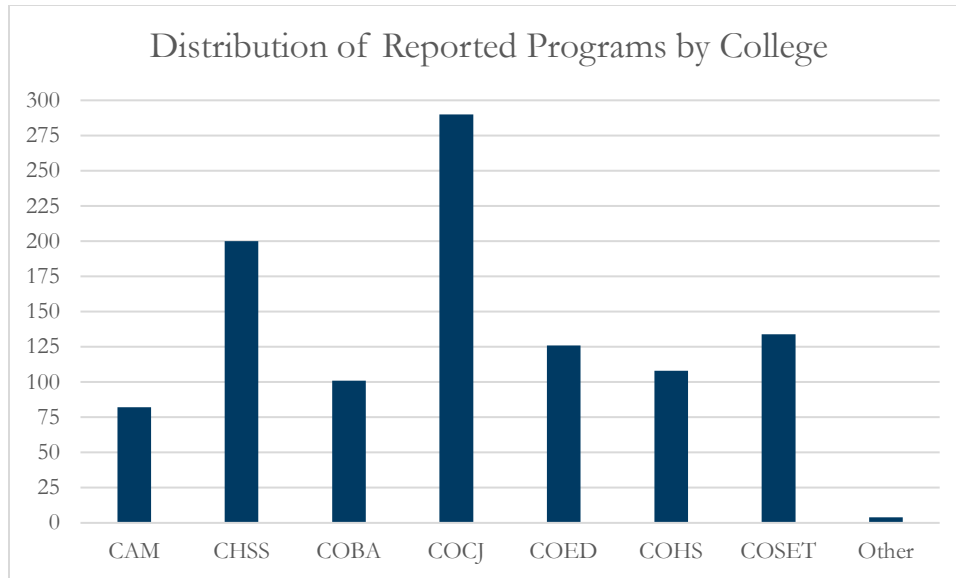
<b>Classification</b>	<b>CMRD HLx Survey</b>	<b>SHSU Factbook - HLx</b>
	<i>Number (%)</i>	<i>Number (%)</i>
Freshman	110 (15.78%)	596 (11.65%)
Sophomore	97 (13.92%)	897 (17.54%)
Junior	177 (25.39%)	1260 (24.63%)
Senior	212 (30.42%)	1622 (31.71%)
Graduate	101 (14.49%)	740 (14.47%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>5115</b>

### What are HLx students studying?

Respondents were asked to write the name(s) of their program of study. We then categorized these programs by College according to SHSU’s 2021-2022 Graduate and Undergraduate Catalogs.

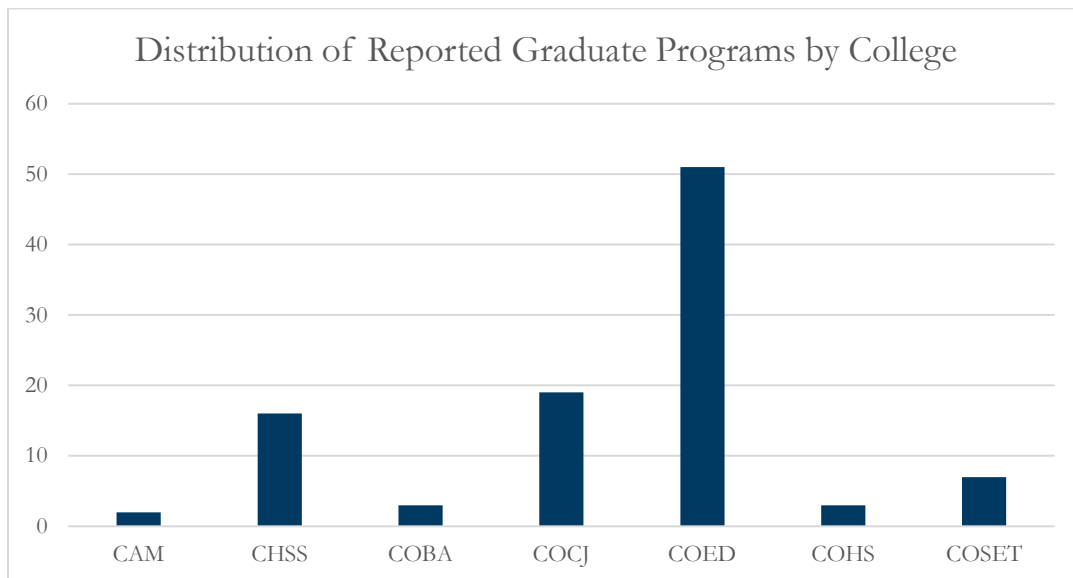
#### Overall Findings

Survey respondents reported more than 100 different degree programs, majors, minors, and concentrations. Overall, the most frequently reported colleges were Criminal Justice (n=290, 42.71%) and Humanities and Social Sciences (n=200, 29.46%). Survey respondents also reported degree programs in the College of Science and Engineering Technology (19.73%; n=134), the College of Education (18.56%; n=126), the College of Health Sciences (n=108, 15.91%), the College of Business Administration (15.91%, n=108), and the College of Arts and Media (12.08%, n=82). Four respondents (0.59%) reported other programs not administered by a college at SHSU (i.e., Equality and Diversity and Military Science).



### Graduate Degree Programs

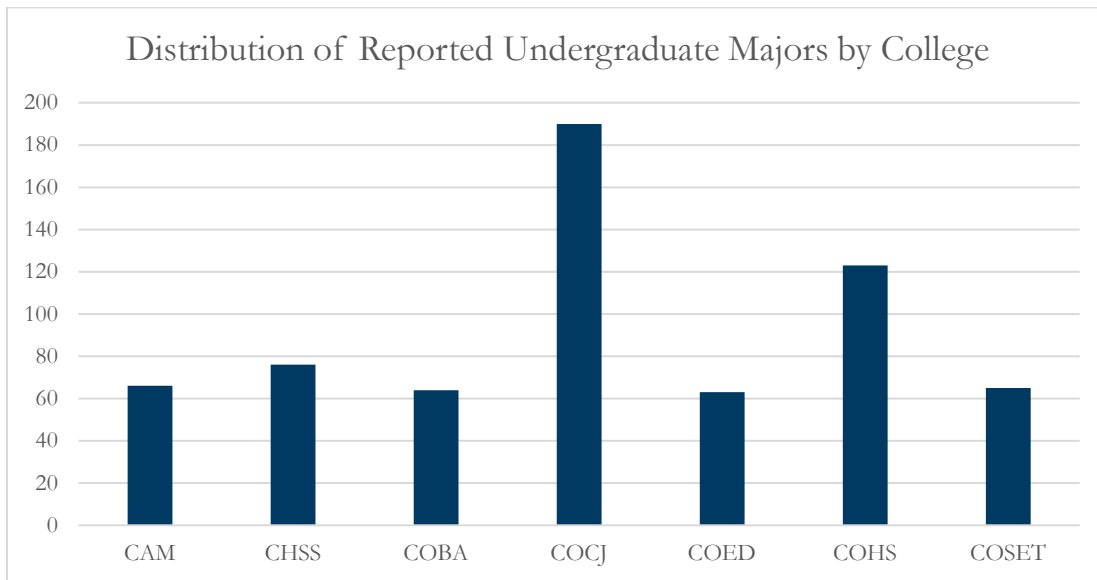
The graduate students (n=101) who completed the survey reported 35 different degree programs across all of SHSU’s seven colleges. They most frequently reported programs of study in the Colleges of Education (n=51, 50.50%), Criminal Justice (n=19; 18.81%), and Humanities and Social Sciences (n=16, 15.84%). This distribution differed slightly from that reported in the SHSU Fact Book for Spring 2021, where programs in the College of Business Administration had approximately the same level of enrollment as programs in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. It is unclear why the response rate from students enrolled in Business programs was lower than expected. In this section, we report only those graduate degree programs identified by 5 or more respondents; please contact the CMRD for more detailed information.



Of those respondents reporting graduate programs in the **College of Education**, 14 (13.86%) were studying in the Higher Education Administration program. Other frequently represented programs included Clinical Mental Health Counseling (5.94%, n=6), Instructional Systems Design and Technology (5.94%, n=6), Counselor Education (4.95%, n=5), and Educational Leadership (4.95%, n=5). More than half of graduate respondents reporting programs in the **College of Criminal Justice** indicated that they were studying in the Criminal Justice degree program (9.90%, n=10), with the remaining students reporting other programs. In the **College of Humanities and Social Sciences**, six respondents (5.94%) reported studying Clinical Psychology.

### Undergraduate Major Programs

Undergraduate respondents (n=596) reported 65 different major programs of study across the seven colleges at SHSU. Because some students reported multiple major programs, the numerical count of majors was 647. Percentages listed below are for the total number of survey respondents who identified as undergraduates (i.e., n=596). We are unable to compare reported majors from our survey with those in the SHSU Fact Book because the Fact Book reports only the first major for each student. In the interest of brevity, we limit our discussion in this section to degree programs reported by 10 or more students; please contact the CMRD for more detailed information.

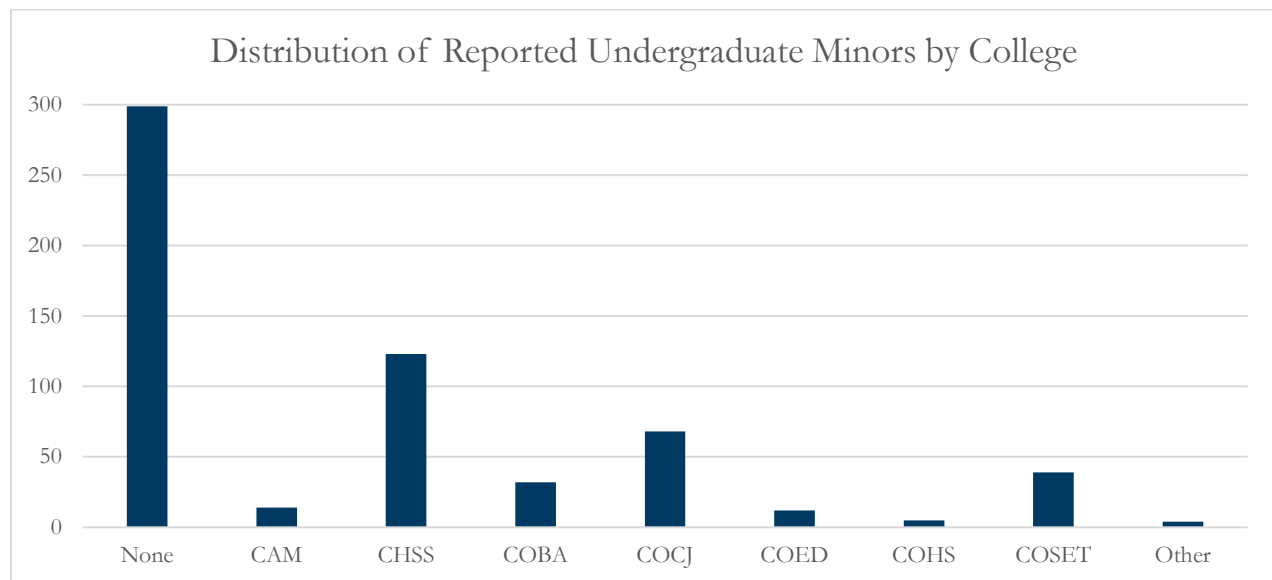


Of the undergraduate survey respondents, 190 (31.88%) reported major programs of study in the **College of Criminal Justice**. Of these, Criminal Justice (n=152, 25.50%) was by far the most-reported major, followed by Victim Studies (n=18, 3.02%) and Forensic Chemistry (n=13, 2.18%). A total of 123 (20.64%) respondents reported majors in the **College of Health Sciences**. Nursing (n=36, 6.04%) was the most frequently reported program, followed by Biomedical Science (n=24, 4.03%), Kinesiology (n=21, 3.52%), Public Health (n=19, 3.19%), and the Health Science major (n=12, 2.01%). Seventy-six respondents (12.75%) reported major programs of study in the **College of Humanities and Social Sciences**. Psychology (n=34, 5.70%) was the most frequently reported major, followed by Political Science (n=10, 1.68%). In the **College of Arts and Media** (n=66, 11.07%), the most frequently reported degree programs were in Mass Communication (n=15, 2.52%), Animation (n=14, 2.35%), and Music Education (n=11, 1.85%). Programs in the **College of Business Administration** were reported by 64 (10.74%) survey respondents. The most frequent majors were

Business Administration (n=17, 2.85%) and Accounting (n=10, 1.68%). The most reported degree programs in the **College of Education** (n=63, 10.57%) were focused on preparing pre-service teachers for Secondary (n=33, 5.54%) and Elementary (n=21, 3.52%) Education contexts. Finally, in the **College of Science and Engineering Technology** (n=65, 10.91%), the most frequently reported programs were Animal Science (n=20, 3.36%) and Biology (n=14, 2.35%).

### Undergraduate Minor Programs

SHSU does not require students studying in Bachelor of Science programs to choose a minor program of study; therefore, half of all undergraduate respondents reported that they were not pursuing a minor (n=299, 50.17%). SHSU’s Fact Book does not report on undergraduate minors; therefore, we cannot compare our findings to publicly available data. In this section, we present those minors that were reported by more than 10 students; please contact the CMRD for more detailed information.



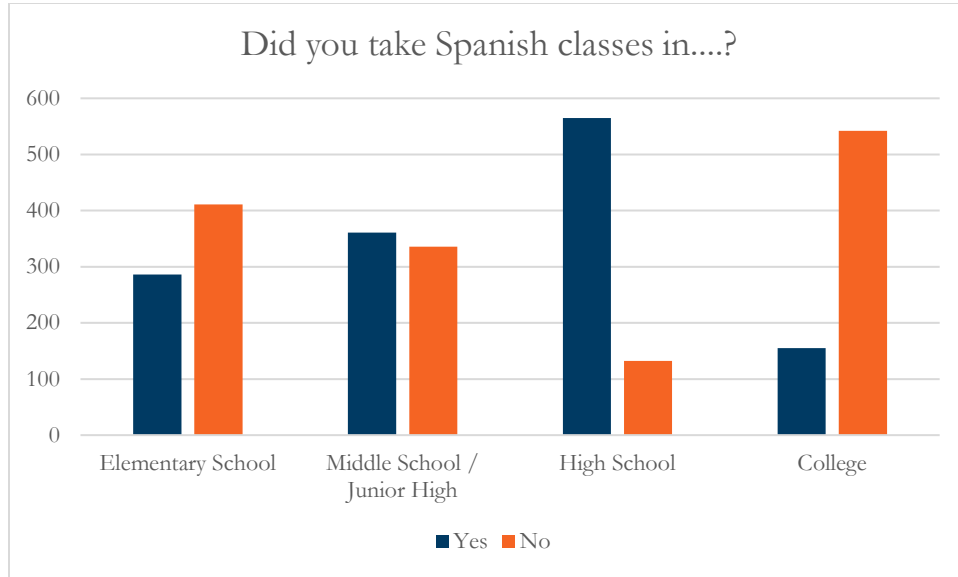
Of the students reporting a minor program of study, the largest college represented was the **College of Humanities and Social Sciences** (n=123, 20.64%). The most frequently reported programs in CHSS were Psychology (n=45, 7.55%), Spanish (n=30, 5.03%), and Legal Studies (n=13, 2.18%). Students also frequently reported minors in the **College of Criminal Justice** (n=68, 11.41%), including Forensic Science (n=31, 5.20%) and Criminal Justice (n=30, 5.03%). Only three additional minors at SHSU were reported by more than 10 students: Biology (n=15, 2.52%) in the **College of Science and Engineering Technology** (n=39, 6.54%), General Business (n=10, 1.68%) in the **College of Business Administration** (n=32, 5.37%), and Human Services (n=10, 1.68%) in the **College of Education** (n=12, 2.01%).

## Language Background and Perceptions of Current Language Use

### Language Background

In this survey sample (n=697), more than half of the respondents reported that they heard primarily Spanish at home (n=370, 53.08%). Nearly the entire sample reported having at least one Spanish-speaking relative (n=682, 97.85%). Only 11 survey respondents (1.58%) reported that they started

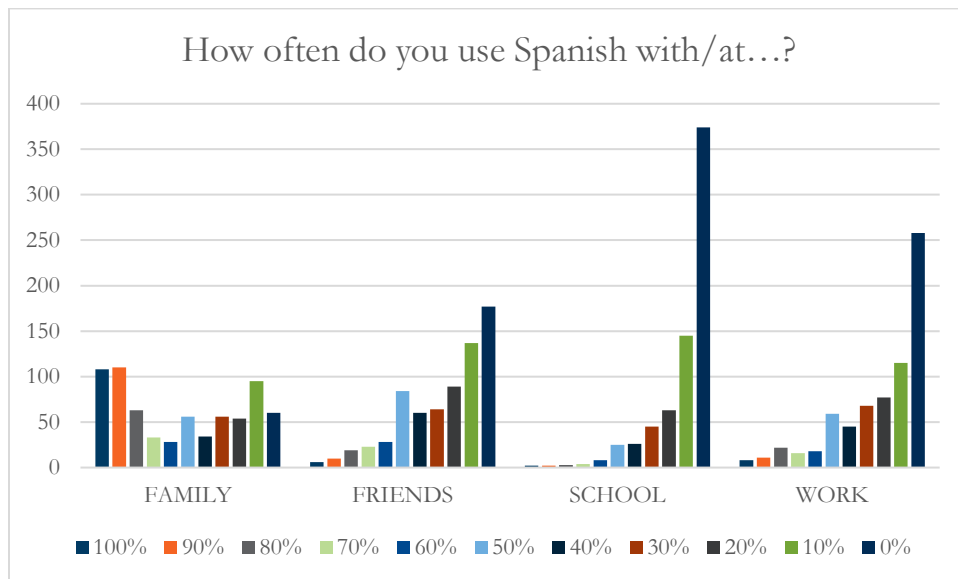
learning English after the age of 12, with most reporting that they began learning English before age 5 (n=522, 74.89%) or between the ages of 6 and 11 (n=164, 23.53%).



Interestingly, most survey respondents reported taking Spanish classes in High School (n=565, 81.06%). Only 155 respondents (22.24%) reported taking Spanish classes in college. The low percentage of students who report having taken college-level Spanish classes may be due to testing for credit programs (e.g., College Level Examination Program (CLEP)) and/or the number of students enrolled in programs that do not have a Texas state-mandated foreign language requirement (i.e., B.B.A. and B.S. programs).

### Current Language Use

Our survey asked respondents to estimate the percentage of time that they use Spanish with family, with friends, at school, and at work.



With family, responses were varied across the range of percentages. A cluster of 281 (40.31%) of respondents reported using Spanish 80% of the time or more with family. On the other hand, 155 respondents (22.24%) reporting using Spanish 10% of the time or less frequently with family. While this statistic may come as a surprise to non-experts in the field of language research, US bilinguals frequently report low usage rates for non-English languages at home. The numerous cultural, social, and political underpinnings of these well-established research findings are beyond the scope of this report (see Potowski, 2018<sup>2</sup> for extensive discussion about Spanish as a heritage language in the United States).

In non-familial contexts (i.e., with friends, at school, at work), respondents reported even less frequent use of Spanish. This is an unsurprising result for US Spanish bilinguals and is likely due to a number of factors, including a lack of Spanish speakers in some environments. However, for Spanish speakers in Texas, in particular, the effects of the sociopolitical climate in the US cannot be understated. In addition to the findings of this survey, there is a preponderance of evidence from numerous empirical studies, whisper networks of student experiences, and even survey preparers' experiences, that respondents may fear reprisal for using Spanish in public places, including on campus at SHSU (see Carter, 2018<sup>3</sup>, for a discussion about the effects of US language policy and politics on the use of Spanish).

We asked respondents to report how much time they spend reading and writing in Spanish during a typical week outside of any Spanish-language course content. The majority of respondents reported spending less than 30 minutes per week doing either activity.

	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>
	<i>Number (%)</i>	<i>Number (%)</i>
less than 30 mins	420 (60.26%)	482 (69.15%)
0.5-1hr	135 (19.37%)	117 (16.79%)
1-2hrs	85 (12.20%)	47 (6.74%)
2-3hrs	24 (3.44%)	22 (3.16%)
3+ hrs	33 (4.73%)	29 (4.16%)
<b>Total</b>	697	697

Respondents were asked to further specify what types of materials they read and write. More than three quarters of respondents reported reading social media in Spanish (n=544, 78.05%) with 216 respondents (n=30.99%) indicating that they read newspaper articles in Spanish. While more than half of the respondents reported that they write social media in Spanish (n=387, 55.52%), by far the most frequently reported writing activity was text messaging (n=567, 81.35%). More than two hundred respondents (n=205, 29.41%) also reported that they write emails in Spanish. Generally speaking, survey respondents reported that they mostly read and write informally in Spanish.

When considering the future utility of reading and writing skills, most respondents indicated that they think both skills will be important to their future. Respondents more frequently reported a level of certainty that reading in Spanish will be important in the future (n=564, 80.92%) than that writing in

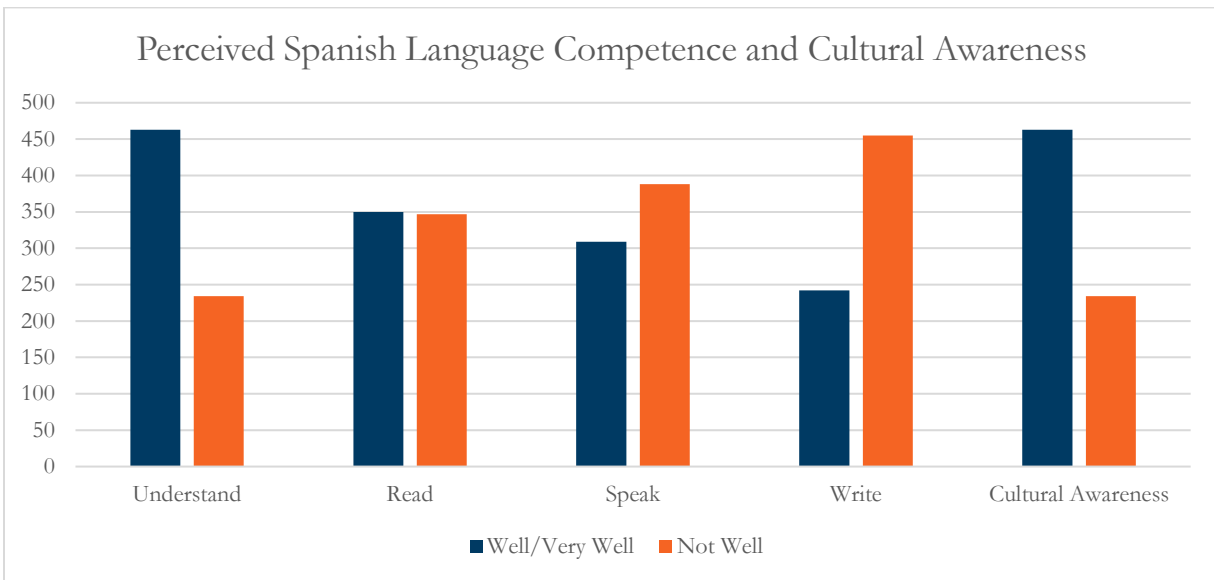
<sup>2</sup> Potowski, K. (Ed.). (2018). *The Routledge handbook of Spanish as a heritage language*. Routledge.

<sup>3</sup> Carter, P. M. (2018). Spanish in US language policy and politics. In Potowski, K. (Ed.) *The Routledge handbook of Spanish as a heritage language* (pp. 36-52). Routledge.

Spanish will be important in the future (n=534, 76.61%). This high level of confidence in the value of Spanish indicates that respondents are aware of the value of multilingual communicative skills in personal and professional contexts, but they are not engaging in these activities to develop these skills. This may be because of a lack of resources/opportunity, attitudes about Spanish language maintenance, motivational factors, or other unexplored psychosocial variables. Willingness and/or interest in engaging in Spanish language communication is an area that clearly merits further exploration in this population.

### Perceived Spanish Language Competence and Cultural Awareness

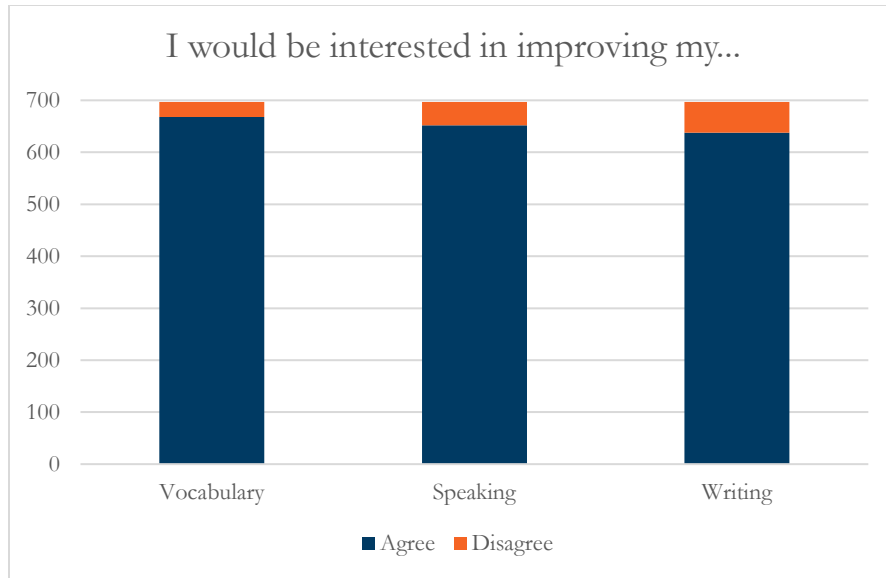
In the survey, respondents were asked to rate their competence in both receptive (i.e., understand, read) and productive (i.e., speak, write) language skills from 0 (Not well at all) to 6 (Very well).



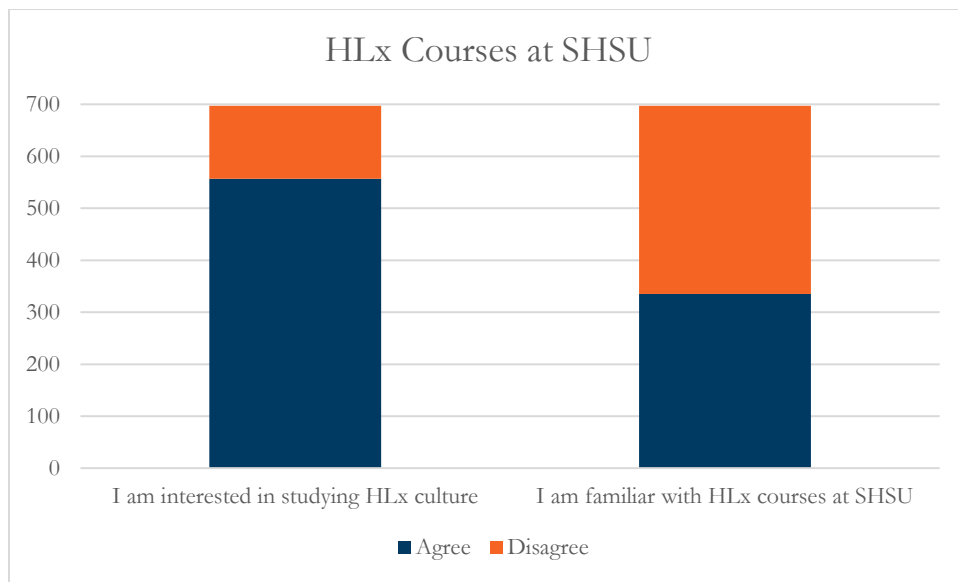
Respondents were more likely to rate themselves as Well or Very Well on receptive abilities (i.e., understand, read) than on productive language use (i.e., speak, write). Nearly two-thirds of the respondents self-rated as understanding Spanish well or very well (n=463, 66.43%) and more than half self-rated as reading Spanish well or very well (n=350, 50.22%). With respect to speaking and writing, we observed that only 44.33% (n=309) of respondents self-rated as well or very well for speaking and 34.72% (n=242) for writing. With respect to cultural awareness, respondents were more likely to rank themselves as familiar/very familiar (n=463, 66.43%) than unfamiliar (n=234, 33.57%). These survey responses are expected from bilingual Spanish speakers who likely have had little formal Spanish instruction, and starkly contrast with the unfounded stereotype that Hispanic heritage is equivalent to high levels of communicative competence in all aspects of Spanish.

### Academic Interest in Spanish Language and Culture

The apparent lack of confidence in productive Spanish language skills is reflected in the high level of interest that respondents have in developing those skills. This indicates a clear need for SHSU curricular initiatives to target skill development in these areas.



Most respondents indicated a strong degree of interest in improving their Spanish vocabulary knowledge (n=668, 95.84%), as well as their Spanish speaking (n=652, 93.54%) and Spanish writing (n=638, 91.54%) skills.



With respect to learning about HLx cultures in an academic context, more than three quarters of respondents indicated a degree of interest (n=557, 79.91%). However, when asked about familiarity with the Spanish and HLx courses already offered at SHSU, more than half of respondents indicated that they were uncertain about or unaware of such offerings (n=362, 51.94%), indicating a need for greater outreach efforts.

We explored student academic interest further by asking about HLx community-focused experiential learning opportunities in the region (e.g., in Huntsville, Conroe, and the Greater Houston Area). The response was quite positive, with more than three quarters of respondents indicating interest in service-learning courses (n=559, 80.20%) and internship work (n=547, 78.48%) that engages with the



HLx community. This type of programming would be ideal for providing opportunities for students to use Spanish while promoting SHSU's mission of service to the community.

## Relationship with HLx Identity and Spanish Language

Key to serving the needs of the HLx community at SHSU is understanding this population's relationship with their languages (i.e., Spanish and English) and cultural identities. As previously alluded to, Spanish language use in public can be fraught in the sociopolitical climate that surrounds the university. To that end, we designed a series of questions to explore survey respondents' opinions about Spanish and HLx cultures. We learned that, in spite of potential difficulties, respondents overwhelmingly revealed a positive outlook on their HLx identity and the Spanish language. However, they also responded in ways that may reflect underlying anxieties about their personal Spanish language use.

Nearly all respondents indicated agreement with the statements *I am proud of my language and cultural heritage* (n=675, 96.84%), *Spanish is a beautiful language* (n=683, 97.99%), and *I like hearing Spanish* (n=656, 94.12%). Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that they like the idea of being or becoming bilingual in English and Spanish (n=683, 97.99%) and that they would like potential future children to learn Spanish (n=672, 96.41%). In the same vein, respondents generally disagreed with the statement that *It is OK to give up (i.e., forget) Spanish in favor of English* (n=646, 92.68%).

While most respondents agreed with statements that made positive generalizations about Spanish (e.g., Spanish is a beautiful language) and with statements that were speculative in nature (e.g., I like the idea of being bilingual...), they were somewhat less positive when asked about their personal language use. When ranking the importance of English and Spanish, only 87.80% (n=612) agreed that *To me, Spanish is as important as English*. More than 15% of respondents (n=111, 15.93%) agreed with the statement *Speaking just English is enough for me*. Most telling was the high level of agreement with the statement *If I had a choice between using English and Spanish in a conversation, I would prefer English* (n=423, 60.69%).

This apparent disconnect between respondents' perceptions about the beauty and importance of Spanish and their preference for using English is an area that demands more in-depth exploration. Our survey respondents prefer to use English in conversations in spite of their feelings of pride in their heritage and language. This is likely due to multiple factors, including lack of confidence in their Spanish skills and fear of reprisal or negative judgement from other Spanish speakers and from non-Spanish speakers (Potowski, 2018<sup>4</sup>; Carter, 2018<sup>5</sup>). There is clearly a need for targeted diversity and inclusion work in this area. Many US Spanish speakers describe their language use as faulty in some way (Potowski, 2018), this sense of deficiency is often exacerbated as families persist in the monolingual English environment of the United States and can have long-lasting effects on ultimate attainment (Reagan & Osborn, 2020<sup>6</sup>). Therefore, it is essential to raise awareness of the extraordinary diversity of expression found across more than half a billion Spanish speakers worldwide. Giving HLx students low-stakes opportunities to practice Spanish and learn globally-useful language features could not only give them confidence in their abilities, but also increase their marketability in the workforce. To reduce the misinformed perceptions about multilingualism in a primarily monolingual community, it is important to increase non-Spanish speakers' consciousness about the personal and professional

<sup>4</sup> Potowski, K. (Ed.). (2018). *The Routledge handbook of Spanish as a heritage language*. Routledge.

<sup>5</sup> Carter, P. M. (2018). Spanish in US language policy and politics. In Potowski, K. (Ed.) *The Routledge handbook of Spanish as a heritage language* (pp. 36-52). Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> Reagan, T. G., & Osborn, T. A. (2020). *World language education as critical pedagogy: The promise of social justice*. Routledge.



benefits of language learning and the socioeconomic utility of being able to communicate in Spanish and English.

## Campus Resources, Organizations, and Events

We asked survey respondents to respond to a series of questions about HLx cultural representation on campus, including resources, student organizations, and events. Approximately 90% of all responders agreed with the statement *It is important to me that my culture is represented/supported in the Spanish classroom* (n=625, 89.67%) and with the statement *It is important to me that my culture is represented/supported campus-wide* (n=631, 90.53%). The majority of survey respondents (n=565, 81.06%) agreed that they would like SHSU to have an office, division, or center specifically dedicated to the needs of HLx students.

Nearly 40% of survey respondents (n=274, 39.31%) indicated that they were unaware of HLx student organizations and clubs at SHSU. Even more respondents (n=330, 47.35%) claimed that they were unaware of HLx events on campus. We then asked survey responders to share whether they thought that there are sufficient HLx organizations and events on campus. More than 75% indicated that there were insufficient HLx organizations (n=524, 75.18%) and events (n=549, 78.77%).

Finally, we asked respondents to share ideas for HLx events and organizations. Respondents shared dozens of ideas that we analyzed thematically. We describe our findings in greater detail in the following section.

The most frequently mentioned concept was that of increasing diversity. Suggestions for accomplishing this include diversifying the Spanish-speaking countries represented in on-campus events and organizations, raising the profile of indigenous cultures and their contributions to Hispanic cultures, and offering activities beyond the stereotypical *fiesta* focused on food, film, and dance. Multiple respondents sharply criticized past activities that have included cultural appropriation and/or have been Americanized (e.g., decontextualized *Día de Muertos* celebrations treated as a pan-Hispanic Halloween).

A number of responses mentioned educational activities, such as book clubs and author talks, to raise community awareness about HLx contributions to the global community. Interestingly, several students indicated interest in low-stakes opportunities to improve Spanish language communicative skills through reading and/or speaking. Survey respondents suggested mixers both within the HLx community and across cultural and other identity organizations. Many survey completers mentioned that they would simply like to connect with other members of the campus community who share HLx culture and heritage.

With respect to HLx organizations, respondents frequently suggested professionally-oriented networking and discipline-specific organizations (e.g., HLx Graduate Preparedness). They specifically indicated interest in an HLx First-Generation organization to help them and their parents to navigate college. Further suggestions included offering Spanish-speaking campus tours, orientation sessions, and even Family Weekend activities.



## Key Recommendations for SHSU's HLx Student Population and Community

- Help HLx students **feel psychologically safe in their HLx cultural identity and public Spanish language use** on SHSU's campus by creating bilingual signage, webpages, and parent/student resources.
- Launch an office, center, or division for **HLx affairs**, with a clear mission of supporting current and future student success; it is imperative that this office be staffed with experienced, bilingual professionals with culturally-relevant expertise.
- Centralize marketing and publicity of **HLx-related activities** at all levels (university, college, department, individual) to boost awareness and participation and to foster bottom-up initiatives. This should include all HLx-related events, course offerings, faculty and student research activity, publications, scholarships, etc.
- Increase awareness of **existing HLx resources**, organizations, and events through targeted outreach and greater visibility, including front-page, high-profile digital marketing.
- Improve targeted outreach to **current and future HLx students and parents**, such as Spanish-language advertising featuring academic success stories (see Lonestar College's recent efforts here: <https://www.lonestar.edu/spanish>).
- Target resources to **first-generation HLx college students**, including Spanish-language orientation events, financial aid information, and parent-specific communications.
- Diversify **professionally-oriented Spanish-language curricular offerings** and offer **low-stakes opportunities** for HLx students who wish to improve their Spanish-language communication skills.
- Foster **experiential and service-learning** opportunities in HLx communities in the region; it is imperative that experienced, bilingual professionals with culturally-relevant expertise play a role in developing these opportunities to increase the likelihood of successful collaborations.
- Create discipline-specific **organizations** and **networking** opportunities for HLx students.
- Offer **campus-wide and public education events** to raise awareness of and dialogue about topics such as the personal, professional, and socioeconomic benefits of multilingualism and multiculturalism and the essential contributions made by HLx people to the local community and throughout the region and throughout the world.
- Evaluate resources and events for **diverse representations of HLx peoples and cultures** that do not promote stereotypes.
- Provide **informal gathering** opportunities for HLx students and their families to share resources, discuss experiences, and develop a greater sense of community at SHSU.