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ABSTRACT

Fluctuations in interest and enrollment in the study of Latin in the United States have led many to believe that the language was in permanent decline. However, in the last decade the public has become more aware of the need for language instruction, and high school Latin enrollments have risen dramatically since 1976. There is a shortage of teachers. In general, growth in college Latin enrollments has not paralleled that in high schools, and teachers are not being trained to meet the demand. Some schools must choose between no Latin program and a mediocre program taught by an unqualified teacher. However, a new National Endowment for the Humanities program is devoted to training high school Latin teachers. Response has been encouraging. Greater attention must be given by college and university classicists to teacher preparation as part of their professional responsibility. A table of high school and college Latin and college Greek enrollments and related professional association memberships is appended. (MSE)

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6

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# The Study of Latin in American Schools: Success and Crisis<sup>1</sup>

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The University of Georgia, the nation's oldest state university, chartered in 1785, marked its 200th anniversary in 1985. From its beginnings, the University placed a high value upon the role of Classical Studies in the curriculum. The university's catalogue for 1843 listed the following tuition and admissions requirements:

For admission into the Freshman class, a candidate must have a correct knowledge of Cicero's orations, Virgil, John and the Acts in the Greek New Testament, Graeca Minora or Jacob's Greek Reader, English Grammar and Geography, and be well acquainted with Arithmetic. . . . Every candidate must be at least 14 years old. . . . The rate of Tuition, the Library Fee, and Servant's Hire, are \$38 per annum, payable half yearly in advance.

Today the prospect of every college freshman knowing Latin and Greek seems nearly as incredible as an annual tuition of \$38. In the nineteenth century, however, such admissions policies were typical of colleges across the country. During the late 1800s, in fact, both the number and the percentage of high school students enrolled in Latin rose dramatically; by the turn of the century more than 50 percent of our public secondary school

<sup>1</sup> This paper has been adapted and substantially updated, by permission of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), from LaFleur, Richard A. "1984: Latin in the United States Twenty Years After the Fall," *Foreign Language Annals*, 18 (1985), 341-47

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students were studying the language (about 263,000), and the actual number had increased to more than 899,000 by the mid-1930s.<sup>2</sup>

Fluctuations of interest and enrollments in Latin since that time, particularly over the past two decades, and some of the consequences of the ebb and flow, merit discussion at this time. Following a precipitous post-war decline to about 429,000 in 1948, secondary school enrollments climbed steadily through 1962, when there were 702,000 public high school students (grades 9-12) enrolled in Latin classes in this country (for these and other data cited in this paper, see the accompanying table). Then, of course, came the Decade of the Relevant, the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s. Johnny did "his own thing", and in the process forgot how to read and write; publishers revised college textbooks downward to a ninth-grade reading level; SAT scores dropped alarmingly. Public school Latin enrollments plummeted, falling 79 percent, from 702,000 in 1962 to a low of only 150,000 in 1976. While complete figures are not available for private schools, their experience seems to have been comparable, with an even more abrupt decline in parochial schools as a result of the deemphasis of Latin by the Catholic church. The number of Latin Achievement Test (AT) participants declined from 22,297 (1965) to 1,433 (1975), and Advanced Placement (AP) exam participants fell from 1,208 (1969) to about half that number in 1974. Membership in the National Junior Classical League (NJCL), the North American academic association for high school Latin students, sponsored by the American Classical League, (ACL), fell from about 107,000 in 1964 to less than 29,000 a decade later. College enrollments in ancient Greek (including both classical and koine) actually increased by more than 50 percent during the 1970s (partly, perhaps, as a result of the intense "social consciousness" of students of the period, to whom such characters as Socrates and Antigone were especially attractive), but college Latin dropped by over a third, from nearly 40,000 in 1965 to fewer than 25,000 in 1974, according to Modern Language Association figures provided on the accompanying table. Membership in the ACL-sponsored National Senior Classical League (NSCL), an organization for college Latin students, also declined during this period, as did membership in most national and regional Classics professional associations.

To many it appeared that Latin, so long a cornerstone of the curriculum, especially the college-preparatory curriculum, was destined to become indeed a "dead language." Foreign language study in general was,

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<sup>2</sup>The source for all public high school enrollment figures through 1978 cited in this study is Sandra B. Hammond and C. Edward Scebold, *Survey of Foreign Language Enrollments in Public Secondary Schools, Fall 1978* (New York, NY: ACTFL, 1980).

of course, one of a number of traditional academic areas weakened by educators and administrators of the period who demanded "relevancy" at every turn, challenged the concept of a core curriculum, and favored the cafeteria-line approach to high school and college graduation requirements. Latin, that most ancient of relics, was naturally the first to go.

Over the last decade, however, the American public has become increasingly aware of the error in much of the educational reform of the 1960s and increasingly distressed at its consequences. The response of the 1970s was a cry that arose in near unison from parents, businessmen, educators, and even many students themselves for a movement "Back to Basics." Though that cry was at times perhaps too impassioned, though "the basics" were sometimes too narrowly defined, American education has unquestionably benefited from this movement and from the reassessment of curricular emphasis that followed. In 1979 the public's attention was drawn most sharply to the deplorable state of foreign language study in this country and to the crucial need for its revitalization in all of our schools, from the elementary through the university level, by the report of President Carter's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies. The imperative for foreign language study, as a means of enhancing general linguistic and communications skills as well as international cultural awareness, has been emphatically reasserted in the recommendations of subsequent national education study groups, including the Reagan/Bell Commission on Excellence in Education and the College Board's Educational Equality Project.<sup>3</sup>

The classical languages, Latin in particular, have figured to one extent or another in virtually all of these discussions. Moreover, during the late 1970s and the early 1980s considerable public interest in Latin was generated for its usefulness in improving English vocabulary and reading comprehension, as demonstrated in several research studies conducted during the period and widely reported in nationally circulated newspapers and magazines as well as in the professional journals.<sup>4</sup>

By 1976 interest in the study of Latin had reached its nadir in this country. In 1978 public high school Latin enrollments increased, for the first time since 1962, to about 152,000. And by 1982—as all indicators had

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<sup>3</sup>Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, *Strength through Wisdom: A Critique of U.S. Capability* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1979); National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1983); Educational Equality Project, *Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do* (New York, NY: The College Board, 1983).

<sup>4</sup>LaFleur *op. cit.*, p. 344, n. 5.

suggested and survey figures released last year by the American Council on The Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) confirmed—high school Latin enrollments had risen dramatically, nearly 12 percent in fact, to approximately 170,000. This figure, it may be noted, represents an increase between 1978 and 1982 from 1.1 percent of total public secondary school enrollments to 1.3 percent; by contrast, modern foreign language enrollments in grades 9-12 were down about 10 percent, from approximately 3 million to approximately 2.7 million and from 21.9 percent of total public secondary school enrollments to 21.3 percent.<sup>5</sup>

There is good reason to suppose that the upward trend in Latin has continued since 1982, and that it could in fact continue for quite some time. Across the country there remains a strong interest in establishing new Latin programs and in revitalizing and expanding existing programs. New and livelier methods and materials for teaching Latin are being developed, including Longman's *Ecce Romani* series, the Cambridge Latin Course, and a variety of computer-assisted instruction packages, to mention only a few. NJCL memberships (which tend to parallel national enrollments), up by more than 25 percent from the 1977 low of 29,000 to about 37,000 in 1982, have in the last three years increased a full 30 percent to 48,350 in 1985. (The six states with over 2,000 members each, by the way, are all southern states: Florida leads the way, with about 6,200 JCL members, with Virginia a close second and Texas, Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina following). Participation in the College Board's AT and AP exams (though still lamentably low<sup>6</sup>) continues to increase, and the number of participants in the ACL's National Latin Exam has grown steadily from approximately 9,000 in 1978 when it was first instituted, to over 33,000 in 1982 and, by nearly 65 percent since then, to 53,505 in 1985.

Thus we have succeeded—all of us together—in reviving in our schools what was, after all, never really a dead language. The greatest problem we face in the 1980s, in fact, is that we have succeeded too well. As foreign language admissions requirements are being reinstated at colleges and universities around the nation, high schools are faced with the

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<sup>5</sup>For the latest ACTFL survey report, see "Foreign Language Enrollments in Public Secondary Schools, Fall 1982," *Foreign Language Annals*, 17 (1984), 611-23. A new report is expected to be published by ACTFL in 1986.

<sup>6</sup>Of the tens of thousands of high school Latin students in the ten southeastern states comprising the College Board's Southern Region (KY, VA, TN, NC, SC, MS, AL, GA, LA, FL), a total of only 701 took the Latin AT during 1984-85: in Virginia where about 15,000 students are enrolled in Latin, 393 took the exam; in Georgia, with an estimated 8,000 Latin students, only 38 sat for the exam. Source: The College Board, Admissions Testing Program, *College Bound Seniors, 1985 Southern, Virginia, and Georgia Reports*.

necessity—virtuous, but nonetheless difficult—or expanding existing language programs, or establishing new ones, and of finding the staff to direct them. An increasingly critical shortage of qualified foreign language teachers, not unlike the current shortage of science and mathematics teachers, is rapidly developing in many states.

In the case of Latin, with the number of students interested in the language steadily growing since the late 1970s, we have been faced with this shortage in virtually every area of the country for quite some time.<sup>7</sup> The growth in high school Latin enrollments has not been paralleled in our colleges. There are exceptions, of course: at the University of Georgia, Latin enrollments have tripled in the last few years, from about 250 to nearly 800, and some other institutions have enjoyed similar increases. Nationally, however, after a very modest 2.6 percent rise between 1977 and 1980, college Latin enrollments between 1980 and 1983 declined again by 3.2 percent, according to the latest Modern Language Association survey released in the summer of 1984, to 24,224, the lowest number in this generation (see table).<sup>8</sup> Though we do not have certain figures, all indicators (including a fall 1984 survey of U.S. Classics Departments conducted by ACL Placement Service Director Bob Wilhelm<sup>9</sup>) suggest that the number of Latin majors and minors, in decline during the late 1960s and the 1970s, has not increased significantly, if at all, during the first half of this decade, despite the growth of demand for secondary school Latin teachers. Certainly the reports of the ACL's Placement Service and of the several local and regional Latin teacher placement services, as well as correspondence with foreign language coordinators from across the country, continue to indicate that position openings markedly, and distressingly, outnumber available candidates: in 1983-84, the ACL Placement Service advertised 186 openings in 30 states, but registered only 69 candidates; in 1984-85 there were 85 candidates for 236 positions. In a survey of state foreign language coordinators conducted by the author in fall 1984, in

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<sup>7</sup>See esp. Gilbert Lawall, "Teacher Training and Teacher Placement: Responsibilities of the Colleges and Universities to the Schools," *The Classical World*, 72(1979):409-15; Edward Phinney, "The Critical Shortage of Qualified Latin Teachers," *Prospects*, 4(1981):1-2, rpt. in *The Classical Outlook*, 59(1981):10-11; Robert M. Wilhelm, "The Shortage of Latin Teachers: Fact or Fiction," *Classical Outlook*, 62(1985):105-10.

<sup>8</sup>For reports on the 1980 and 1983 MLA surveys, see Kurt E. Müller, "Foreign Language Enrollments in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education—Fall 1980," *ADFL Bulletin*, 13,ii(1981):31-34, and Richard I. Brod and Monica S. Devens, "Foreign Language Enrollments in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education—Fall 1983," *ADFL Bulletin*, 16,ii(1985):57-63.

<sup>9</sup>Wilhelm *op. cit.*

connection with the preparation of a grant proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a National Latin Institute, the twenty respondents unanimously affirmed the shortage of qualified Latin teachers in their states, in many instances terming the situation "severe," "critical," or "increasingly acute."

As a consequence of the lack of qualified teacher applicants, positions have often gone unfilled for a year, two years, or more, leaving an established program, and its students, in limbo; or enthusiastic plans for a new or expanded program have ultimately been abandoned. In other instances, persons unqualified, or at least seriously underqualified, have been hired or reassigned to make shift. The French teacher, or the English teacher, or the biology teacher, who, the ever-resourceful principal discovers, did study Latin—yes, indeed—for two years, in high school, twenty years ago, is appointed to the post, and presto, the school has a Latin program!

It is hard to judge which of these eventualities has the greatest negative effect. For the student, a mediocre program may be worse than none at all. Certainly for the teacher, bright but inadequately prepared in the subject area, teaching "out of field" can be painfully frustrating, embarrassing, and demoralizing. Nevertheless, an increasing number of Latin classes are being taught by persons lacking even minimal proficiency in the language and culture of ancient Rome, especially teachers who are reassigned by their principals to develop the new Latin courses necessitated by parent and even student demand. In his 1981 report on the critical shortage of qualified Latin teachers, Professor Edward Phinney of the University of Massachusetts described his experiences teaching a course in Latin pedagogy at Tufts University's New England Classical Institute and Workshop:

...nine of the twenty certified teachers enrolled had been recently reassigned by their school systems to teach Latin instead of English or a modern foreign language. Of these nine, none of whom was certified to teach Latin, five had not studied Latin in over a decade, two had studied it only a year or two, and two had not studied Latin *at all* (though they were scheduled to begin teaching Latin that September).<sup>10</sup>

That the situation Professor Phinney describes is not unique to New England, and that it has not improved but worsened since he wrote his report in 1981, is confirmed by the experiences and testimony of teachers and school and college personnel from around the country. It may be noted that the NEH-funded Westminster Latin Institute, an intensive program sponsored

<sup>10</sup>Phinney *op. cit.*, p.1

by Westminister College (New Wilmington, Pennsylvania) during the summers of 1984 and 1985 and designed to prepare underqualified Latin teachers for certification, attracted more than three hundred inquiries and eighty completed applications for the twenty positions available.<sup>11</sup>

Now the National Endowment for the Humanities has provided \$250,000 for another National Institute, this one jointly sponsored by the American Classical League and the University of Georgia and designed in particular for this ever-growing group of "hybrid" Latin teachers—teachers who are bright, able, and motivated, but who lack the background in the language and culture of the Romans necessary for the development of a full Latin program. The Institute consists of two intensive five-week sessions, to be held on the University of Georgia campus during the summers of 1986 (July 7-August 8) and 1987 (June 26-July 31), with a variety of continuation and follow-up activities scheduled for the 1986-87 and 1987-88 academic years while the participants are teaching in their home schools. Participants in the Institute will receive intensive instruction in the language, from the beginning into the advanced level, and in aspects of the civilization, history, and literature of the Romans centering on the theme, "From Republic to Empire." Eligible to apply are current teachers of Latin or prospective teachers with a firm, preferably contractual, commitment to teach Latin beginning in 1986 or 1987, who have some background in the language but lack certification in the subject.

Participants satisfactorily completing the program should have attained at least the minimum language proficiency necessary for teaching Latin 1-4 at the secondary level as well as a sophisticated understanding of the complex of ideas and issues involved in the collapse of the Roman Republic and the emergence of the Principate during the first century B.C., one of the most crucial periods in the history of Roman—and Western—civilization. In addition, through a series of lectures, workshops, and exhibits, as well as the actual use of texts suitable for application in the high school classroom, participants will become broadly familiar with methods and materials for teaching Latin in the schools. A very distinguished group of seventeen visiting faculty will play an important role in the Institute.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>A. Dwight Castro and J. Hilton Turner, "Responding to the Shortage of High School Latin Teachers" (paper presented at the ACL session held during the American Philological Association Annur' Meeting, Toronto, Canada, December 1984).

<sup>12</sup>The visiting faculty include Richard Beaton, Gerald R. Culley, John A. Dutra, Jane Hall, Judith P. Hallett, George W. Houston, Jared S. Klein, Bobby W. LaBouve, Gilbert W. Lawall, Agnes K. Michels, Mark P. O. Morford, M. Gwyn Morgan, Michael C. J. Putnam, Kenneth J. Reckford, Robert J. Rowland, Jr., Susan Schearer, and Judith Lynn Sebesta. The author of this article serves as Project Director; James C. Anderson, Jr., is Assistant Project Director; and Lynne Bell McClendon is the Project's Master Teacher.

Participants will earn thirty-five quarter-hours of non-resident credit from the University of Georgia, including thirty hours in Latin language and literature and five hours in Roman Civilization. Although certification requirements vary widely from state to state and many involve further work in the teaching field as well as in language education and other professional education courses, it is expected that certification boards in most states will offer significant credit toward certification for the work completed in the Institute (applicants have been advised to consult with their local certification officials). All tuition is waived; textbooks, room, board, and a generous transportation allowance are provided, as is a \$1,000 stipend for each of the two summer sessions.

Response to the Institute announcement, released in August, 1985, has already been considerable: as of late November 1985, hundreds of inquiries have been received and nearly 250 application packets have already been distributed. Only twenty-five participants can be selected for this Institute, however, and this will surely not be enough to alleviate the shortage [described herein] a shortage which—in direct proportion to the success of our efforts at promoting interest in the language over the past decade—is becoming ever more critical.

While the situation we are facing today has the potential to create enormous difficulties, it has at the same time produced enormously rich opportunities. The job market for prospective high school Latin teachers has been a "seller's market" for the past several years. And, as the nation's attention comes to focus ever more sharply on the crisis in American education, especially in secondary education, professional opportunities for Latin teachers should continue to improve. Society is becoming more and more appreciative of the need for academic excellence, and more and more willing to offer master teachers the respect, the improved working conditions, and the financial rewards they merit. We can now, in good conscience, earnestly exhort our students to consider Latin teaching as a profession.

The jobs are there, the conditions of the profession are improving; the students—Latin students—are motivated and disciplined above the average. It is among our foremost responsibilities today to recruit our high school and college students to the study of the classical languages, to encourage the best of them to major or minor (with a second major, preferably, in another area), and to urge them to consider the many rewards of the teaching profession.

College and university classicists in particular need to be more aware of the serious problems in secondary Latin teaching today, and to be more concerned about those problems. We need to regard teacher preparation as a part of our professional responsibility just as important as publishing and

teaching doctoral seminars. We need to become familiar with our state's certification requirements and assist students with meeting those requirements and with the placement process. We need to offer courses whose content and scheduling are appropriate to the needs of secondary school teachers, including evening and weekend workshops and summer institutes designed with the current or prospective Latin teacher in mind. We need to be vigorous in pursuing support from state and national agencies such as the state Humanities Councils, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education, as well as from private foundations interested in the improvement of secondary education.

The Imperative for these and other such efforts, on behalf of high school and college classicists alike, has not been greater, nor more urgent, nor more demonstrable, in this generation.

APPENDIX A  
LATIN ENROLLMENTS AND CLASSIC ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS  
1960-1985

	ENROLLMENTS			MEMBERSHIPS											PARTICIPANTS			
	H. S. Latin <sup>1</sup>	College Latin <sup>2</sup>	College Greek (Ancient) <sup>3</sup>	ANCL	NSCL	NCL	APA	CAWS Area	CAWS Total <sup>4</sup>	CAAS <sup>5</sup>	CAFW	CANE	AIA	CAC	National Latin Exam	Latin AI	Latin AP	National Greek Exam
1960	654,670	25,700 <sup>6</sup>	12,788 <sup>6</sup>					2197	4163			697	2746			18,068	208	
1961	695,297							2796	4577			930	3014			13,874	357	
1962	702,155						1568	2328	4696			933	3404			16,580	439	
1963	690,331						1645	2541	5077			679	3693			17,788	677	
1964	670,647			107,086		6752	1784	2591	5141			921	3868			20,244	862	
1965	691,665	39,600 <sup>7</sup>	19,500 <sup>7</sup>	101,810	213	6170	1855	2689	5184			934	4202			22,297	885	
1966					448	6064	2053	2736	5239			954	4520			20,670	984	
1967				98,201	694	5855	2175	2698	5117			973	5173			19,561	882	
1968	171,977	64,861	17,516	88,727		5812	2755	2768	5244			906	5996	560		18,462	971	
1969					786	5279	2468	2682	5205			904	6446	518		15,920	1208	
1970	265,293	27,597	16,697			4465	2598	206	4816			841	6253	582		12,777	1046	
1971					674	4118	2770	2608	4618			780	6867	580		7,460	975	
1972				39,772		3872	2765	2512	4489			730	6889	619		3,425	851	
1973				38,898		3444	2932	2211	3968			752	6695	676		4,731	705	
1974	187,165	24,167	24,391	32,918	618	3562	2861	1991	5524		127	724	6282	667		3,049	611	
1975				28,894		3469	2900	1916	3443		129	714	5752	547		1,433	624	
1976	150,478			30,532	612	2970	2928	1872	3535		125	651	6063	567		1,555	744	
1977		24,403	25,843	28,678	543	2814		2034	3357		132	641	6999	654		1,734	841	
1978	151,262			29,016		2777	2964	1754	3100		127	576	7601		9,000 <sup>8</sup>	1,725	880	
1979				31,162		2890	2855	1850	3071		125	616	7923	548	16,497	1,649	1016	
1980		25,635	27,111	32,056	600	2880	2847	1618	2915		141	606	8258	642	20,710	2,060	1127	
1981				33,974		3006	2912	1657	2881		170	645	9680	559	22,602	2,258	1261	310
1982	169,400			37,017	659	2995	3025	1575	2753		109	662	8981	557	33,336	2,587	1311	415
1983		24,224	19,740	40,578	641	2988	3025	1611	2757	643	107	712	8717	559	35,608	2,845	1529	597
1984				44,452	540	3061	3087	1651	2895	630	99	756	8645	548	46,565	2,695	1704	545
1985				48,350		3088		1813	2882						53,505	2,756	1929	610

<sup>1</sup>Source: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. <sup>2</sup>Source: Modern Language Association. <sup>3</sup>Includes only members in the thirty CAWS states and two Canadian provinces. <sup>4</sup>Includes, in addition to CAWS area members, subscribers in 53 from outside CAWS territory. <sup>5</sup>Figures before 1981 currently unavailable from CAWS headquarters. <sup>6</sup>Estimated. <sup>7</sup>Rounded to nearest hundred. <sup>8</sup>Approximate.

Data compiled by Richard A. LaFleur, University of Georgia, October 1985.