

WSSU one of 100 institutions to offer Swahili

Have you ever wanted to learn more about African languages? Seeking to fulfill your foreign language requirement? Consider Swahili elementary and intermediate level courses.



BRITTANI PARKER
REPORTER

According to the

Stanford University Web site www.stanford.edu, an estimated 100 institutions teach Swahili in the United States, and Winston-Salem State is the only school in the Triad offering courses in the native African language. Swahili was first offered in fall 2008 when Dr. Leonard Muaka came to WSSU, and the class enrollment has steadily been increasing.

Swahili is spoken in several East African countries including Kenya, Tanzania and Somalia. The elementary levels of Swahili introduce the basic level of language. In these courses, students read stories and sing songs in Swahili and are taught grammar and communicative skills by talking to native Swahili speakers.

Students who have never been exposed to the language or culture say that they appreciate the cultural exposure they are gaining by taking Swahili.

Paige Watts, sophomore, justice studies major from Rocky Mount took Elementary Swahili I last spring. Watts said she was interested in

"[In Swahili] We started off learning sentences, singing songs and watching TV clips," Watts said. "Within the first semester we were already having conversations and writing papers in Swahili."

Watts participated in out-of-class activities to enhance her learning and to practice the language. During a foreign

who was a native speaker," Fishe said.

"I added this [my proficiency in Swahili] to my resume because it will help me to stand out when I'm interviewing for jobs. I know Spanish is what makes the world go around, but everyone is learning to speak Spanish."

based on the Swahili culture.

"By taking this course you can expand your horizon," Muaka said. "Through this language one can see how Africans do things. Swahili serves as a window through which they [students] can see the continent of Africa."

Muaka said the biggest obstacle for students taking the course is not being able to practice Swahili outside of the classroom. However, there are numerous incentives to learning Swahili.

"Knowing the fundamentals of Swahili can assist you when applying for jobs," Muaka said. "It is a useful skill for the military, immigration offices for careers in the federal government, and when traveling abroad."

Muaka says students should study Swahili instead of other foreign languages so that they can be exposed to its diverse opportunities.

"Being fluent in Swahili is something that's special...or different," Muaka said.

"There are challenges when learning a foreign language, but the rewards are greater. Allow yourself to take the challenge of learning something unique."

Common Phrases	
Swahili translation	English translation
Jambo	Hello
Habari	How are you?
Kwaheri	Goodbye
Aşante	Thank you
Hakuna Matata	No worries
Kwanzaa	Beginning/first

learning Swahili because of her dream of studying abroad.

"I would like to study abroad in Kenya next summer," Watts said. "I knew that learning Swahili would enable me to communicate in Kenya."

Although Watts studied another foreign language in high school, she said it was completely different learning Swahili.

language informational meeting, Watts read a poem in Swahili.

Kenneth Fishe, senior, marketing major from Charlotte, is enrolled in Elementary Swahili I. Fishe said he took Swahili to learn about the African culture and because the course counted as an elective.

"I used Swahili at work [Best Buy] to have a basic conversation with a customer

"I don't want to be average. I want to be the needle in the haystack during an interview, by being the only person who can speak Swahili," Fishe said.

Most likely if you've seen the 1994 movie *The Lion King*, you are familiar with one popular Swahili phrase "Hakuna Matata," which means "no worries."

Kwanzaa, the African American annual holiday, is

Table by Brittani Parker

14 percent: Graduation rates at WSSU trail UNC-system average

Brittani Parker
REPORTER

Less than 50 percent of students attending colleges and universities in the UNC-system graduate "on time" in four years. In fact, the average four-year graduation rate for the UNC-system is 35 percent.

Winston-Salem State's four-year graduation rate is dramatically lower at 14 percent.

Some of the possible causes for the low graduation rates include advisement issues, lack of readiness for college-level courses, transfers, changing majors and financial obligations.

Provost Brenda Allen said the low graduation rate is attributed to various challenges.

"Some students are not as prepared when they come to college," Allen said. "Students start out taking developmental courses, which keeps them in school longer than four years."

She also said, "There is a lot of structure at larger institutions. They have more resources [than WSSU] so that students don't have to work while in school."

Allen said that she will research curricula which have "impossible obstacles" and extensive paradigms such as extra courses.

Allen said the University must start working with students in their first semester to ensure that they are developing skills to be successful in their major.

"Whether it is academically or financially, there has to be a better way to support them."

Dr. Jackie Booker, professor of history said the reasons for the low graduation rate can be attributed to students not being prepared to do university-level work, and students who work and go to school.

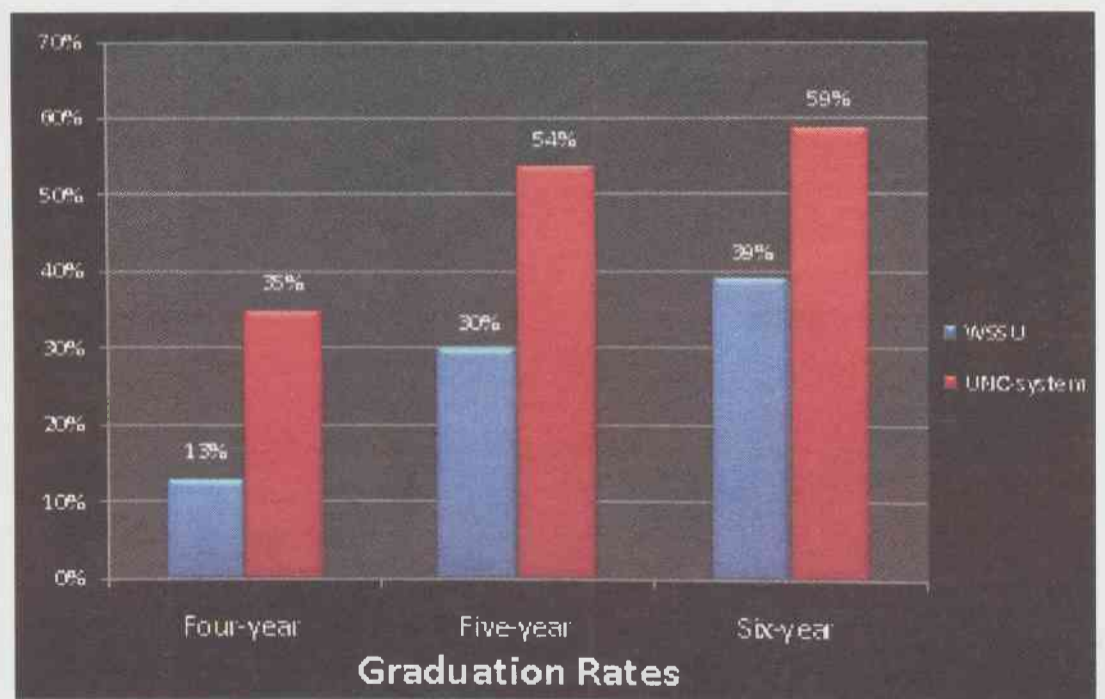
"Since academic standards are going up, students coming in who are less prepared must find some way to catch up," Booker said.

Booker said he thinks an advisement center would help improve the graduation rate.

"This [an advisement center] would be one place where students could go to get expert advice in their major," Booker said. "The advisers would be trained to give advice on every major."

He also suggested that academic departments focus on the five designated general skills: reading with comprehension, writing, analysis, synthesis, research, and problem-solving.

"We should incorporate more assignments that include



these skills," Booker said. "I believe if faculty did this, we would see improvements."

Booker said, "Overall, we have to do a better job of educating and graduating our young people. It should be a collective effort. The burden must be shared by everyone, rather than falling on just one group."

Students offer various reasons for not graduating on time.

Charlie Butler, senior, marketing major from Charlotte, is graduating this month, one

semester late.

"It was my fault," Butler said.

"My freshman year, I picked a major based on the average salary of that field. I think students would do better if they didn't have to select a major in their freshman year."

Satira Holiday, elementary education major from Philadelphia, is a junior who knows she will not be able to graduate on time.

Holiday said because of budget cuts, the education department is unable to offer

enough classes, so many students are placed on waiting lists.

"The problem could be solved by offering more online courses," Holiday said.

Chad Smith, senior, exercise science major from Rocky Mount will not graduate in four years because he transferred from NC A&T.

"I had 66 credits when I transferred, however, WSSU only accepted 32 of them," Smith said.

Table by Brittani Parker