



DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS

Why Study Linguistics at Western



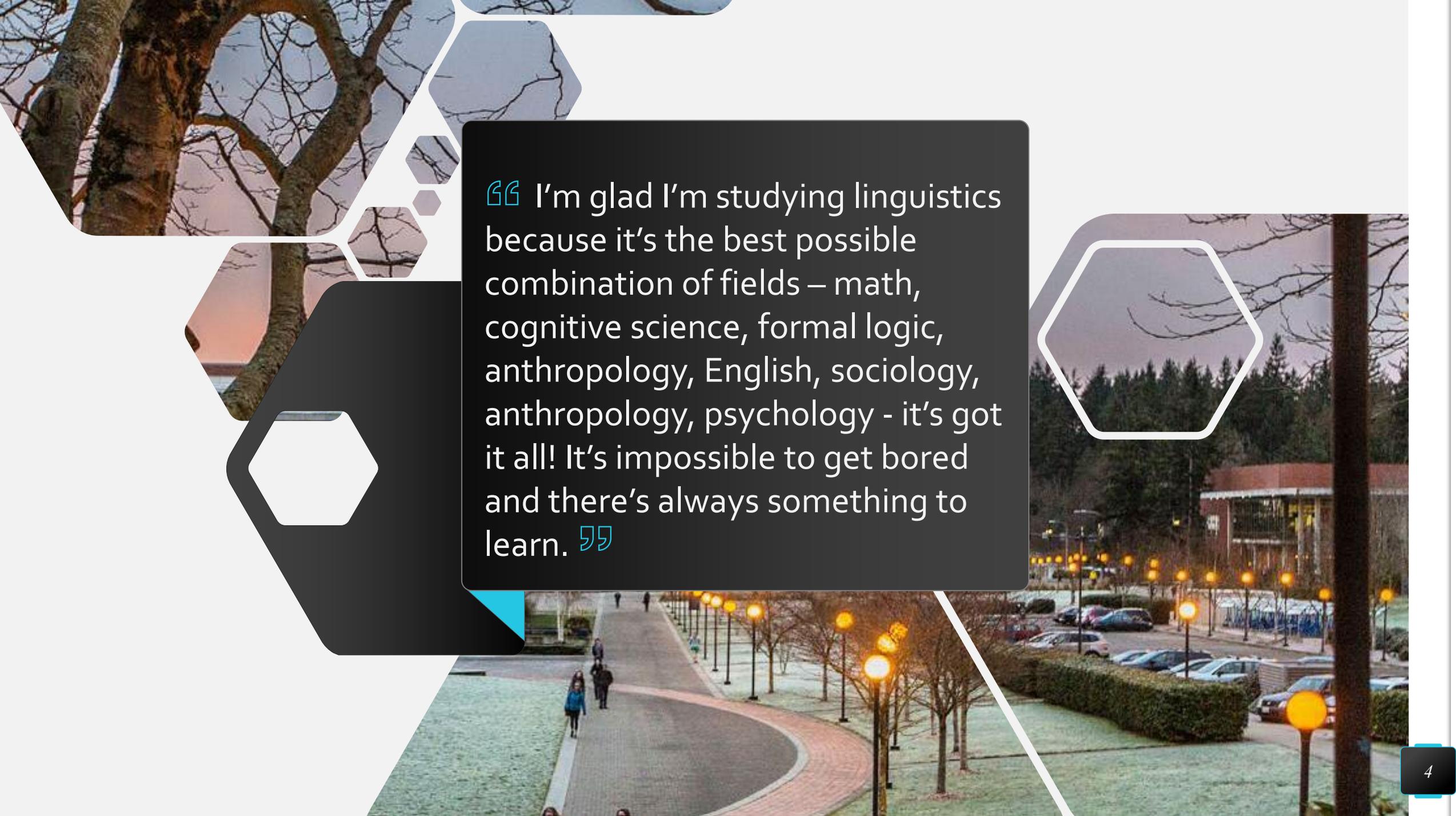


“ I’m so glad I’m studying linguistics! It’s a unique major that combines aspects of different social sciences and humanities. It’s really helped me to appreciate interdisciplinary perspectives, to be a good humanist, and to think scientifically. ”

Those who study linguistics acquire valuable intellectual skills, such as:

- analytical reasoning,
- critical thinking,
- argumentation, and
- clarity of expression.





“ I’m glad I’m studying linguistics because it’s the best possible combination of fields – math, cognitive science, formal logic, anthropology, English, sociology, anthropology, psychology - it’s got it all! It’s impossible to get bored and there’s always something to learn. ”

Linguistics students can

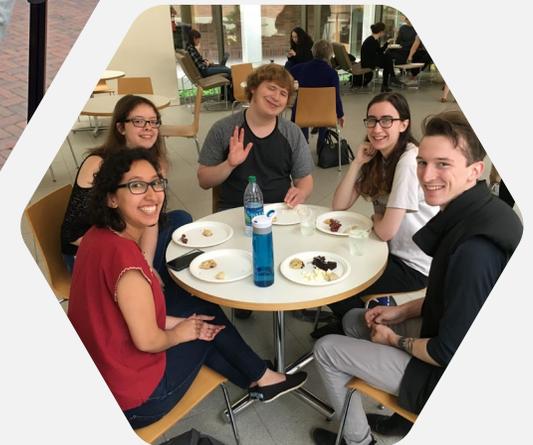
- make insightful observations,
- formulate clear and testable hypotheses, generate predictions,
- make arguments and draw conclusions,
- communicate findings to a wider community.



Linguistics is the absolute best major

A survey conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities in 2013 found that:

- 9 in 10 employers say it is important that those they hire demonstrate ethical judgment and integrity; intercultural skills; and the capacity for continued new learning.
- More than 3 in 4 employers say they want colleges to place more emphasis on helping students develop five key learning outcomes, including: critical thinking, complex problem-solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge in real-world settings.



Employers want you – but they might not know that

Employers endorse educational practices as potentially helpful in preparing college students for workplace success. These include practices that require students to

- a) conduct research and use evidence-based analysis;
- b) gain in-depth knowledge in the major and analytic, problem solving, and communication skills; and
- c) apply their learning in real-world settings.

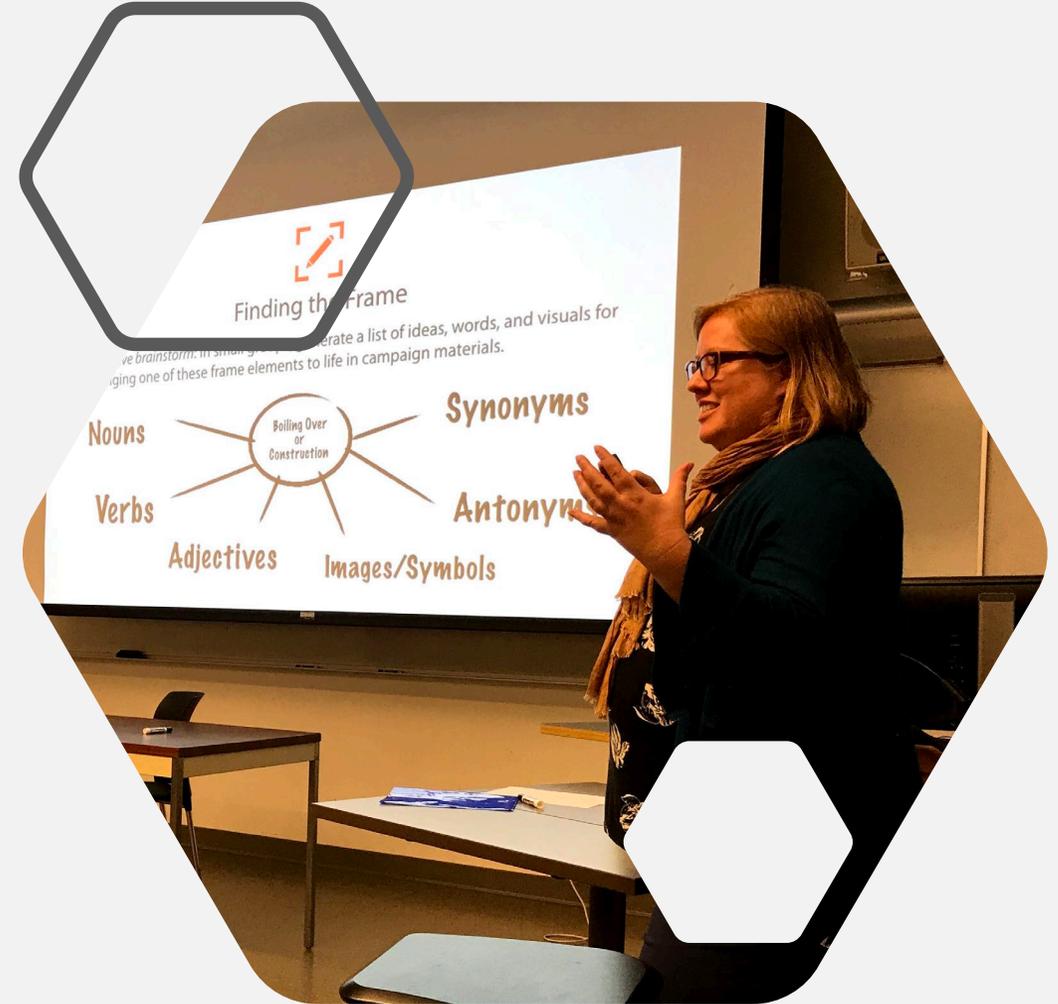


Figure 13: Trends in Growth in Linguistic Degrees 1967-2017

Source: ED Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS)

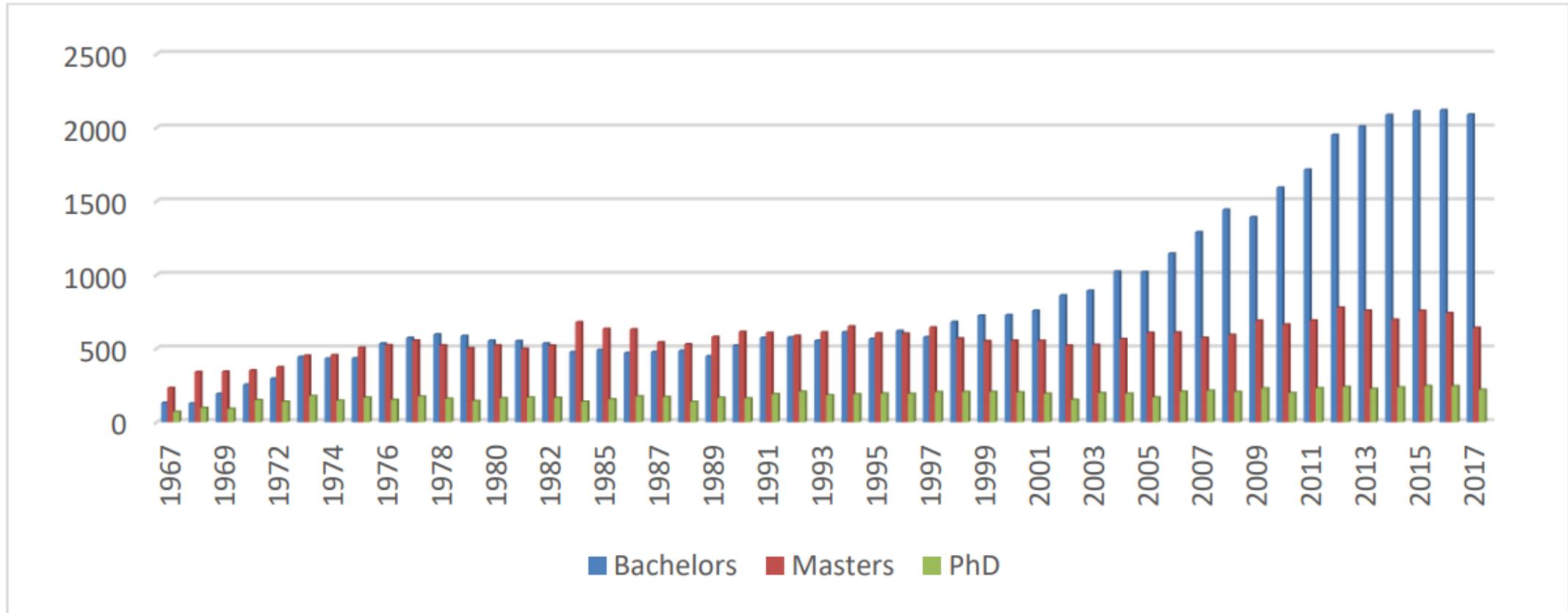
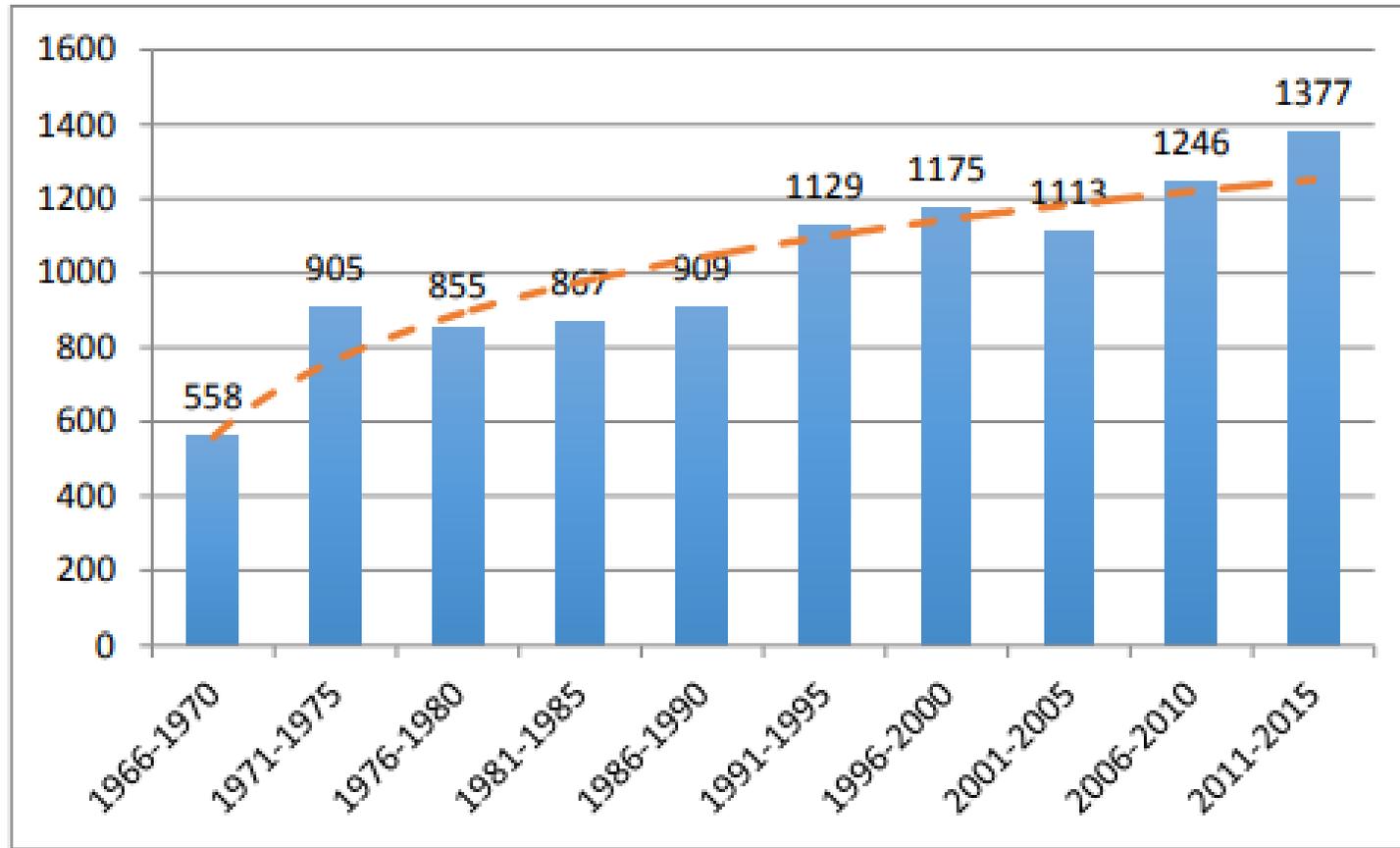


FIGURE 10A: TOTAL LINGUISTICS DOCTORATES AWARDED: ACROSS 5-YEAR SPANS 1960-2015

Source: Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2015



Careers in Education

- *Linguistics Professor at a College or University*
- *K12 education*
- *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)*

“ I'm studying to be an elementary school teacher, and after taking education classes, I still had a lot of lingering questions about how to actually teach the nuts and bolts about language and to promote diversity in my classroom. So I decided to add linguistics as a second major since I realized that all that information would be immensely useful for me in my teaching career. I strongly believe that linguistics strengthens my foundation as a teacher - and it's fascinating! I think that all teachers of all subjects should study linguistics. ”

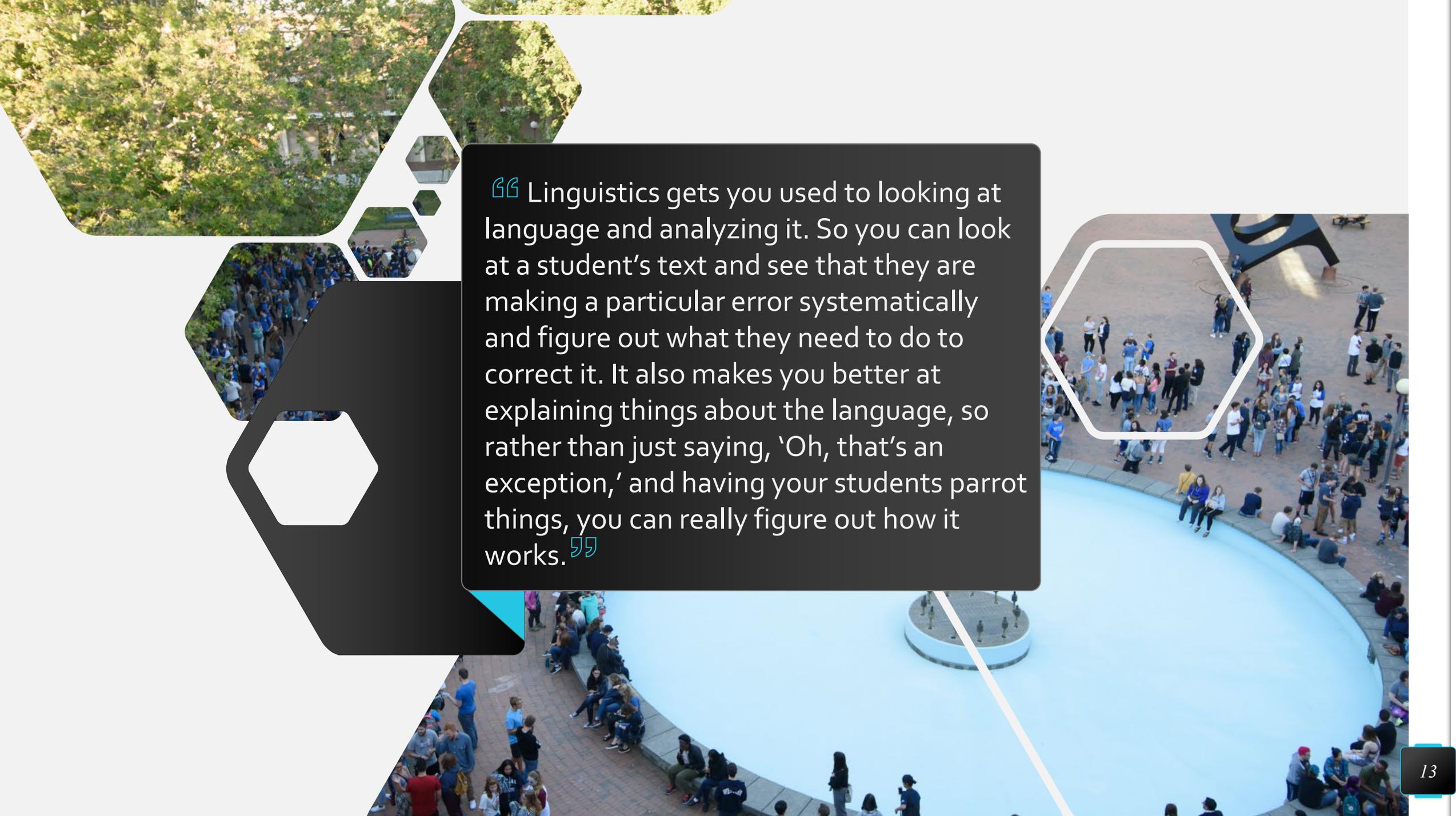


“ Doing linguistics turns students into scientists of language. They have to discover the rules for themselves based on evidence that *they* look for. Also, students use their own intuitions to understand the rules. ”



“ Studying linguistics has helped me to decide where I want to go after graduation – namely grad school, and academia thereafter. I’ve found an outlet for my love of theory and language! ”

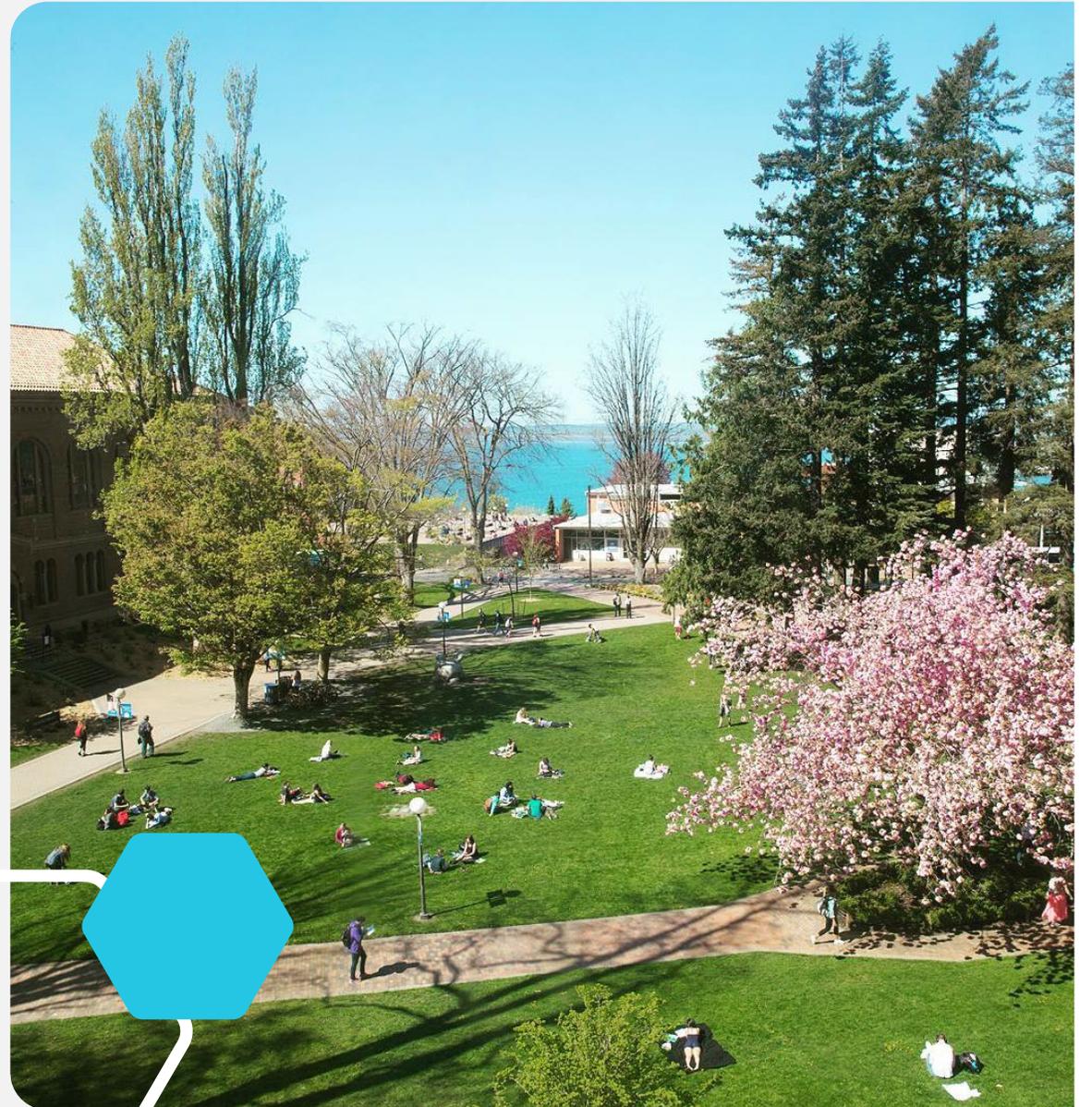




“ Linguistics gets you used to looking at language and analyzing it. So you can look at a student’s text and see that they are making a particular error systematically and figure out what they need to do to correct it. It also makes you better at explaining things about the language, so rather than just saying, ‘Oh, that’s an exception,’ and having your students parrot things, you can really figure out how it works.”

Non-Profits, Public Policy

- Center for Applied Linguistics: They “conduct research, develop language assessment and instructional materials, provide professional development and technical assistance services, offer online courses, and disseminate information and resources related to language and culture.”
- The Frameworks Institute “designs, conducts and publishes communications research to prepare nonprofit organizations to expand their constituency base, to build public will, and to further public understanding of specific social issues.”



Testing Agencies

“When I finished my Ph.D. in linguistics, ETS hired me to work on the GRE; they sought out philosophy and linguistics graduates, because in their experience those were the people who had the training in precision of language and thought that they needed for high-stakes testing.”



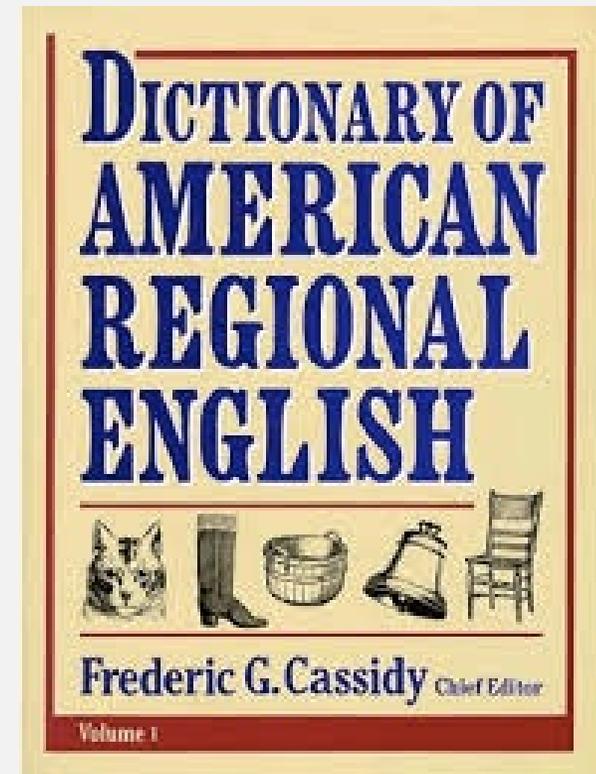
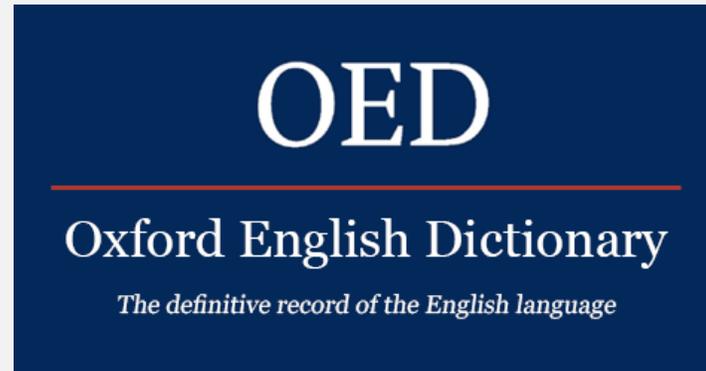
Speech Language Pathologist

Studies suggest that children treated by speech language pathologists who have undergraduate degrees in linguistics and then pursue masters degrees in Speech Language Pathology improved faster than children treated by SLPs with only minimal linguistic preparation. (Bernhard 2004)

“Linguistics is a part of any speech pathology degree, but I certainly appreciated the breadth of knowledge I entered my masters with. Now, on any given day, I might be analyzing a language sample from a child, explaining linguistic concepts to teachers, or helping a group of children build their phonological awareness so they can learn to read and write.”



Lexicography



Editing and Publishing

“A solid understanding of grammatical structures is obviously an asset in editing—it’s much easier to convince an editor of something if you can back it up with jargon-y linguistic arguments. More importantly, the focus in my linguistics degree on critical analysis of all sorts of written and spoken discourse (including news media) gave me a fantastic grounding in being able to engage critically with the news I read and the news I write.”



“Any editor needs to be intimately acquainted with the nuts and bolts of language, and there’s really no better way to do that than by studying linguistics...Most people see editing as a simple issue of correctness and incorrectness, but linguistics majors know better. It’s actually more about making well-informed choices for appropriateness, consistency and clarity, and linguistics gives you the context to do that.”



Journalism

“The benefits of my linguistics degree lie in its broad engagement with the humanities and social sciences. Linguistics is an incredibly diverse discipline, and studying it got me curious in so many other areas of inquiry: psychology, sociology, politics, philosophy, anthropology... the list goes on. That breadth also encourages linguistics students to think critically about what they’re studying—it’s hard to take so many diverse and often conflicting ways of looking at the world at face value. Curiosity and critical thinking are, I would argue, the most important traits a journalist can possess, and studying linguistics helped me develop those in spades.”



Tech Industry

- voice recognition/generation
- information retrieval (search engines that do semantic searches)
- speech synthesis
- machine translation
- grammar checkers
- text classification and text clustering and other “Big Data” applications
- text mining – finding pieces of useful information in unstructured text
- analyzing the language of social media



Marketing, Website Design, Branding

Knowledge of phonology and morphology and, of course, meaning, plays out in marketing, especially marketing to targeted groups. This work makes use of patterns and hypothesis-testing – things that linguists are really good at.

“So why would a linguist be any good at inbound marketing? Because we know language variation.”

“As important as it is to know what makes a successful marketing campaign, it is equally important to be attuned to the ways in which advertising can be problematic – e.g. issues around cultural sensitivity – and how users are expanding on and subverting the prescribed uses of media. Because I spent time studying these issues from outside the industry, as a linguist, I bring a perspective that isn't necessarily shared by my colleagues who come to marketing from more traditional business backgrounds.”

Language Documentation and Revitalization

Those interested in pursuing language documentation or revitalization are typically either members of the community whose language is endangered or those who have conducted research and worked with speakers of the language(s).

“ I hadn’t ever thought about the place of language study in relation to cultural identity, sovereignty, and civil rights; they are so completely intertwined with language. I have gained a real understanding of the links between historical events and language change, and I want others to better understand these kinds of connections.”

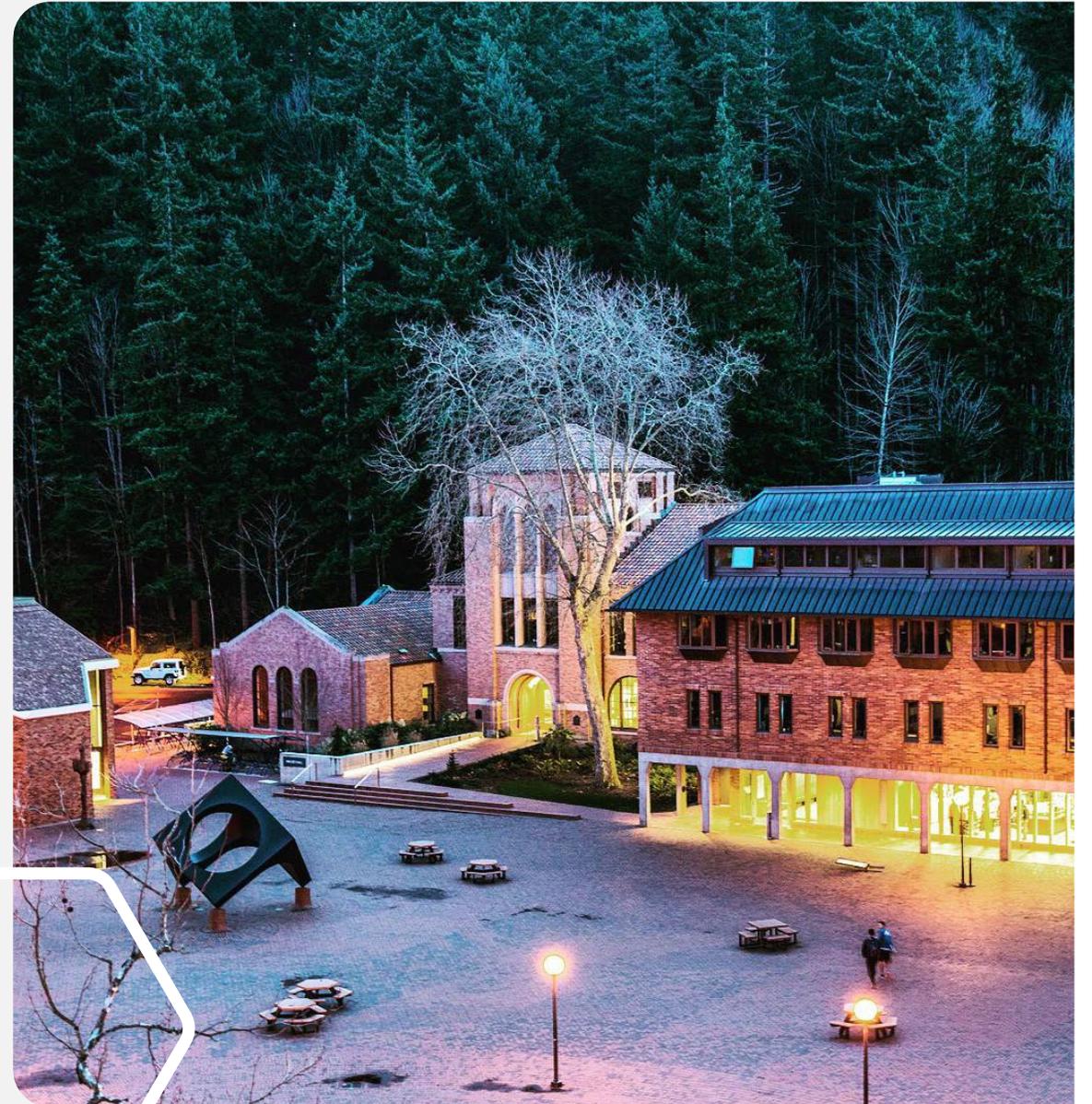


Forensic Linguistics

Some areas of the law that linguists typically engage with are

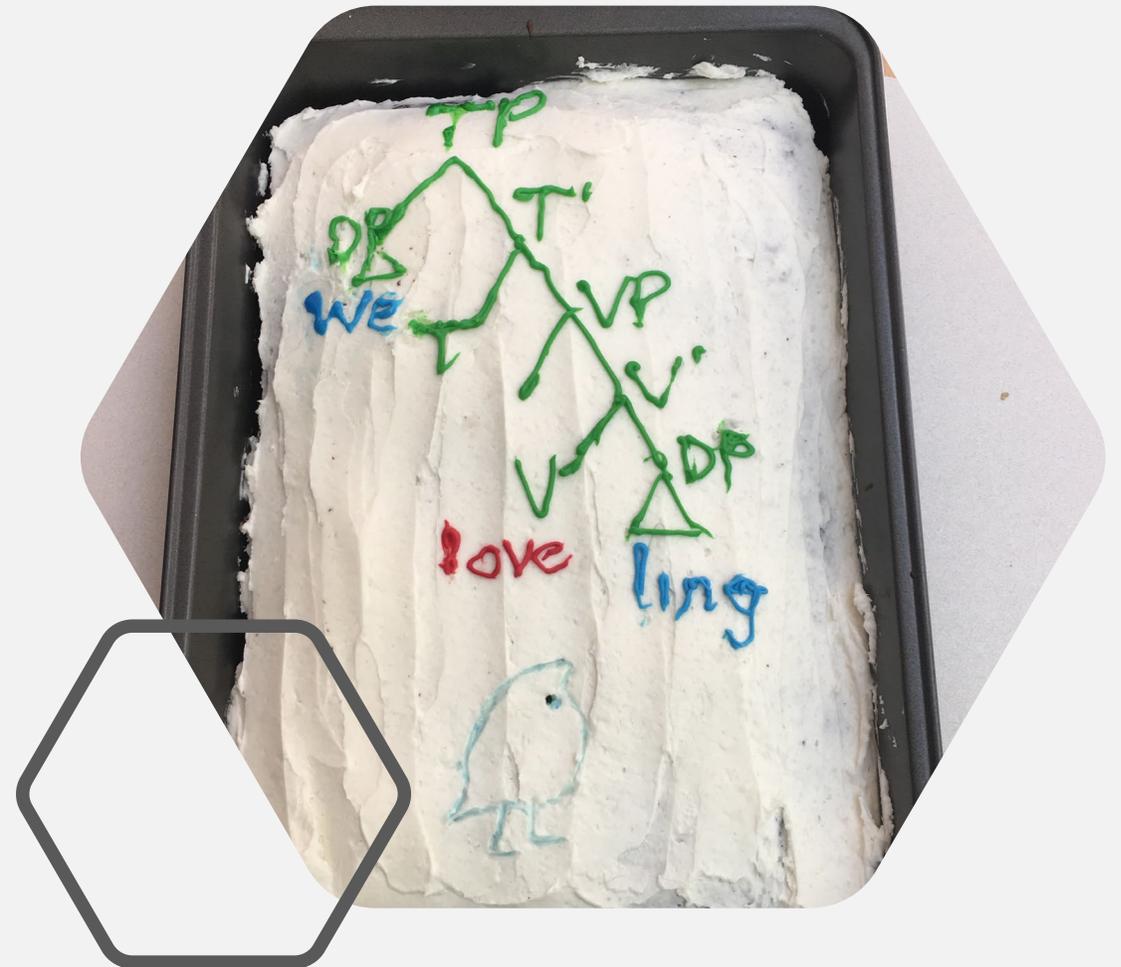
- trademark infringement,
- product liability,
- authorship of documents,
- speaker identification

Forensic linguists provide expert evaluations of written items (whether on paper or onscreen) involving murders, kidnappings, fraud, and other crimes. Sometimes their expertise is so critical to a legal case that they are called upon to testify in court.



Polyglot Jobs

“Syntax training and drawing syntax trees, prepared me to be able to instantly translate from SVO languages (English) to a language with relatively free word order (Latvian), to be able to mentally break apart a phrase, switch it around, and have a coherent translated phrase come out.”





“My job is to understand what exactly that ad creator wanted the audience to feel and to adapt it, or even rewrite it, so that it will look like it was written in Brazil and for Brazil. And, often, this process will not only involve the adaptation of the text, but of the images, graphics, and colors used in the ad as well. I am not responsible for recreating the other elements of the ad, apart from the text, but it is my job to point out that a certain color, image or symbol can be considered offensive, vulgar, or dubious in our culture, so that the advertising agency has the chance to change it to something that will suit the target market best.”



The list of the kinds of jobs that linguists have could go on and on, from the dialect coaches who work with actors on accents to cross-cultural and cross-linguistic consultants to jobs not yet imagined.

But linguists are also lawyers, doctors, librarians, bankers, bakers, and candlestick makers.

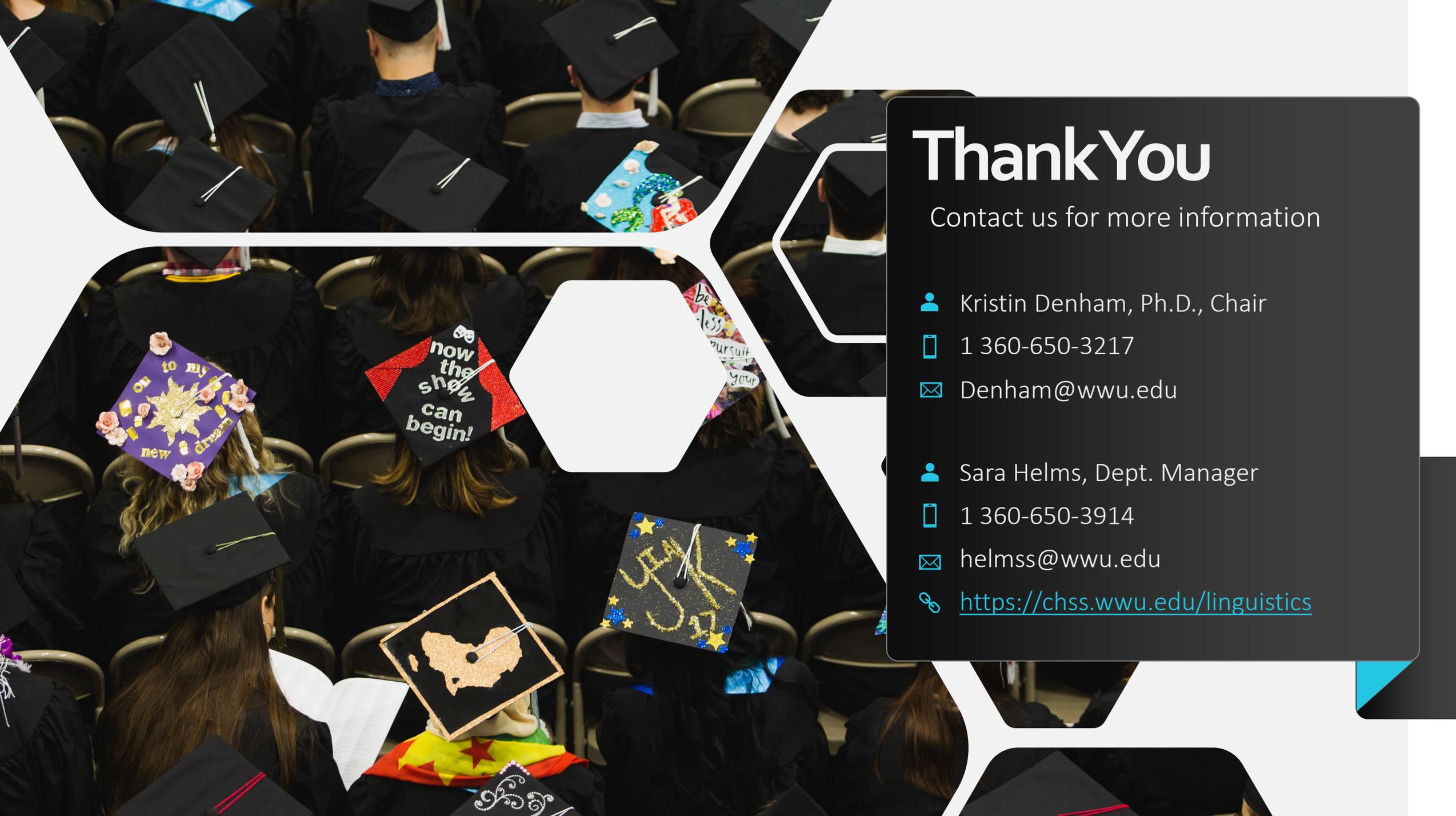
And the study of linguistics doesn't necessarily have to play out in what you do for a job in a direct way, but rather it can and will shape who you are and how you interact with the world.

It's not all about jobs

As you probably already know, not everyone knows what linguistics is, and not everyone is aware of how important language is to our diverse identities and communities.

- Knowledge of language is a tool for advocacy
- The study of linguistics supports and promotes scientific inquiry



A collage of graduation caps with various decorations and messages. The caps are black with white tassels. Some are decorated with colorful patterns, flowers, and text. One cap has a map of the United States, another has a graduation cap, and another has the text 'So now the show can begin!'.

Thank You

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