

College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

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CURRICULUM AND REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

For the February 5, 1991, Meeting

Cragmor Hall 113 - 8:00 A.M.

See the attached summary and recommendations

CURRICULUM AND REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE MEETING

5 FEBRUARY 1991

SUMMARY REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Professor John Miller, Chairman of the Department of Foreign and Literatures, made a presentation to the Committee in which he discussed the College's foreign language requirement and presented an alternative. He was accompanied in his presentation by Professor Doug McKay and Professor Inez Dolz-Blackburn. A summary of the presentation follows.

Professor Miller noted that he is satisfied with the foreign language requirement as it is currently constituted. There is a continuing problem of enough instructors to meet student demand. Originally, student enrollment was intended to be 18 students per section. That has been raised to the current 20, but almost always reaches 23 per section in an effort to try and absorb those students on the waiting list.

Fewer than one-half of entering students take the three course sequence in order to satisfy the requirement. This is attributed to an improvement in high school language programs which enable many entering students to test out of the language requirement. Of those students who do take language courses, an estimated 35-40% take all three courses, approximately 20% take only one course, and the remainder (which would be most of the students) take two courses to satisfy the requirement. The real problem students are not those entering college for the first time but the returning student who took an introductory language course many years ago and is trying to take the next course in the sequence at UCCS.

Professor Miller noted that he would like to move away from the three-course sequence toward proficiency testing.

A problem exists with the Foreign Language Placement Exam. The Student Information System will allow students to enroll in any course regardless of how they score on the test or whether they have even taken the test. Professor Miller spends much of the first two weeks of each semester getting students into the proper language course in order to keep skill levels as equal as possible.

Enrollments in the nonWestern languages, Japanese and Russian, are described as good. The 2 sections of Japanese and the lower than expected dropout rate in these two difficult languages is largely attributed to capable instructors. Latin has held its own with respect to enrollments; it continues to offer an alternative to those students who prefer a strictly verbal experience.

The next languages that are being considered for addition to the program are Chinese and Arabic.

Beginning with the fall semester of 1991, day classes will meet three times each week. This module is considered preferable for foreign language teaching and learning. The evening classes will continue to meet twice each week.

For those few students who find learning a foreign language impossible or nearly so, an alternative set of courses has been devised which a student may pursue with Professor Miller's permission and which will satisfy the foreign language requirement. The alternative set of courses has the following components: cultural anthropology, an ethnicity course, and a linguistics/nature of languages course.

Each semester about 10 students satisfy the foreign language requirement with their native (non-English) language.

Foreign language courses have been linked with Title III's Multi-Cultural Learning Center, especially the media component. Students are expected to view tapes of foreign news broadcasts.

Noting a shift from language to language and culture, Professor Miller then presented a proposal for an alternative to the foreign language requirement. (See the attached proposal from the Foreign Language Department.) The proposal is viewed as timely and as one that will greatly increase global awareness. For those students who cannot learn a foreign language, this proposal is seen as a viable alternative. The three-course sequence will lead to a greater understanding of a foreign culture.

Professor Miller felt confident that the current foreign language resident faculty would be able to teach many of the courses, but wondered about honorarium faculty.

No increase in the operating costs of the department are anticipated, and the alternative proposal would actually be more efficient because the courses would be larger (40 as contrasted with the current maximum of 23).

In response to the question "Why does the College have a foreign language requirement?", the collective response (in which members of the committee participated) focused on an improvement in communicative skills. Professor Miller noted that after three semesters of a foreign language a student achieves a survival level and can go on in that culture. Other purposes were included besides just being communicative in a foreign language. Those other purposes were such things as discipline, logic, a cross-cultural experience, abstract thinking that transfers back to English, and graduate school preparation.

This question (Why does the College have a foreign language requirement?) was viewed by the committee members as crucial especially in light of the proposed two-track program which would allow any student to satisfy the foreign language requirement by choosing between foreign language and a cultural alternative.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Curriculum and Requirements Committee did not feel comfortable making specific recommendations related to this requirement. Instead the committee proposes that the faculty take up the issue and begin by answering the following questions:

1. What is wanted from a foreign language requirement that cannot be provided by alternatives? In other words, what is the purpose of the requirement, and is it sufficiently unique that it cannot be met any other way?
2. Should a limit be placed on the number of honorarium credit hours that any department can use? If so, should the number of foreign language resident faculty positions be increased?
3. Is the variety of languages offered appropriate? Should there be more languages offered? Fewer?
4. In light of the alternative proposal put forth by the foreign language faculty, should there be a cultural diversity requirement in the College? Can such a requirement be done outside of foreign language? Should foreign language be a required component of a cultural diversity requirement?