

Date: March 20, 2008

To: Council on Academic Affairs
c/o Christie Roszkowski, Chair

From: Gail J. Richard, Department Chair
Communication Disorders & Sciences

Re: Proposal to Change the Foreign Language Requirement

I am writing to express serious concern regarding the proposal to increase the foreign language requirement to achieve a baccalaureate degree at Eastern Illinois University. My concerns are shared by the faculty in the Department of Communication Disorders & Sciences.

Specific areas of concern are the following:

- Many departments have a content-heavy curriculum, including CDS. It will be a challenge for majors to incorporate an additional semester of foreign language into a 120 hour degree.
- Students with hearing impairment or language impairment that opt for the sign language class due to deficits in their auditory system will lose that state-approved option. Students in majors such as Communication Disorders, Special Education, and Early Childhood often opt for sign language to meet the foreign language requirement because it broadens their academic preparation to work with disordered populations of children. There is not a third level of sign language courses, other than to go for full interpreter status, which is not available at the community colleges.
- It would probably be more advantageous to explore an additional introductory course in a different language to increase students' global competency, rather than focusing on more of the same language. A more diverse exposure to languages, such as "Japanese for business or travel" would expand our students' horizons and be more consistent with the EIU mission statement and study abroad options.
- There were no data presented to support this decision and no specified outcomes as to what will be accomplished by increasing the foreign language component of general education.
- Several programs include options within the major for expanded foreign language study. That option should be a department-by-department decision, not mandated as an additional component of general education. The majors that desire that component can build it into their curricular requirements.
- Several of the universities cited as requiring more than 2 semesters do not have a global requirement of more than two semesters. For example, at the University of Illinois, it is a choice by program or degree. The majority of peer institutions require 2 semesters.
- The additional requirement will become a burden at the high school and community college levels. Most students currently meet the requirement in high school and will continue to try and meet the requirement before enrolling at EIU, which could negatively impact the recruitment of students.

We appreciate the opportunity to express our concerns to the Council. The Communication Disorders & Sciences Department encourages you to seriously consider this proposal and not approve it at the present time. Thank you!