

*Memorandum*

Department of Biological Sciences

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**To:** Council on Academic Affairs  
Christie Roszkowski, Chair

**Re:** Proposal to Change the Foreign Language Requirement

**Date:** April 8, 2008

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I am writing on behalf of the Department of Biological Sciences to express the department's reservations about the proposal to increase the foreign language requirement to receive a baccalaureate degree at Eastern Illinois University. While the department understands that increasing the foreign language requirement may have potential advantages (supports initiative to internationalize Eastern's curriculum; increases expectations for graduates; increases student communication skills; increases appreciation of other cultures), our specific concerns are as follows:

- Majors in Biological Sciences have a content-heavy curriculum. It is already a challenge for majors to complete their degree in 120 hours. The addition of a semester of foreign language will only exacerbate the problem.
- The Spring 2010 implementation date is a significant concern because of its impact on new students, of which we have a significant number.
- Incompatibility of foreign language requirement for transfer students, of which we have a significant number.
- Impact on non-traditional students who have not had a foreign language in many years and would have difficulty meeting the requirement.
- No specified outcomes are presented as to what will be accomplished by increasing the foreign language requirement of general education.

In addition, there are other options:

- Implement a one semester class that focuses on foreign culture rather than the advancement of a foreign language for students who need an additional semester of foreign language.
- Allow one semester of a different language to increase global competency.
- Several programs include options within the major for expanded foreign language study. Departments that want additional foreign language requirements can build them into their curriculum. This should be a department-by-department decision, not a mandated additional component of general education.

I appreciate the opportunity to express our concerns to CAA. The department looks forward to a continuing dialog on a better approach to greater internationalization of campus and what will best serve the students at Eastern Illinois University without extending the length of time to degree completion. The Department of Biological Sciences encourages CAA not to approve the foreign language proposal at this time.