1994-95 Task Force on the GER Foreign Language Requirement

REPORT TO THE FACULTY SENATE

UWM Faculty Document No. 1929 (May 12, 1994) defined the charge of the Task Force: "To make recommendations on the implementation of the GER foreign language component with regard to a definitive timeframe for implementation, budgetary concerns of implementation, and the effect of implementation on University admissions." The Task Force was to report back to the Faculty Senate at its March 1995 meeting.

The Task Force met five times (December 22, January 19, February 9, February 16, and March 2), and a subcommittee met once (January 26).

The Recommendation of the Task Force follows. It has three parts: (1) "Proposed New GER Foreign Language Requirement," (2) "Assumptions," and (3) "Rationale." The motion on which the Faculty Senate will be asked to act is that the Proposed New Requirement replace the existing (but never implemented) GER foreign language requirement.

Three pages from Faculty Document 1382 (1984) are attached. They include the statement "Goals and Rationale of General Education" and the original GER foreign language requirement (never implemented, but never formally changed.)

At the time this Report and Recommendation were "going to press," an estimate of costs of the proposed new requirements was not available. If the estimate that we have requested from the Office of Institutional Research comes to us prior to the March Senate meeting, it will be distributed as a hand-out.

1994-95 Task Force on the GER Foreign Language Requirement:

Garry Davis (German)
David Luce (Philosophy), representing the University Committee, Chair
Doug Mickelson (Educational Psychology), representing the Admissions and Records Policy Committee
Erl Otte (Assistant Dean, College of Letters and Science)
Georgia Saemann (Business Administration), representing the Admissions and Records Policy Committee
Madeleine Velguth (French and Italian)
Beth Weckmueller (Enrollment Services)
Dick Western (Curriculum and Instruction), representing the Academic Program and Curriculum Committee
Ruth Williams (Academic Affairs)
RECOMMENDATION

Proposed New GER Foreign Language Requirement:

As a condition of graduation from UWM, an undergraduate student must satisfy the GER Foreign Language Requirement. This requirement may be satisfied by completing any one of the options specified below:

(1) complete with passing grades, prior to enrollment at UWM, at least two years of high school level instruction in a single foreign language; or

(2) complete with passing grades at least two semesters (minimum of 6 credits) of college level instruction in a single foreign language; or

(3) demonstrate foreign language ability at least equivalent to (2) above by means of a satisfactory score on an approved placement, proficiency, departmental or other appropriate examination; or

(4) satisfy the APCC-approved alternative GER Foreign Language Requirement, if any, stipulated by the student's particular degree program.

Assumptions:

a. Satisfaction of option (1), (2), or (3) above will fulfill the GER Foreign Language Requirement for any UWM undergraduate degree program. Option (4) alone may vary depending on the student's particular degree program.

b. Notwithstanding assumption (a) above, it is understood that particular degree programs may specify additional foreign language requirements beyond these campus-wide GER Foreign Language Requirement options. UWM schools/colleges are in no way precluded from maintaining or establishing such additional program-specific degree requirements.

c. With regard to option (4), the APCC may exercise its discretion in considering other proposed alternative requirements which (i) meet the needs of the particular school, college or program; and (ii) are consistent with both the Rationale spelled out below and the objectives specified in Faculty Document No. 1382 (as subsequently revised and amended), Section I, "Goals and Rationale of General Education."
Rationale:

It is the view of the Task Force that language itself is deservedly made an object of study. It remains the primary means of self-expression and communication in all cultures; the medium through which we apprehend both the world and ourselves; and an object which must be understood if anything else is to be understood with clarity and depth. The experience of studying a foreign language is an important element in gaining such understanding.

Nevertheless, two considerations loom large as reasons for reconsidering the existing GER foreign language requirement.

The first is the cost of implementing the language requirement in its present form. That cost has previously been brought to the attention of the Senate.

The second is the negative impact upon student recruiting and student enrollment figures that would be very likely, were the language requirement in its present form to be implemented. This issue has also been brought to the attention of the Senate.

There is reason, however, to retain some form of campus-wide language requirement that can be satisfied by high school credits in a foreign language. There are data indicating both that more high school students are studying a foreign language, and that a larger proportion of students entering UWM have two or more years of a foreign language, since a foreign language requirement was placed in the General Education Requirement. This gain might be lost, were we to eliminate altogether a campus-wide foreign language requirement.

The specific plan proposed in this Recommendation provides the flexibility appropriate to the differences in the purposes, prerequisites, curriculum needs, and research methods apparent in the range of degree programs available at UWM.
Action Items on the Task Force Language Requirement Recommendation

Three motions are spelled here. (2a) and (2b) are alternatives conditioned on the outcome of (1), as per the "flow chart" provided below. The Recommendation of the Task Force is subject to amendment if, and when, Motion (2a) becomes the motion on the floor.

Motion (1). The Faculty Senate reaffirms the general principle that there be a foreign language requirement in the General Education Requirements.

Motion (2a). [To be proposed only if the vote on (1) is affirmative] The Proposed New Foreign Language Requirement (in the Recommendation of the 1994-95 Task Force, Fac. Doc. 1965, 3/23/95, p. 2) shall replace the existing GER foreign language requirement (Fac. Doc. 1382, 11/29/84, p. 3) The implementation date of fall semester 1999 remains the same.

Motion (2b). [To be proposed only if the vote on (1) is negative] The Foreign Language requirement presently in the General Education Requirements (Fac. Doc. 1382, 11/19/84, p. 3) shall be deleted.

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