REPORT FOR THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

University Senate Committee: Academic Policies Committee

Brief History of Issue—why the issue is being considered (From the Curriculum Rapid Action Task Force):

- The current admissions foreign language requirement indicates that every student offered admission must have two years of foreign language in a single language prior to high school graduation.

- When the foreign language requirement was added into policy, admissions decisions were formula-based (using only ACT and class rank or GPA). The admissions language requirement was an additional factor to assist admission with selection of candidates. In 2006 admission review practice was federally mandated to be more holistic; this required a more comprehensive review of additional factors such as rigor of coursework, GPA, grade trends, extracurricular involvement or commitments outside of the home, essays, recommendation letters, specific student situations, etc. In this holistic review, quality and diversity of coursework are reviewed, together with many other factors.

Points Discussed by Committee:

1. The admissions requirement for foreign language is separate and different from the UW-Eau Claire graduation requirement for foreign language/culture.
2. Of the total applications denied for Summer/Fall 2015, 5% (37) of those were denied (and otherwise would have been a clear admit) because of the foreign language requirement. This does not include students who may have been considered and were a less clear admit (data as of 3-31-15).
3. While data can be provided on number of students denied, we cannot provide quantitative data on the opportunity lost to consider students who never apply to the institution. They are self-selecting out or are advised not to apply due to the requirement. Parents and students have walked out of Admissions presentations when they find out that UWEC requires 2 years of foreign language. Counselors across the state are informed that students are not eligible to apply if they do not have 2 years of foreign language and locally, we know counselors at North and Memorial high schools tell students not to apply if they don’t have two years of foreign language.
4. The active college search cycle begins in the spring of the junior year, which is too late to add two years of foreign language.
5. Removing the requirement fits in with the holistic admissions process. This is the only stand-alone requirement UW-Eau Claire has placed on itself by which a student can be denied. The UW System mandates unit requirements for admission as follows: 4 English, 3 Mathematics, 3 Natural Science, 3 Social Science, 4 other which can include foreign language. Most of our students admitted already exceed these requirements, and would be expected to continue to do so.
6. Foreign language will still be considered as an admissions criteria—it just won’t be required. Those high school students who have foreign language coursework will benefit; those who don’t will not be penalized.
7. Per the Language Chair, removing the admissions requirement will have minimal effect on the foreign language course offerings. Most students who major/minor in a language generally start at the third semester level (201) or higher as a first-year student. Most high school students who take just two years of language generally test into 101 or 102. Removing the foreign language requirement would likely result in more “true beginners” in the 101 courses with classmates that could have taken 2-3 years of language in high school. This situation already exists. Language faculty already tailor their teaching to meet students at the different levels of proficiency.
8. The current policy is exclusive rather than inclusive. Students who attend a high school with limited availability for foreign languages or students who choose to take other courses (e.g., Advanced Placement courses, additional core academic courses, music/arts, student support programs-AVID, Upward Bound, etc.) are excluded from studying at UWEC. K-12 elective courses are often scheduled against one another.
9. Although we should continue to be an advocate to the elementary, middle, and high schools to encourage and promote languages and the arts, our focus right now should be on providing students the educational opportunities afforded to them by an Eau Claire experience. We can’t do that if we don’t admit them.

10. ACT has issued studies in the past on college and career readiness standards. The standards currently include English, math, reading, science and writing. ACT recommends students take a core curriculum of at least 4 years of English, 3 years of math, 3 science and 3 social science (which match the UW System requirements).

11. UW La Crosse is UW Madison’s #1 UW System competitor—we are not. Per the UW System Multiple Application and Admissions Database (MAAD) which records cross applications within the system, UW La Crosse has the highest number of cross applications with UW Madison at 1685 while we only share 1038 applications with UW Madison (data as of 3-1-15). UW La Crosse does not require foreign language for admissions.

Pros of Recommendation:
1. Inclusive of more students who meet the other rigorous admissions standards.
2. May lead to more highly qualified applicants, which in turn could raise our institutions academic profile (class rank, ACT, GPA).
3. Provides UWEC faculty an opportunity to teach students who would otherwise be prevented from engaging in the UWEC experience.
4. Would provide more tuition.
5. Would enable more local students to attend UWEC.

Cons of Recommendation:
1. Removing just one of the admissions standards appears to be a piecemeal approach to addressing our admissions policy. If we remove the foreign language requirement, then perhaps we should also examine the other requirements. Counter argument: the other admissions requirements (4 units of English, 3 units of Mathematics, 3 units of Natural Science, 3 units of Social Science, and 4 units of other courses, which can include foreign language) are mandated by the UW System. UWEC added the Foreign Language requirement on top of the UW System requirements. Most students admitted exceed minimum unit expectations, and would be expected to continue to do so.
2. Removing the foreign language requirement is perceived by some as lowering the standards of education at UWEC. Counter arguments: a) the strong reputation of UWEC is based on the quality of graduates as they exit the university; b) the holistic approach to admissions (see above) includes other measures of rigor and student quality entering the university.
3. Now that the Curriculum Rapid Action Task Force report has been published, we should wait to act on this proposal until after we see what more global changes might be implemented. Counter argument: this proposal also came from the Curriculum Rapid Action Taskforce and was intended as an immediately actionable item. Addressing an admissions policy is related philosophically to proposed curriculum redesigns but the two relate to separate policies. The goal of this action item is to increase (if even by 5%) the number of otherwise-qualified students who can participate in the UWEC experience while simultaneously providing additional tuition.
4. Removing foreign language as an admissions requirement might pose a barrier to students who are seeking a BA degree in the College of Arts and Sciences. Counter argument: Students would still be able to complete a bachelor of arts degree. The foreign language component of the BA degree requires students to earn a grade of at least C in a 102-level foreign language course.

Technology/Human Resource Impact: None

Committee Recommendation:
Remove the Admissions requirement for two years of foreign language and update the Undergraduate Catalog as indicated in the attached proposal.
MOTION FOR THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

The Academic Policies Committee,

by a vote of _7_ in favor and _2_ against on ____April 7, 2015____,

recommends that the Admissions requirement for two years of foreign language be removed and the Undergraduate Catalog updated as indicated in the attached proposal.

Implementation Date: Immediate; to be published in the 2016-2017 Catalog

Signed: _______Jean A. Pratt_____
   Chair of the Committee

Send to: University Senate Office