Proposal and rationale for CLAS B.A. non-English language (FL) requirement
29 October 12: DRAFT for consideration by CUSA; submitted by Academic Standards

Proposal

CUSA motion

On May 8, 2012 the following motion was passed unanimously by CUSA regarding the non-English language requirement for the B.A.:

"Students must either:
1. demonstrate the equivalent of the initial four semesters of study in a single language other than English
OR
2. demonstrate the equivalent of the initial three semesters of study in one language AND the equivalent of the initial semester of study in a different language."

We propose eliminating the second alternative. We have been unable to find parallels for this proposal at other institutions and, more importantly, are unable to develop a satisfactory intellectual justification. We continue to recognize the attractions of this second option: it would enable students to have broader exposure to languages and cultures, and it will enable lesser-taught languages to attract more students (who under the current system are understandably drawn to complete their FL requirement with a language that they've had exposure to before coming to KU, rather than starting anew with one that had been inaccessible to them in high school or at a previous institution). Nevertheless, we cannot craft a justification for this second option that we found to be justified intellectually. Furthermore, this option could offer the opportunity for a student to claim that a three-semester sequence in a language should be satisfactory for the B.A., which we strongly believe not to be the case.

If CUSA agrees to support option 1. only, the FL requirement will be the same as it is now.

Learning Outcome

According to the latest version of the KU Core (http://kucore.ku.edu/updates.shtml; visited 10/25/12), two semesters of the proposed four-semester FL requirement would map onto Goal 4, LOs 1 and 2:

Requires two units that may be

A two-course non-English language sequence that includes culture content, or a one-semester non-English language course and a significant study abroad experience, or
Two approved courses or educational experiences, one meeting the criteria for each of the two learning outcomes, or
An approved course or educational experience meeting the criteria for one of the two learning outcomes, and a significant study abroad experience

Non-English languages and the Bachelor of Arts degree
The B.A. degree at KU requires four semesters of exposure to a non-English language and, through that non-English-language learning experience, exposure to the cultures which that language profoundly informs and molds. Participatory competency in non-English languages and cultures is ever more essential as the global community becomes increasingly central in our lives and requires that we interact with other cultures, economies, peoples, and nations. As the KU core states, “participating in 21st century society means acquiring knowledge and understanding of the world beyond our immediate experience and culture,” “reexamining our own lives in a global context,” and “enabling [our students] to engage with the languages, cultures, customs, beliefs, and/or behaviors from the world’s various communities,” tasks which can only be accomplished meaningfully with participatory knowledge of the non-English languages that drive those communities and cultures. KU regularly teaches more world languages than any university between the Mississippi River and the West Coast. Non-English language capabilities are integral to the B.A. and liberal education, the aims of which are to develop a citizenry broadly informed and capable of critical inquiry and appraisal, to provide fundamental knowledge and understanding of human complexities unattainable without participatory knowledge of non-English languages, to enable our students to communicate effectively in a global economy by means of at least one language other than English, and to ensure that they have the cross-cultural linguistic tools more and more necessary to succeed in an interconnected and multilingual world.

Non-English language learners from semester one through semester four gradually and progressively become effective participatory users of that language, which brings them into communication with others both within and across communities. These communities can be local (e.g., in the city of Lawrence, the state of Kansas, and the United States, with their diverse ethnic populations; note too that American Sign Language currently fulfills this requirement), international in the many countries whose languages are taught at KU, or virtual (whether in real time or across temporal and spatial distance, as with the study of ancient civilizations whose languages, thought, and cultures continue to impact and mold the present). Non-English language learners develop the ability to analyze authentic cultural texts, documents, artifacts, and products (written, oral, aural, visual, digital), to reveal, create, problematize, and delve into meaning as only participatory users of the language can. In this way, non-English language study enables the learner to reflect critically on language itself as a dynamic, unique, and central component of the human experience and cultures. Non-English language learners reflect on and gain insight into both their own and the target language and culture, and they become better equipped to live, work, communicate with others in languages other than English, and thrive in the global and increasingly multilingual market place.

"Because Americans use the world's dominant language, and we have a culture that has been internationalized and globalized, we think we're in the dominant position. The truth is the reverse. Because we think in the English idiom the whole world has a window into how we think and who we are--they get us, but we don't get them. We are an open book to the world, and the world is a closed book to us" (Col. Rich Outzen, U.S. Army; Dartmouth Alumni Magazine, 2012). The aim of studying non-English languages and through them, other cultures, is not just to acquire a protocol, digest, data set, or fact set relevant to this or that culture, but to understand aspects of the culture that are accessible and verifiable only through participatory competency in a language that founds the culture’s profile, routines, behaviors, beliefs, outlook, and vision. Acquisition of one non-English language facilitates the acquisition of further languages, allowing our students in the B.A. program to broaden their knowledge base of other cultures during the
course of study at KU, and deepening their ability beyond studies at KU to add new intercultural skills to their profile and thus adapt to new challenges and demands in the global marketplace.

The Bachelor of Arts degree is unique at the University of Kansas in its commitment to both breadth and depth of knowledge. It is intended to give graduates the greatest flexibility and choice in future study or career. Any other degree program in the University, without an equivalent foreign language requirement, serves other purposes. The Bachelor of Arts degree would be substantially changed if this non-English language requirement were waived or changed.

Bachelor of Arts majors in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences generally do not prepare students for licensure or certification in a particular field. However, many students who begin in the Liberal Arts and Sciences go on to professional schools at the undergraduate, graduate, or certificate level. In addition, graduate study for the M.A. and Ph.D. in many fields in the liberal arts requires research skills and participatory competency in one or more languages other than English.

Justification of four-semester requirement

In October 1984, KU’s CLAS Task Force on General Education made the following recommendation for strengthening the Bachelor of Arts degree (one year each in two different languages had previously been a possible alternative to four semesters in one language):

\textit{We recommend ... that the foreign language requirement for the B.A. degree be retained, and indeed that it be strengthened. Since competency in the language is the natural standard in a language requirement, we recommend that students be required to complete the fourth-level course in one language or to demonstrate proficiency.} (7-8)

In Spring 2012, a justification of the four-semester sequence was submitted to CUSA by Prof. Bill Comer (Slavic) on behalf of the foreign language departments at KU. We quote here the concluding points of that discussion (full text at \url{https://clas.drupal.ku.edu/sites/clas.drupal.ku.edu/files/docs/Governance/CUSA/2011-2012/Responses_from_Fl_Departments_2012.pdf})

\textit{Four semesters of foreign language learning contributes to KU's general education outcomes in the following unique ways:}
* Learners become participatory users of that language over time and this allows them to communicate in speech and writing with speakers from target-language communities;
* Learners develop the ability to analyze authentic cultural texts (written, oral, visual) to reveal, create, and problematize meaning as only participatory users of the language can;
* Learners reflect critically on language as a dynamic component of the human experience and as a means of expression;
* Learners reflect on and gain insight into their own and the target language and culture, and they become better equipped to live, work, and thrive in the global market place.}
We concur with this assessment and add that, taken as a whole, a four-semester sequence of non-English language covers essential elements of the first four professed goals of the new KU Core (Critical Thinking, Communication, Breadth of Knowledge, Culture and Diversity) and would in most cases include the fifth as well (Social Responsibility and Ethics).

Furthermore, this four-semester recommendation concurs with:
--the practice of the majority of our peer institutions (Indiana, Iowa, Michigan State, Missouri, Oregon, Virginia; two of the remaining four--Colorado and UNC-Chapel Hill--require two years non-English language training in high-school for unqualified admission to the university);
--a college-wide vote of faculty in Spring 20XX in strong support of the four-semester requirement (data forthcoming);
--CUSA's survey of CLAS department chairs in Spring 2012 (response of twelve departments that do not teach non-English languages).

It is also worth considering the recommendations drafted in September 2012 by the Association of American Universities, of which KU is currently a member:

AAU universities are committed to strengthening the foreign language and international education pipeline to meet the nation's need for a steady supply of graduates who can engage internationally in the educational, governmental, and business sectors. (www.aau.edu/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=13720 under "Support for International Education, Foreign Language Training"; visited 10/25/12)

Finally, support for this claim may be found in a recent position paper of the Council of Foreign Relations:

The global economy is shifting away from the English-speaking world. Since 1975, the English-speaking share of global GDP has fallen significantly and will continue to fall ... and future U.S. growth will increasingly depend on selling U.S. goods and services to foreign consumers who do not necessarily speak English. In a competitive global export market, there will be a premium on foreign language skills and international competency. It is an old adage that you can buy in any language, but you must sell in the language of your customer. ... The widespread use of English as the leading global second language, especially in business, does not offset the disadvantage faced by monolingual Americans. (“A ‘Language Jobs’ Initiative,” Policy Innovation Memorandum No. 24, June 2012, http://blogs.cfr.org/renewing-america/2012/06/26/foreign-languages-and-u-s-economic-competitiveness)