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Dear Maggie,

Hello. Rachel Schwien, the College’s administrative liaison to CUSA, forwarded your April 28 email to me and Antha Cotten-Spreckelmeyer about a CUSA decision last week. Antha is the chair of CUSA’s subcommittee for Curricular Changes and Degree Requirements. I am the CUSA chair. Your email was: “Just wondering why the committee approved introductory German but not introductory Chinese [for the KU Culture and Diversity Core Goal 4.2 requirement].” As you know, the requirement for Goal 4 is:

Participating in 21st-century society means acquiring knowledge and understanding of the world beyond our immediate experience and culture, showing consideration and enhanced understanding for human and cultural diversity, and reexamining our own lives in a global context. Students will learn to analyze regional and international issues and perspectives, enabling them to engage with the languages, cultures, customs, beliefs, and/or behaviors from the world’s various communities.

The requirement for Core Goal 4.2 is:

Upon reaching this goal, students will be able to examine a variety of perspectives in the global community, distinguish their own cultural patterns, and respond flexibly to multiple worldviews.

As for the introductory German language courses – GERM 104 and 108 – they were approved by CUSA for Core Goal 4.2 in May 2013. This was before Antha and I were on CUSA and before Rachel was the liaison. It was also before the Curriculum Inventory Management (CIM) system was being used for curricular changes. For the latter reason, Rachel has been unable, as yet, to retrieve the German proposals, in particular, the summaries of how the courses met the Core Goal 4.2 learning outcome requirements. Karen Ledom (Administrative Director, Student Academic Services) also checked Larry Fillian’s files and could find nothing about the courses. Larry was then the Director of Student Academic Services. Karen added:

This was very early on in the “fast track” process, so I’m not going to be able to provide any rationale for how these got in… The GERM courses were when everyone was still “finding their way” in governance as relate to the Core…
At the time, then, CUSA’s and the university’s standards might have been different than they are today. In any event, all we have now are the current GERM course catalog descriptions. The relevant part of the GERM 104 description is this:

Development of students’ use of the German language, including the ability to comprehend, interpret, and produce short spoken, written, and multimedia texts on everyday topics in cultural contexts (italics added)

The relevant part of the GERM 108 description is “Further development…” of the same. Both descriptions include a cultural component.

Better examples of introductory language course proposals for Core Goal 4.2 are FREN 110 and FREN 120, which CUSA approved on February 14 this year. Unfortunately, French’s course descriptions are not helpful. Both read: “A balanced approach stressing understanding, speaking, reading, and writing.” However, the summaries of how the courses met the learning outcome requirements for Core Goal 4.2 were infused with cultural content. For both FREN 110 and FREN 120, the summaries were:

This course is entirely comprised of other-cultural material as students study the French language and Francophone cultures in which it is used, including certain Francophone communities in Canada, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Students use the French language they are learning to discuss and debate Francophone cultural beliefs and practices, while comparing these to their own culture. Students are asked to extrapolate cultural elements from a wide variety of readings and oral or visual documents, with the goal of leading them to understand and be sensitive to differences, and therefore to better negotiate cultural situations outside of the U.S. Students reflect on specific cultural beliefs, products and practices throughout the semester in both oral and written assignments, culminating in a final cultural essay or project.

This was also borne out in the French course syllabi, which is important, but now moot. The University Core Curriculum Committee (UCCC) did not approve French’s proposal that these courses count for Core Goal 4.2. This leaves, perhaps, only SPAN 111, 212, 216 as language courses that count for this goal, but like the German courses, they were also approved by CUSA for Core Goal 4.2 in 2013, so we do not have the summaries of how they met the Core Goal 4.2 learning outcome requirements. The SPAN 212 and 216 course descriptions, but not SPAN 111, hint of cultural content:

Students process and practice a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures in order to complete tasks that promote critical exploration of the Spanish-speaking world and the development of listening, reading, speaking, writing, and intercultural competencies.

In contrast to the French proposals, the CHIN 104 and CHIN 106 proposals were, in CUSA’s view, insufficient for meeting the Core Goal 4.2 learning outcomes requirements. Moreover, if the French courses were not approved by UCCC for this goal, the Chinese courses would not likely have been approved either. The Chinese course descriptions were little different than those for FREN 110 and 120. For CHIN 104, the description was: “An introduction to spoken
and written modern standard Chinese (Mandarin).” For CHIN 106, it was: “The course focuses on perfecting listening, speaking, reading and writing skills...” They included no cultural content. The summary descriptions of how CHIN 104 and CHIN 106 would meet the learning outcome requirements were these:

The goal of CHIN 104 is for students to develop cross-cultural communication skills in Chinese enabling them to live and work in the current multicultural world. The course focuses on the development of language skills, the acquisition of knowledge about Chinese-speaking communities, and an understanding of Chinese culture. Achievement of these goals is assessed through cultural projects, presentations, unit tests, midterm exams and a final exam. These assessment samples are evaluated for students' development of accuracy, fluency and their ability to interpret, compare, and contrast Chinese and their own cultural practices, products and perspectives. 10% of total assessment of this course is for culture knowledge and awareness. (italics added)

CUSA had three concerns. First, the CHIN 104 and CHIN 106 course syllabi (e.g., the course requirements) did not include the same amount of breadth and depth in cultural content as was conveyed in the summary descriptions. Second, the cultural component of the course – a student project -- was only 10% of the final grade and, thus presumably, only 10% of the course content. Third, the required CHIN textbooks were about “listening, speaking, reading and writing skills,” not about cultural content. In CUSA’s view, the courses did not include enough cultural content to meet the learning outcome requirements for Core Goal 4.2.

If CUSA overlooked something or misunderstood the CHIN course syllabi or proposals, CUSA would be pleased to review revised proposals, but this would not be until next fall. Antha’s subcommittee met for the last time this semester on May 2. CUSA as a whole meets for the last time on May 9. In the interim, we would be happy to meet with you to discuss the amount of cultural content an introductory language course needs in order to meet the requirement for Core Goal 4.2. Ultimately, though, you will want to meet with the UCCC.

Sincerely,

Edward K. Morris, Chair
College Committee for Undergraduate Studies and Advising

Antha Cotten-Spreckelmeyer, Chair
Subcommittee for Curricular Changes and Degree Requirements
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cc. P. Atchley