

From: David Radavich [daradavich@eiu.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, April 16, 2008 5:02 PM
To: Roszkowski, Christie; Julie Dietz; Fopay, Janet
Cc: dareid@eiu.edu; Bonnie Irwin; Young, Bailey; Canfield, Stephen A.; Perry, William L.; Anne R Zahlan
Subject: Foreign Language Requirement

Dear CAA officers,

I am writing in strong support of efforts to strengthen foreign language requirements at Eastern, which I understand will come up for debate at your next meeting on Thursday, April 17.

Eastern's language requirement has long been thought to be less than rigorous compared to our peer institutions. This is reflected in the additional requirements that many forward-thinking individual programs have set beyond the university minimum.

I would make three strong arguments on behalf of requiring additional foreign language study from most of our students:

1) President Perry has established priorities for making Eastern both "first choice" and "best of class" among institutions in our category. An enhanced foreign language requirement contributes toward achieving that goal, since current requirements fall noticeably below those of our competitors (like Truman State, for instance).

2) Under the dedicated leadership of Provost Blair Lord, Eastern has devoted enormous energies during the past 5-6 years to expanding our study abroad programs and opportunities. This has been an amazing success; my students have been transformed by their experiences studying abroad. These programs simply weren't offered a decade ago at EIU; now they are. Increased foreign language study is a crucial related component to our efforts to encourage and sustain student travel and experience internationally.

3) We live in a global community that grows metaphorically smaller every day - more connected by electronics and interactions of every kind. It is highly likely that many of our students will one day work abroad at least at some point in their careers. In such a world, foreign language study is absolutely critical as preparation and education for a multi-faceted, multi-linguistic world. Given the rise of China, India, and other nations, English will not remain the lingua franca it has been, as more and more transactions will be conducted in other languages. We need to prepare our students for that reality.

I'm sure many other strong arguments could be made in favor of increased language study at Eastern. But these are the issues that come to my mind most readily and which persuade me to support and urge you to adopt more advanced foreign language requirements for our undergraduates, who soon will be leaving our campus for a wider world that nonetheless will be closer and more inter-connected.

Yours sincerely,

David Radavich,
Professor of English