

TO: Administrative Boards of the General College and College of Arts and Sciences

FROM: Professor Clayton Koelb, Professor Larry King, Professor Gary Marks, Professor Liesbet Hooge, Professor Richard Langston, Professor Kathryn Starkey, Professor Hana Pichova, Professor Martine Antle, Professor Ennio Rao, Professor Sahar Amer, Professor Nadia Yaqub, Professor Paul Roberge, Dr. Glynis Cowell, Dr. William Maisch, Dr. Hannelore Jarausch, Dr. Tin Wegel, Dr. Eleanora Magomedova, Dr. Tanya Kinsella

RE: Deletion of the phrase; “in the English language” from the current description of the Communication Intensive requirement

DATE: February 11, 2011

With the addition of the phrase “in the English language” to the description of the Communication Intensive requirement¹, certain foreign language courses (above the level of 204) have been eliminated from the list of courses which students can use to fulfill this requirement. Although it is true that the majority of our students will use English as their primary means of communication in their professional lives, this restriction limits options for students working in a global context, contradicts crucial stated goals of the curriculum reform and overlooks the cultural elements of communication.

1. Students should be encouraged, though not required, to take a Communication Intensive course in their major or minor area of study.

All students pursuing a major/double major or minor in a language or wishing to develop their language skills for international studies and related fields are at present excluded from this option. These are students who often plan to use the second language for career goals, business, medical professions, law and last, but not least, in teaching K-12 at institutions of higher education. They will need the extra communication skills developed in courses beyond level 204 or the equivalent.

2. For budgetary reasons, the original requirement of foreign language enhancement has been eliminated from the current curriculum, although the following statement is found in the curriculum document:

“The theme of internationalization/globalization is subtly integrated into the new Gen Ed requirements. The increased emphasis on global awareness and international citizenship is visible in new requirements, such as the Global Issues and Experiential Education requirements (EE can be satisfied by studying abroad) and in the clarification, intensification and reaffirmation of longstanding requirements, such as

¹ Content-area courses with an emphasis on written and oral communication **in the English language** are intended to prepare students to write and speak effectively in their disciplinary area(s). They should directly or indirectly help them recognize that different disciplines have different discourses. Students should be encouraged, though not required, to take a Communication Intensive course in their major or minor area of study. (Criteria document, p .9)

the Beyond the North Atlantic World requirement (formerly a Non-Western Comparative course) and the eventually-to-be-implemented Foreign Language Enhancement requirement.” Various websites (for example, that of the Center for Global Initiatives, but there are many others) refer to “leadership in global research, teaching and service.” For this leadership to be successful, our graduating seniors will need to have the linguistic skills and show the cultural sensitivities in a foreign language that reach beyond what most of them can obtain in the first three semesters of the foreign language requirement.

3. Communication skills in a foreign language certainly begin in the introductory/intermediate (i.e. requirement) sequence, but do not fully develop until students reach fifth semester courses and beyond.

| By the end of the language requirement, better students in the more commonly-taught languages may reach what the ACTFL guidelines refer to as “Intermediate Mid to High” skills in speaking: “Speakers at the Intermediate-Mid level are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture; these include personal information covering self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel and lodging.”² It is in courses at the fifth semester level or beyond that require extensive oral production and the rewriting of papers that students begin to approach a level that corresponds to their skills in English.

4. Communication skills in a second language are not different from those required in English. In order to write effectively, students must organize their ideas in a coherent manner, express themselves convincingly and clearly, with awareness of the rhetorical demands of the genre in which they are speaking or writing. They must be aware of the need to reflect and revise, not only for formal accuracy but also to support their positions. In speaking they face the additional challenge of being understood by their classmates, which means they often must adapt the language they find in doing their research on their topic. They are expected to engage their classmates in discussion and not merely state their point without any interaction.

Through intensive communication in a second language students gain linguistic and cultural awareness of what is involved in transmitting ideas. They realize the need to adapt their language to their interlocutors, clearly different if engaging with native speakers or with peers. The cultural aspects of communication can only be understood when we speak or write in a language not our own. Instructors at all levels of seniority in foreign language departments at UNC believe that we should be in a position to encourage our students to expand their understanding of communication in such a broad sense as outlined in this document.

5. We therefore request a reconsideration of the limitation of “Communication Intensive” to courses conducted in English only.

² <http://www.actfl.org/files/public/Guidelinespeak.pdf>