



The Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies

November 3, 2017

Re: Resolution CUSP 2017-18.C
Resolution to Revise Pathways General Education Curriculum (Presidential Policy Memorandum No. 125 and University Core Curriculum/Curriculum for Liberal Education (CLE) (PPM 24)) and Implementation for the Pathways General Education Curriculum to Amend the Language for Foundational Discourse Courses

Dear Commission members,

At its most recent meeting on Oct 31, the Faculty Senate voted to oppose Resolution CUSP 2017-18.C. This resolution was drafted in response to a series of course proposals by the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures for inclusion as Foundational Discourse credit in Pathways, and would prohibit courses taught in languages other than English from being used this way.

The resolution purports to be motivated by desire to ensure that all students obtain “a necessary foundation of language proficiency in English,” but does not define what this entails. Faculty senators pointed out that proficiency is measured through the ability to perform specific tasks, set forth in the Pathways Guidelines. The Faculty Senate concurs that these skills are independent of the language in which they are developed, and that skills obtained in one language are in fact transferrable to another. If, for example, students can “analyze and evaluate the content and intent of information from diverse sources” in a foreign language, this same activity can be transferred to one’s native language.

In addition, academic departments control their own check sheets and would need to opt in to allow their students to count non-English language courses toward their degree. Far from viewing this as detrimental to student learning, the Faculty Senate considers this option an appropriate initiative that should be available to at least some students who are willing and able to take on the additional challenge of satisfying their Discourse requirements in a language other than English. Moreover, the Faculty Senate believes the resolution does not align well with Virginia Tech’s goal to become a global land-grant university, where students should be encouraged to become proficient in a foreign language.

For these reasons, the Senate believes that this resolution is unnecessary and may in fact run contrary to the goals of the Pathways curriculum, and therefore recommends that courses that meet the Discourse Learning Outcomes be permitted to count for either foundational or advanced discourse credit, regardless of the language of instruction.

Submitted on behalf of the Faculty Senate,

Hans Robinson
Faculty Senate President

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