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WKU considers further changes to foreign language requirement

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Faculty at Western Kentucky University are considering whether to extend a policy that allows students to use two years of a high school world language to fulfill the university's foreign language requirement.

In December, faculty members of WKU's University Senate approved the change to address a backlog of roughly 7,000 students who hadn't completed the requirement. Now that the backlog is cleared, faculty members are considering whether to extend that policy into the 2018-19 academic year.

"I frankly think it's immoral for us to have a requirement we can't staff," said sociology professor Jerry Daday, who proposed the change last semester.

Following a committee's preliminary approval Monday, the extension will next go before the full University Senate later this month for a vote.

Daday said the goal of the extension is to allow time for development of a language placement test that would be given to future incoming students.

Previously, students had to demonstrate their foreign language proficiency by either completing a 102 level course or by taking the STAMP test. The STAMP test comes with a fee and takes more than two hours to complete with a computer.

However, under the new placement exam, a student's score would determine what level of foreign language study they need or even if they need further study.

"If they test high enough, then they would have fulfilled our requirement," Daday said.



In theory, the placement test would be given in the spring or summer before the student comes to WKU or at orientation. The placement exam would be cheaper and much shorter than the conventional STAMP test, taking only about 30 minutes to complete, Daday said.

Over time, Daday said, the new approach could bring the demand for language instruction in line with the faculty's ability to supply it. Future student backlogs would be prevented entirely.

The University Senate next meets at 3:45 p.m. March 22 in the Faculty House outside Cherry Hall.

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