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WKU faculty approve further changes to foreign language requirement

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Students at Western Kentucky University will be able to use two years of a high school world language to fulfill the university's foreign language requirement through the 2019-20 academic year, following faculty approval Thursday.

Faculty members of WKU's University Senate voted in December to approve the change for the 2017-18 academic year to clear a backlog at the time of roughly 7,000 students who hadn't met the university's foreign language requirement.

During their monthly meeting Thursday, faculty senators initially considered extending the policy to the 2018-19 academic year but ultimately decided to extend it another year.

Jerry Daday, a sociology professor who proposed the original change in December, urged faculty to take action to prevent future backlogs. He said the university is expecting students to show up for orientation for two weeks and needs to know where it stands.

"The reality is, if we do nothing, students show up in two weeks and our existing world language proficiency requirement is on the table," he said.

Previously, students had to take either a 102-level course or take the STAMP test. That's a test that comes with a \$35 fee and takes more than two hours to complete with a computer.

With the policy change extended, faculty will now develop a foreign language placement test for future incoming students. The test will determine what level of language study students need or if they're already proficient by the university's standards.

Daday previously told the Daily News that the test could be given in the spring or summer before a student comes to WKU or at orientation. It would also be cheaper and less time-consuming than the STAMP test, taking only about 30 minutes to take.

Over time, the new approach could tame the demand for language instruction at WKU, preventing future student backlogs altogether. The university only offers 2,300 seats a year and sees more than 3,000 new students enroll each year, Daday said Thursday.

Faculty in the Department of Modern Languages will have until October 2019 to present the results of their pilot placement test.



Faculty also approved a resolution asking WKU President Timothy Caboni to renegotiate a 20-year dining services contract with Aramark in exchange for renovating the Garrett Conference Center.

Faculty Regent Claus Ernst has previously said the deal will raise students' dining fees.

“The problem I see with this is this is predominantly financed by dining fees,” he said at a previous meeting. “So we currently have a \$75 fee for students who are not signing up for any meal plan. This will rise to \$150 in the fall. It will rise to \$300 the fall thereafter. It will rise to \$350 thereafter, and it’s a per semester fee.”

Ernst has said WKU’s Board of Regents didn’t approve the contract because its bylaws give the president that authority. The contract was signed by then-President Gary Ransdell.

Anthropology professor Kate Hudepohl spoke out against the deal at the University Senate’s meeting Thursday.

“This is a horrible contract that should not have happened,” she said.

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