

Motion to Alter Colby's Language Requirement

Purpose: I am proposing that we change the language requirement from the equivalent of three semesters to the equivalent of two semesters.

The What: Prior to bringing this motion to SGA, I researched the various language requirements of all of the other NESCAC schools. There are only three that have a three-semester language requirement as we do (more on other schools' requirements to follow), with several schools stating that they do not have such a language requirement because they want allow their students to explore all of the courses that their institutions have to offer and choose to take the ones that interest them most. I also discussed the effect that the lack of language requirements has on students at these schools (specifically, Bowdoin and Bates as these are very similar institutions to Colby). These students had nothing but positive things to say about their limited core curriculum requirements (both language and others). I would like to add that I am not suggesting that we get rid of all of our core requirements, I am just saying that I feel we should limit the number of courses in each discipline so that students are introduced to each field, but are not forced to sacrifice taking other courses and feel negatively about their ability to learn because they have to take courses that are not as naturally good at as other courses.

The How: I decided to bring this motion to SGA prior to proposing it to the Academic Committee or administration because I felt that SGA's support would greatly benefit the reception of this motion. So, should this motion pass, my next step would be to Melissa Glenn who is the Academic Committee chair, discuss her thoughts on the motion, and work with her to create an adaptive version of this motion for the Academic Committee. I also want to get Barbara Moore's thoughts on the motion as she has served in many roles at Colby and would be able to offer insight on how faculty might receive such a motion and how to go about introducing this idea to them. Finally, after the Academic Committee approves the motion and I receive Dean Moore's advice, I will propose this change to the faculty for them to vote on it.

Strengths and Importance: This proposal is incredibly important because it will allow students to have more freedom to explore their liberal arts education and fit courses into their schedules that excite them. In particular, language classes meet four times a week in the morning, which prevents students from taking many courses due to conflicting times. Specifically, this is challenging for underclassmen (who are usually taking their language courses early on in their time at Colby) because it prevents them from exploring other disciplines and taking other 100-level classes, which are the bases for various majors. Altering the language requirement would diminish this effect. This proposal will also allow students who are not as naturally gifted

in languages to be able to appreciate and understand this discipline, as students who prefer languages do in other fields, without it causing so many scheduling conflicts, frustrations with learning, and credits to be taken up by the language courses instead of exploring other fields, taking courses they enjoy, or working on major requirements. Currently, students must take 3 courses, with many language majors only requiring 10 courses in total, so students must take a third of a language major to complete their core requirements.

Possible Risk Areas: In general, passing a new academic legislature is challenging at Colby because there has been such a long precedence set. However, I plan to remind Colby's administration that there have been several policies changed recently such as the JanPlan requirement (this was originally due to COVID, but is an example of how policies can be changed), that this change is consistent with other NESCAC's policies, and that other disciplines' core requirements do not have as many requirements. Also, I am not suggesting that we get rid of the requirement altogether, but find a compromise by decreasing the requirement by one semester.

Intuition and Questions Already Addressed: As I mentioned, the first that I addressed was to investigate all of the language policies in place at other NESCAC schools and discovered that only Trinity, Connecticut College, and Tufts have a 3-semester language requirement. The remainder of NESCAC schools do not have a language requirement at all, including Middlebury, which was ranked the number one language college in 2022 and is known for incorporating language into many of its other programs. Finally, in my discussions with students from both Bates and Bowdoin, these schools have recently changed their foreign language requirements in order to reflect on both the rigor of their other programs and allow their students to fully explore their liberal arts education without so many core requirements hindering their course options.

Contact Information for questioning, clarification, or pre-meeting critiques:

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