

February 12, 2024

Dear Dean Venetria K. Patton,

The SLCL EO committee met on February 7, 2024. After some discussion, it was moved per majority of votes (7 in favor, 1 against and 1 abstention, that we support the suggested compromise of requiring two semesters of LOTE instruction rather than four in the proposed Bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies (BLS), provided that our support be accompanied by a strong statement affirming the residential LOTE requirement for degree programs across campus, and affirming that the LOTE requirement in the proposed BLS is understood specifically as language instruction and cannot be substituted with cultural competency courses. We also voted to request that the present letter be included in the proposal to establish the BLS degree that will be submitted to the Senate Education Policy Committee. Please note, this decision is fully supported by the SLCL Director.

The executive officers of SLCL wish to confirm our belief that language instruction is a crucial, irreplaceable component in the preparation of all our students. Our primary concern is that the decision to reduce the LOTE requirement for the BLS program will result in relaxation, substitution, or elimination of the LOTE requirement for other degree programs on our campus. We wish to state in the most emphatic terms possible that our willingness to accept a less rigorous requirement with regard to the BLS degree is limited exclusively to the BLS program due to particular considerations regarding this degree program as it has been presented to us: An online baccalaureate degree completion program for adult learners with an unusually constricted timeline for completing all graduation requirements.

Our vote in favor of the compromise in no way suggests our willingness to relax, substitute, or eliminate the residential LOTE requirement for other degree programs on our campus. We strongly believe that the current requirement is in the best interest of SLCL, LAS, and most of all, our students. After two semesters of study, learners can achieve basic proficiency in a foreign language, enabling them to handle simple conversations on very familiar, everyday topics. With an additional two semesters, learners can reach an intermediate level of proficiency, widely considered to be the minimum level for integration into a society where the language is spoken and to engage in more culturally appropriate interaction. Furthermore, as faculty in SLCL, we are strongly committed to diversity in a global society, and we see competency in more than one language as vital to any enterprise that seeks to promote the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion among our student body.

Our collective experience and expertise as educators in languages, cultures, and linguistics teach us that the LOTE requirement is a cornerstone in our students' academic, intellectual, cultural and cognitive development, that language learning enhances communication abilities and cultural awareness, that proficiency in multiple languages opens doors to diverse career opportunities in the global job market, and that students engaged in language learning often outperform their peers in a range of academic areas. Furthermore, language instruction helps to promote a lifelong love of learning, personal growth, and a broader global perspective, fostering well-rounded individuals prepared for success in an interconnected and diverse world. We want *all* University of Illinois students to share in these extraordinary benefits.

While we accept the compromise proposal to lessen the LOTE requirement for BLS students, this does not change our position that the learning outcomes associated with the residential LOTE requirement are a critical component of earning a degree on our campus.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the SLCL Executive Officers and Ryan Shosted, SLCL Associate Director.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mariselle Meléndez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mariselle Meléndez  
Director, School of Literatures, Cultures & Linguistics  
Professor of Latin American Literatures & Cultures