

UAC Response to President Philip's Request

The Undergraduate Academic Council has given serious consideration to the President's request for feedback regarding the proposed deactivation of the French, Russian, Italian, Theatre, and Classics Programs. Over the span of two weeks, members of the UAC have shared a variety of suggestions, opinions, and strategies regarding this proposal and the following is a summary of those comments.

Student Notification/Information

- A primary concern of the UAC is that all students be notified of the proposed deactivation in order to plan accordingly. Immediately after the initial announcement of the proposed deactivations, all intended majors in these programs were identified and individually notified of this proposed change. However, undeclared/unintended majors or minors are not identifiable and therefore could not be individually notified. Therefore, the UAC feels that it is particularly important for all students to be made aware of the proposed changes in order to afford them the best opportunity to plan their course selections appropriately.
- Concerns were expressed about the ability of current students to declare majors or minors in these areas if they had planned to do so and were already invested in the program. It is noted that the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education has implemented an appeals process to address the needs of those students and, to date, a number of students have utilized that appeal. It is the recommendation of the UAC that the appeals process be more broadly publicized and information about the process be distributed to all students and advisors.
- Additionally, members of the UAC expressed concern about the ability of current students to obtain the necessary courses and access to faculty that they will need in order to graduate from these programs, if in fact the programs become deactivated. Specifically, can we guarantee that students currently in these majors and minors will be able to meet graduation requirements? There is a clear commitment to assisting these students to plan for the completion of program requirements. However, the UAC is seeking clarification regarding proposed timelines for completion of program requirements to ensure that students are advised correctly and able to fulfill degree requirements.

Project Renaissance

- The UAC discussed the discontinuation of the Freshman focused Project Renaissance Program at some length. In general, the Council feels that the discontinuation of the program could impact potential recruitment and retention of students who look forward to participation in this unique program.

Impact on Other University Course Offerings

- Members of the UAC expressed concern over how deactivation of these programs, and subsequent diminished offerings at the upper level of certain language courses, would impact other programs on campus. Specifically identified were the Globalization and English program's uses of courses from the targeted departments. Even though it was noted that these courses are not required for either major, and alternative options are available, the concern remained that this would narrow options for students and could create greater demand on other programs across campus. One member suggested that it would be beneficial to consider retaining the upper division language courses in the targeted programs if they are currently utilized by other departments. It was thus recommended that the University engage in widespread discussion regarding the impact of these deactivations on other programs as well as which, if any, of the courses in the targeted programs might remain.
- The impact on the general education sequence was considered by the UAC. While it is clear that a number of language courses and sequences remain at UAlbany, the UAC notes that deactivation of these programs would likely impact the number of lower level language courses available to students to meet the general education requirement.
- Additionally, there was concern about the impact on general education courses given the closure of Project Renaissance. It was noted that Project Renaissance provided a minimum of 350 general education seats per semester and students who would have completed general education requirements through Project Renaissance will no longer be able to do so. It is estimated that this will create a demand of 700 or more seats in existing general education classes annually.

Other Comments/Notes

- It was noted that enrollment has been highlighted as the primary area of consideration in choosing these programs for potential deactivation. Given the current budget situation, and the possibility that similar discussions will be undertaken by UAC in the future, some members have asked for clarification of the other factors considered in choosing these programs.