

October 14, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Elizabeth Beise
Chair of the Senate CORE Committee

FROM: Arthur Popper
Professor of Biology and Chair of the University Senate

SUBJECT: Proposed Revision to the Humanities and the Arts Requirement
In the CORE Distributive Studies Program
(Senate Document Number 04-05-18)

At its last meeting, the Senate Executive Committee reviewed the attached proposal from Professor James Harris, Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. It addresses a concern raised, but not resolved at the Senate meeting on April 19, when an optional interdisciplinary and emerging issues category was approved as an addition to the CORE Distributive Studies Program. Because of the revisions to the Distributive Studies Program, courses in Humanities Other--philosophy, linguistics, and the languages--must now compete with courses in Humanities Literature, Humanities Arts, and Interdisciplinary and Emerging Issues. From the Dean's perspective Humanities Other deserves a special focus as a fundamental body of ideas. Last spring, the Collegiate Council, the department chairs, and the directors in the College of Arts and Humanities concurred with the Dean's view and voted unanimously to require that a third course, if taken in Humanities and the Arts, be from Humanities Other.

The Senate Executive Committee asks you and the Senate CORE Committee to study carefully the implications and the language of the proposed new rule: "If two courses are chosen, one must be an HL and one must be HA. If, a third course is chosen, it must be selected from either HO or I."

- Please investigate the practices of our peers to determine whether philosophy and the languages are given more emphasis or whether our practice, as reflected in the new Distributive Studies requirement, is the norm.
- Please consult with the Senate Educational Affairs Committee about the merits of this proposal and its impact if enacted.
- Please consider whether this adjustment to the Humanities and the Arts category will benefit liberal arts education or will have a minimal effect.

Some members of the Executive Committee have expressed reservations about making another change in the Distributive Studies Program without due deliberation particularly after a revision to CORE has been so recently approved. For that reason, I have set no deadline for returning a report. When you do submit a report, please send it to the Senate Office, 1100 Marie Mount Hall. If you have questions, please contact Dr. Mary Giles by e-mail at mgiles@deans.umd.edu.

AP:mdg

cc: George Bean, Chair of the Senate Educational Affairs Committee

Enclosure