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SB71-13/14: Critical Languages

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Whereas, Arabic, Chinese, and Russian have been designated critical languages by the US Department of State;

Whereas, such a designation entitles programs and students involved with these languages to unique scholarship and funding opportunities from the federal government and other organizations;

Whereas, the University of Montana (UM) offers interdisciplinary minors in Arabic Studies and Russian Studies as well as a minor in the Chinese language;

Whereas, much of this enrollment increase was the result of recruitment efforts at Missoula high schools and the establishment of an Arabic Language Program in Missoula County Public Schools;

Whereas, the summer high school program Montana Arabic Summer Institute (MASI), has graduated over 100 students in the past, most of whom show interest in taking college-level Arabic courses at UM-Missoula after finishing high school;

Whereas, both of the aforementioned programs are funded by the US federal government through a National Security Agency grant;

Whereas, due to the funding shortfall in the spring of 2013, one section of Arabic 101 was zeroed out for several weeks until the other could be filled;

Whereas, due to scheduling conflicts, the zeroed-out section prevented existing UM students as well as potential UM students in high school from registering for Arabic;

Whereas, the decrease of two sections of 100-level Russian language classes in the fall semester to only one section in the spring is detrimental to students’ academic opportunities and harms long term enrollment in the Russian language program;

Whereas, Arabic, Russian, and Chinese are small language programs and any factor inhibiting enrollment in introductory sections can threaten the long-term viability of student recruitment for these expanding programs;

Whereas, the Montana Board of Regents approved an Arabic minor in 2011 with two full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty members;
Whereas, many critical language alumni from UM have gone on to win prestigious national scholarships such as the Fulbright, Critical Language, and Mitchell Scholarships, enhancing UM’s reputation for academic excellence;

Therefore, Let It Be Resolved, that the Associated Students of the University of Montana (ASUM) requests that critical language programs be maintained at current staffing and funding levels, as calculated by FTE, to protect the institutional knowledge and expertise they have developed;

Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, that ASUM requests that the current number of sections, advisory duties, and other funding of critical language programs be maintained;

Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, that funding methodology take into account the unique and integral role of these programs;

Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, that a copy of this resolution be sent to Dr. Khaled Huthailly and Professor Samir Bitar, Arabic Department; Professor Alice Harris, Russian Language Professor; Professor Robert Greene, Chair of History and Professor of Russian History; Professor Ona Renner-Fahey, Professor of Russian Language; Professor Zhen Cao, Professor of Chinese Language; Dr. Gilbert Quintero, Chair, Department of Anthropology; Dr. Mehrdad Kia, Director of Central and Southwest Asian Studies Center; Chris Comer, Dean of College of Humanities and Sciences; Perry Brown, Provost; and Royce Engstrom, President of the University of Montana.

Passed by Committee: March 17, 2014
Passed by ASUM Senate: March 19, 2014
19Y-3N-2A

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Sean McQuillan,    Mariah Williams,
Relations and Affairs Chair   Chair of the Senate