

WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

January 3, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Gavin Keulks, President, Faculty Senate
Members of Faculty Senate Executive Committee

FROM: Michele V. Price, Director
Study Abroad and International Exchanges

Eliot Dickinson, Chair, International Education and Services Committee

SUBJECT: Study Abroad and WOU required diversity credits

At the November 2010 International Education and Services Committee meeting, the members of the committee unanimously endorsed a recommendation to submit a proposal to the Faculty Senate, requesting approval for students to use their credits earned abroad and the WOU study abroad capstone project to fulfill Western Oregon University's cultural diversity requirement of six (6) credits.

WOU has an established on-line submission process for course and program requests; however, we are not requesting a new course or program. Rather we are requesting approval for an additional way for students to meet the cultural diversity requirement.

Because our proposal does not fit neatly within the current WOU curricular proposal process, we consulted with Robert Monge, Chair of the Curriculum Committee and Gavin Keulks, Faculty Senate President about the best way to proceed. They both agreed that we should submit our proposal directly to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee for review and guidance about next steps.

Proposal

Currently, students enroll in WOU catalog designated cultural diversity courses to fulfill the six (6) required cultural diversity credits. The designated courses are approved in a variety of disciplines. When students enroll in these courses, they simultaneously fulfill the cultural diversity requirement and requirements in the LACC, major, or minor. We are requesting approval for students earning credit through WOU study abroad and internship programs to be able to use those credits and the one credit study abroad capstone project to fulfill this six (6) credit cultural diversity requirement in a similar way. Students earning fewer than the six (6)

credits still would need to complete an additional on-campus cultural diversity course to complete the requirements.

Rationale

Currently, WOU students may participate in exchange programs, study abroad programs, international internships, and programs that offer a combination of study abroad and service. Some programs are as short as two weeks and others as long as a year. Students enrolled in the short term programs complete pre-and post-session work. Programs are available in the Americas, Asia, Africa, Europe, and Oceania.

All study abroad courses are reviewed by WOU's academic departments, divisions, and deans. The departments and divisions assign WOU course equivalencies and the number of credits for the courses. When the Registrar's Office posts study abroad courses to student transcripts, they are posted with the WOU prefix, number, and title. This process for study has been in place since 1995 and works successfully.

Students are always surprised to learn that even though they are about to embark on an immersion experience in another country, in another culture, and perhaps in another language, they aren't able to use those credits or their one credit study abroad capstone project to fulfill the cultural diversity requirement. At times, this has discouraged students from studying abroad because they planned to complete those requirements during their study abroad program.

There are many reasons why it is important to encourage greater participation in international programs. In a recent article in the *International Educator*, Janet Hustrand, a writer and advocate for the international experience, very articulately expressed, "Learning about historical events firsthand in locations where they took place doesn't just teach about the past; it helps students make connections to events that have shaped today's societies and developed today's cultures."

The international experience is essential to the education of our students, and the International Education and Services Committee is committed to making study abroad and international internships more accessible to all students by removing what students perceive as barriers. Granting approval for students to use their study abroad credits and study abroad capstone project to fulfill the cultural diversity requirement would remove one of those barriers.

Logistics

The Office of Study Abroad and International Exchanges registers students for their study abroad programs, using a placeholder prefix and number INTL 399. When the office receives the student's transcript, they produce an equivalency sheet for the Registrar's Office that includes the WOU prefix, numbers, titles, credits and grades for each course. When the Registrar's

Office receives the equivalency sheet, they remove the INTL 399 placeholder course and replace with the WOU approved equivalencies. As shown below, the transcript clearly displays the WOU equivalencies as well as the location of study.

Spring 2010								
Term Comments:			SA: MORELIA, MEXICO					
Academic Standing:			Academic Honor Roll					
Subject	Course	Level	Title	Grade	Credit Hours	Quality Points	Start and End Dates	R
INTL	399	UG	SA: CAPSTONE PROJECT	IB-	1.000	2.70		
SPAN	201D	UG	SECOND YEAR SPANISH	A-	4.000	14.80		
SPAN	202D	UG	SECOND YEAR SPANISH	A-	4.000	14.80		
SPAN	203D	UG	SECOND YEAR SPANISH	A-	4.000	14.80		
SPAN	399	UG	SPEC STUDIES	A-	1.000	3.70		
SPAN	407	UG	CONTEMP MEXICAN HISTORY	A-	3.000	11.10		
Term Totals (Undergraduate)								

WOU has a well defined process for assigning cultural diversity “D” designation to on-campus courses; however, to submit every study abroad or international internship course through that process would be unwieldy and time consuming for the academic departments, faculty senate curriculum committee, and the Registrar’s Office.

If this proposal is approved, the International Education and Services Committee recommends that the Office of Study Abroad and International Exchanges and the Registrar’s Office develop a process either via Banner or manually whereby the cultural diversity requirement is shown as fulfilled on the student’s academic program at the same time that the study abroad and international internship credits are posted on the transcript.

We thank you for your consideration of our proposal and respectfully encourage you to approve our request. If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact Michele Price (88493, pricemv@wou.edu) or Eliot Dickinson (88835 dickinse@wou.edu).