

Foreign Language Department Axed at NCA&T

Contributed by LaRia Land – Black College Wire
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Spanish, French degree programs to be halted; department phased out

The foreign language Bachelor of Arts degree programs will no longer be offered in Spanish and French, and the department will be completely phased out in two years, Goldie Byrd, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at North Carolina A&T State University, announced recently.

Byrd said that the university was acting on a mandate from administration within the UNC system to assess which academic programs were high or low producing and to make the necessary cuts to offset budget restraints.

A degree program is considered low producing if in two consecutive years it does not graduate a minimal of 20 students. In the last two academic school years before the review was conducted, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, the Foreign Language Department graduated only nine students in both Spanish and French. And since 2005-2006, the most students to graduate from both degree programs combined have been six in a single year.

This decision was not a "reflection of the quality of education" within the department or its professors, Byrd said. Many students took the change personally and felt as if it were forced upon them without an opportunity to have their concerns heard or a chance to improve the department to review-passing standards.

"This is my major that they are shutting down," said Chloe McSwan, a sophomore Spanish major from Virginia Beach, Va. "I really wouldn't have a choice [but to change majors]. I just can't go to UNCG because I could lose my tennis scholarship and I am an out-of-state-student."

"Basically they are closing our future," said Helen Briggs, a junior Spanish major from Chapel Hill, N.C. "They want us to go abroad [and participate in globalization], but if they have no foreign language department how are we going to communicate with these international people and companies."

Students who have completed 50 percent of their degree requirements by the end of this semester, a minimal of 62 credit hours, will be able to continue their matriculation under a teach-out program. Those who do not meet the credit requirements are encouraged to meet with their adviser to consider changing majors or possibly institutions.

"As a dean and [former] chairperson, the last thing I want to see is a program cut, but it's done," Byrd said. "[We] want to make sure you know what your options are, how best to help you get your degree."

The administration assured the students that upper-level advanced classes would not close due to low enrollment to ensure a fair opportunity for students to complete the required major courses in the designated time frame.

Additionally, students would not be granted a degree in this department after 2013 even if they utilize the consortium agreement and take classes at another UNC system institution.

Byrd would not comment on the status of the faculty and staff after the department is gone, and she refused to state with certainty under which department foreign language classes would be offered after the phase out.

The Department of Foreign Languages was the youngest degree program to be cut, currently servicing 30 students from all classification levels.

"Dr. Bravo, Profesora Carrig, Dr. Morales and Professor Niditch are by far the best teachers I have ever had in my life. They embrace the language and culture and share that enthusiasm with the students," McSwan said. "I'm just devastated about the closing of the program."

The administration acknowledged that this was only the first round of program cuts.

LaRia Land writes for The A&T Register, the North Carolina A&T State University student newspaper, which originally published a version of this article. {moshaloscan}