

To: Senate Steering Committee

From: Senate Planning and Review Committee
Richard J. Rozek, Chair

Re: Review Department of Modern Languages and Literatures
proposal for a new major in Japanese Language and Literature

The Department of Modern Languages and Literatures in the College of Arts and Sciences has submitted a proposal to a new major in Japanese Language and Literature. This proposal was approved by the College of Arts and Sciences Committee on Instruction on November 28, 2007. This proposal has the support of the SPRC.

Program Strengths

Japanese language courses were offered for the first time in 1975-76. At that time, Japanese courses were taught by part-time instructors only and the program was essentially considered to be peripheral in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures (DMLL). Over the years with continuing interest of students in taking Japanese, the popularity seemed to warrant a full-time faculty position in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, and in 1992 a new tenure-track position in Japanese was created, initially funded through a large grant from the McGregor Foundation. The new faculty member was given the mission to develop the Japanese program in the DMLL as well as to provide courses in the Center for International Programs. Demands for advanced courses in Japanese as well as independent studies in Japanese brought this proposal forward.

Another compelling strength for the Japanese major has to do with the thriving international business community located near the Oakland University campus in Oakland County. Just as the DMLL has experienced a steady growth of interest in its Japanese program over the last decades, so has Southeastern Michigan in Japan. In particular, Oakland County witnessed a steady influx of international, and most notably Japanese, businesses. The Daily Oakland Press (July 16, 2005) reports that there are 347 Japanese companies in Michigan, of which Oakland County is the "home to the largest collection of Japanese-affiliated facilities," numbering 177. Oakland County has a Japanese school run by the Japanese government for children of Japanese families residing in this area. In 2006, the school had 991 students and it is the second largest of the Japanese schools in the USA. Local high schools have responded to the influx of Japanese people to the area by offering Japanese language courses for American high school students. West Bloomfield, Clarkston, Birmingham, Livonia, Ferndale, Troy, Walled Lake, Utica and Warren, for example, are all school districts that offer Japanese in their curricula. Often, many students come to Oakland University upon graduating from high school with the expectation of being able to continue their Japanese studies at

the university level. A growing number of high school students also take Japanese courses at Oakland University.

Lastly, the rising popularity of Japanese among K-12 students leads to a greater demand for Japanese instructors than ever before in our area. In the past 10 years, a number of middle and high school teachers have enrolled in our evening Japanese courses for the express purpose of preparing to teach Japanese at their schools. In response to this demand, the Japanese major at OU intends to meet the STEP and MED standards.

Issues and Concerns

In the first sentence of the Abstract it states "Japanese is offered currently as a minor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures (DMLL) and a major in the Center for International Programs under East Asian Studies. We need clarification on the interaction between Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and the Center for International Programs under East Asian Studies. Should the major in Japanese language be in Center for International Programs under East Asian Studies where we assume Japanese culture is taught? Christopher R Clason, Prof German/Chair Modern Languages & Literatures writes, "We appreciate your alert regarding the first paragraph of the abstract, which has raised questions that are relevant, but not real. The Center for International Studies does not offer a major in Japanese language, but rather a major in East Asian studies in which Japanese studies and Chinese studies are a focus. We are suggesting a new beginning paragraph that will simply be a straightforward request for the new major." Professor Clason further states, "We do not anticipate that the major in Japanese Language and Literature will have significant impact on the programs in the Center for International Programs."

Will the new Proposal for a major in Japanese take students away from the current Japanese major in Center for International Programs under East Asian Studies? Professor Clason, assured the Senate Planning Review Committee that they do not anticipate that the major in Japanese Language and Literature will have a significant impact on the programs in the Center for International Programs. He indicated that the budget for the proposed major is built on students new to Oakland University. Typically some students from other majors in the university gravitate to a new major, and that will be true for this major as well, especially since students who really wanted the major in Japanese have settled for other majors or gone elsewhere. But that impact should be minimal.

This proposal has the support of SPRC.