

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies
Updating the Foreign Language Requirement
Resolution 2025-26B

Resolution Proposal Form Sent to University Council Cabinet	03/21/2025
First Reading by Commission	09/22/2025
Approval by Commission	Date
First Reading by Senate	09/26/2025
Approval by Senate	Date
Faculty Senate Comment	Date
Staff Senate Comment	09/23/2025
Administrative and Professional Faculty Senate Comment	10/06/2025
Graduate and Professional Student Senate Comment	Date
Undergraduate Student Senate Comment	10/03/2025
First Reading, University Council	Date
Approved, University Council	Date
Approved, President	Date
Approved, Board of Visitors	Date
Effective Date	Upon Approval or Date

WHEREAS, Presidential Policy Memorandum 68 (PPM 68) revised University admissions requirements of undergraduate applicants to include a minimum of four units of English, three units of math, two units of social sciences, two units of laboratory science, three additional units and four elective units; and

WHEREAS, PPM 68 introduced a new requirement that “all graduates of Virginia Tech must meet a language study requirement either by completing two units of a single foreign or classical language study during high school (3 units by the College of Arts and Sciences); by earning 6 semester hours of college-level foreign language credit, such credits to be in addition to the number normally required for graduation in a student's program of study; or by receiving credit by examination for a foreign or classical language”; and

WHEREAS, 99% of the 2017-2019 cohorts of admitted students met the language study requirement (232 students out of a total of 23,684 took courses at Virginia Tech to meet the requirement) largely due to the large number of applicants from Virginia high schools awarded the Advanced Studies Diploma, which requires two years of a single foreign or classical language; and

WHEREAS, for those admitted students meeting this admissions requirement prior to graduation, the stipulation these six credits of foreign language earned are in addition to the number normally required for graduation poses issues unique to Virginia Tech that can compromise a timely graduation, including financial aid and minimum credit hours toward graduation; and

WHEREAS, tracking this requirement institutionally requires custom programs that will be unavailable once the student information system (Banner) is moved to the updated university management software for enterprise resource planning (SaaS); and

WHEREAS, enforcement of the language requirement at admission does not eliminate or preclude additional foreign or classical language courses as part of a specific degree requirement; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the language study requirement be enforced at the time of admission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the university will monitor for any unintentional barriers to admissions created by this change in enforcement by identifying changes in the pool of applicants denied admission due to the requirement.



Undergraduate Student Senate
Comments on CUSP 2025-26B

October 3, 2025

Overall, considering that this change will not pose an immense impact on students currently pursuing their degrees, I can see that by requiring the foreign language requirement to be met in advance to beginning at the university will help minimize the logistical concerns on the advising end as well as may help students using various financial aid programs who require their credits to contribute directly to their degree program being that these credits, as of now, are only meeting their graduation requirement. However, being that admissions cycles seems to move earlier by the year, with on-site admissions interest surveyed in late September and finalized by early November, my worry is that the current language of the “Now, therefore, be it resolved” clause, requiring enforcement at the time of admission will disproportionately impact students who are in their final year of meeting the foreign language requirement. I would like to ensure that the requirement could be better communicated in that clause to ensure that students who are actively meeting that requirement at the time of admission are not discounted or misled to believe that they would not qualify for admission. Additionally, I find it may be beneficial to indicate that a large consideration of this resolution is to mitigate Banner SaaS compliance and should be noted within a whereas clause.

- Emma Roshioru, President of the Undergraduate Student Senate

To learn a foreign language requires discipline with studying and promotes better studying habits. I think it's important for students to have those requirements before starting their first year at Virginia Tech. Not necessarily before being admitted but before they start.

- Undergraduate Student Senate Senator

While I appreciate CUSP's acknowledgment of the concerns raised by the Staff Senate, I want to bring attention to several critical flaws in the rationale being used to justify this policy change; flaws that risk undermining our institutional commitments to equity, access, and student success. CUSP asserts that enforcing the language requirement at admission “does not create additional barriers.” This framing is inaccurate and reductive. Under the current system, students who arrive without having met the requirement have a corrective pathway: six credits of language study during their undergraduate career. Eliminating that option transforms a flexible, post-admission

opportunity into a hard exclusion. This disproportionately impacts: Transfer students, including those from Virginia's community college system, Non-traditional and older students, GED holders and first-generation college students, and Applicants from under-resourced high schools, especially those without robust language offerings. Something already brought to CUSPS attention but reiterated out of importance. This is not a neutral shift. it's a structural gatekeeping mechanism that narrows access for precisely the students our institution claims to uplift. CUSP cites that fewer than 1% of students used the on-campus pathway to fulfill the requirement. But percentages don't erase real impact. For those students, the pathway wasn't optional, it was essential. Equity is about whether opportunities exist for all students, not about how many use them. The small number proves that the pathway was a critical safeguard for those with the least access, not that it's unnecessary. Removing it abandons exactly the students our institution claims to uplift. More importantly, the data only reflects admitted students. It fails to account for the invisible population... those who never applied, were discouraged from applying, or were screened out due to lack of access to language instruction. Without that information, claims that this won't impact access are unfounded. We are making permanent exclusions based on incomplete evidence. Removing this pathway doesn't just affect current students, it erases future Hokies before they even reach the application portal. Citing the Banner system's SaaS migration as justification for eliminating the pathway prioritizes administrative convenience over student equity. Technology should be adapted to serve students, not the other way around. If the current system cannot track compliance post-admission, the solution is not exclusion. It's innovation, something Virginia Tech is supposed to be known for. Universities regularly customize systems to meet student needs, eliminating an equity safeguard because it is inconvenient to program is a failure of priorities, not a necessity. Likewise, the "student protection" rationale, that students mistakenly counted these credits toward graduation, points to an advising and auditing issue, not a reason to eliminate a long-standing access point. CUSP claims its goal is to "remove hurdles that get in the way of student success." This policy does the opposite. It removes flexibility, narrows access, and disproportionately affects students who already face systemic barriers. A policy that acknowledges inequities but then codifies them is not equity minded, it's exclusionary. Students are paying more than ever in tuition, especially out-of-state students, and the university's responsibility is to maximize access, not narrow it. It is unacceptable to tell paying students that their needs cannot be accommodated because of system limitations or convenience. If this policy moves forward, it must be paired with an alternative pathway that preserves access for students who lacked language instruction opportunities. Conditional admission, bridge programs, or expanded community college partnerships are viable options. To do otherwise sends a harmful message, that current Hokies are valid, but future Hokies without the same privileges are not. Equity is not a talking point, it's a design principle. And policies that fail to reflect that must be reexamined.

- Miranda Archibald, Vice President for Inclusive and Strategic Affairs

Redundancy of the Requirement: The data included in the resolution itself shows that between 2017 and 2019, only 232 students failed to meet the foreign language requirement prior to admission. This is an extremely small portion of admitted students, and the vast majority already arrive at Virginia Tech with their language credits completed. This demonstrates that the current system works: the admissions requirement is already being satisfied by most students. Adding a stricter “completed at admission” mandate seems redundant and unnecessary.

2. Barrier to Access and Student Diversity By requiring completion prior to admission, the resolution could inadvertently penalize otherwise qualified students who come from schools or educational systems where foreign language offerings are limited or inconsistent. Students from rural areas, international systems, or homeschooling environments might be especially disadvantaged, even if they are capable of completing the requirement during their first year at VT under the current policy. This would limit accessibility and diversity, which are values central to Virginia Tech’s land-grant mission.

3. Personal Perspective Speaking from personal experience, I studied both French and Spanish beginning in middle school and continued with two years of each in high school. Despite this long-term exposure, it was still considered “insufficient” for the official credit requirement. On top of that, I have spoken Hindi and English fluently from a young age, giving me a genuinely multilingual background. Yet none of this was recognized in a way that satisfied the formal admissions requirement. This created unnecessary obstacles and highlights how rigid transcript-based rules fail to account for students’ real language abilities and experiences. A strict admission requirement would only magnify this problem and risk excluding students like me who have invested years in language study but don’t fit neatly into the credentialing system.

4. Better Alternatives Rather than moving the requirement fully to admission, Virginia Tech should preserve flexibility by keeping the current policy. Students who have not completed the requirement can fulfill it with six credits at Tech, which is already a fair and workable system. If the concern is ensuring preparedness, the university could also consider offering additional placement tests or alternative demonstrations of proficiency (e.g., oral assessments for bilingual students). All in all, this resolution unnecessarily adds rigidity to an area where flexibility is key. The data shows that the overwhelming majority of students already meet the requirement, and for the small minority who do not, the current policy provides a pathway without harming accessibility. I, Kovid Sharma, recommend rejecting Resolution 2025-26B or amending it to preserve flexibility for students to complete the requirement post-admission.

- Kovid Sharma, Undergraduate Student Senate At-Large Senator



Staff Senate

Comments on CUSP Resolution 2025-26B

September 23, 2025

The Staff Senate Committee on Policy and Issues has reviewed CUSP Resolution 2025-26B. We do have a few comments and questions for consideration.

Is this resolution's target to change the registrar's tracking of the language study requirement or to change admission requirements? If the latter is intended, there is a consensus of concern regarding applicants being affected by the enforcement of the language study requirement at admission. In either case we recommend more specific language is needed for clarity.

As written, this resolution would seem to exclude from acceptance applicants that did not complete the Advanced Studies Diploma in High School including transfers (including through the VA community college program), non-traditional/older, first-generation, out-of-state, GED, and students from VA high schools that do not offer/encourage 2 years of language study.

By removing the option for a student to fulfill the language study requirement during their undergraduate course work, will this resolution render the above mentioned and similar applicants to no longer be eligible to be admitted to Virginia Tech?

We have no further comment.

Thank you,

Gabe Petry, Chair Staff Senate Policies and Issues Committee

Dear Gabe,

Thank you for the comments and questions from the Policies and Issues Committee of the Staff Senate.

Currently, VT admits students without screening for compliance with the foreign language requirement (<https://catalog.vt.edu/undergraduate/admissions-information/>, “3 additional academic units (foreign language is highly recommended)”). Once the students are admitted, their transcripts are reviewed for compliance and if noncompliant, they are told they need to fulfill an admissions requirement of six or nine credit-hours of a foreign language (<https://advising.vt.edu/advisingresources/vt-foreign-language.html>) before they graduate. Since it is an admissions requirement, the credits and grades do not count toward graduation. Under these circumstances, tracking data from three cohorts of admissions from 2017 to 2019 show there were only 232 students (77 students average per admission year) who fulfilled the two-year high school requirement at Virginia Tech by taking two semesters of courses in the MCLL Department, out of 23,684 (less than 1%) total admitted. Of the VT departments that have a three-year admissions requirement of a foreign language, all 1,400 students fulfilled the VT requirement without taking a foreign language at Virginia Tech. It is important to note that this resolution does not prohibit any degree program from having language requirements as part of their degree requirements.

To answer the questions raised, the target of the resolution is to change tracking of the requirement by shifting the enforcement of the requirement from the time of graduation to the admissions stage. While the tracking of the requirement is necessitated by the transition from on premise Banner to Banner SaaS, the university’s enterprise resource planning system, a review of the data as listed in the resolution clearly shows that students do not need their time at VT to complete this requirement.

I appreciate the Staff Senate’s concern for students that might be excluded by this policy change as CUSP also had this concern. However, given the other admission requirements currently in place that include 4 units of English, 3 units of math, 2 units of laboratory science (chosen from biology, chemistry or physics), 2 units of social science (one must be history), 3 additional academic units (foreign language is highly recommended), and 4 elective units, the enforcement of the foreign language requirement will not create additional barriers to the groups referenced that do not already exist. Related specifically to Virginia diplomas, an incomplete Advanced Studies Diploma in high school would have to be incomplete specifically in the language requirement since even a Standard Diploma fulfills VT admissions requirements with the exception of only a partial fulfillment of the world language requirement (<https://www.doe.virginia.gov/parents-students/forstudents/graduation/diploma-options/standard-diploma-graduation-requirements>) which is unlikely. As well, the VT requirement is satisfied broadly by “two units of either middle school or high school foreign or classical language or American Sign Language [or transfer credits from a community college].”

The other consideration of impact is a positive impact and concerns our current undergraduates who have fulfilled the foreign language requirement here at Virginia Tech. There have been circumstances where undergraduates have included mistakenly the six credit hours and grades of the foreign language courses in their calculations on progression towards graduation and upon course audit have had to face a delay of graduation. One could also imagine impacts on GPA calculations. This resolution will eliminate these situations for those graduating seniors. Lastly, I will ensure that CUSP considers your suggestion to make the intent of this policy clear.

I again want to thank the Senate's time and attention to provide feedback on this important resolution. I can assure you that your desire to not negatively impact prospective or current students is aligned with CUSP as we have made it our primary goal over the last 3 years to remove hurdles that get in the way of student success. Thank you for your partnership in these efforts!

Best regards,
Jim Tokuhisa Chair,
Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies



AP Faculty Senate

Comments on CUSP 2025-26B: Resolution Updating the Foreign Language Requirement

October 6, 2025

The A/P Faculty Senate Policies and Issues Committee has reviewed and approves/endorse the CUSP 2025-26B: Resolution Updating the Foreign Language Requirement.

The following comments were made:

When would this go into effect? Will this be communicated early (two years?) to prospective students so that they can ensure time to complete in their FL requirements in high school? Will there be an appeals process if a student has not completed 2 years of a single FL or is it just a hard no from admissions?

It would be helpful to know how many course credits were taken by the 232 students who registered for a course and what percentage of total language course credits taken that represented.

This will penalize students from small, rural localities where foreign language classes are limited or are only offered as online courses because the local school system is unable to hire qualified foreign language instructors. This happens a lot in smaller school systems and could be viewed as discrimination for those unable to meet this requirement in high school. I would simply suggest continuing with current practice without revision.

I believe this may disadvantage students who have not had the same opportunities as those in more advanced regions. In addition, this could prevent students from being admitted if they just failed to plan earlier.