

COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:
 Jessica Blanchard
 Managing Editor:
 Jeremy Lang
 Editorial Editor:
 Julie Lauderbaugh
 Assistant Editorial Editor:
 Jacquelyn Lewis

Thursday, January 17, 2002

Editorial

No, Non, Nein; In any tongue, 'no' to language requirement

When students come to the University to study, they are expecting to receive an education that will prepare them for their professional careers and enrich their lives. To help with this enrichment effort, the University has set up several requirements aimed at teaching different cultures, including languages, to produce well-rounded students. Unfortunately, the school's language requirement is merely a nuisance for many bachelor of arts students. The requirement is nothing more than a bother — language programs might teach fundamentals, but they don't teach practical application in the workplace.

Language enrichment is counterproductive when students take language courses because they have to and not because they want to. The requirement is not essential for many majors and impedes the graduation process. Although students have a choice of pursuing a bachelor of arts versus a bachelor of science degree, many who seek the former are frustrated because the language requirement is not personally useful for their careers. Many won't even remember what was taught after graduation.

Perhaps the University should create more useful curricula for students who will need language experience for their majors, such as Japanese for business majors or Spanish for journalism students. This option would be more practical for students and it would help them prepare for their careers, which is a goal of the University. Being bilingual is an asset in today's society, but it is not imperative, and many students have no practical use for learning another language.

The Yamada Language Center is a great resource for students and could be used in conjunction with the new, focused, curricula. The center is more useful than standard language classes because it has current international political and social information, and offers a plethora of reading materials — both business and leisure. The YLC is a more practical resource for students seeking to incorporate language study into their major.

If the University wants bachelor of arts students to learn foreign languages, it should work on expanding its study abroad programs. Most language teachers would agree that immersion in the language and culture is the best way for students to learn, and more majors should be incorporated in the overseas curricula.

The bottom line is the language requirement is important, but only to those who plan on using it. Students who do not wish to study languages are free to pursue a bachelor of science. However, those students that are required to fulfill the language prerequisite should be given the option of doing so in accordance with their major.

Editorial Policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Please include contact information. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

Anti-depressants got you down?

Winter is a peak season for both illness and depression, but don't worry. These days, there seems to be a drug available to remedy nearly every malady imaginable. Our country has many options for treating illnesses, and countless people benefit from them every day. But too often, medication becomes a "fix-it-all" for both doctors and patients. The trap is especially prevalent when it comes to antidepressants, and it's worrisome that having a prescription for some type of antidepressant has become so common.

Some doctors are giving prescriptions too frequently, disregarding the importance of psychotherapy and other treatments for depression. According to U.S. News & World Report, "of those treated (for depression), the proportion taking antidepressants soared from 37 to 75 percent between 1987 and 1997." In addition, the number

of patients obtaining psychotherapy dropped 11 percent, though studies show old-fashioned therapy works just as well for many types of depression.

While antidepressants have helped many, and it should be an adult's choice whether to use drugs, antidepressants pose obvious problems. Side effects for different antidepressants range from headaches to convulsions, and sometimes the behavioral changes induced are far from desirable.

Few studies have been done to determine long-term side effects of certain antidepressants. Research is especially scarce when it comes to children and adolescents. Still, the drugs are widely prescribed for young people, with dosages based on height and weight.

A Portland jury awarded \$5.5 million to a college student who attempted suicide after being prescribed first Zoloft and then Prozac. Johnston sued his doctor, who had given him the prescriptions but failed to monitor the effects. Eric Harris, one of the Columbine shooters, was taking Luvox.

Does this mean their medications caused their behavior? Not necessarily. Pharmaceutical companies vehemently deny any implications, claiming the illness, not the medication, was the cause. But the correlation is definitely disturbing.

Adults have experienced problems as well. Last year, a group of 35 patients filed a major class action lawsuit against GlaxoSmithKline, alleging they'd suffered extreme withdrawal effects while trying to stop taking the drugs Paxil and Seroxit. The company claims the substances are nonaddictive.

Does all this mean we should take antidepressant medications off the market? No. But what it adds up to is the need for both doctors and patients to make better choices.

It's a call for pharmaceutical companies to be honest about side effects of the drugs they manufacture. Children shouldn't be prescribed antidepressants, except in extreme cases, until further research is completed.

Antidepressants are drugs. Like other drugs, they alter the body's chemical balance. Patients should review all possible side effects of the drugs and discuss in-depth with doctors and therapists whether they really need antidepressants. Psychotherapy is often a better alternative.

The choice should ultimately be the patient's — and in the case of a minor, the patient's parents as well — but it should also be an informed one.

E-mail assistant editorial editor
 Jacquelyn Lewis at
 jacquelynlewis@dailyemerald.com.
 Her opinions do not necessarily
 reflect those of the Emerald.



Steve Baggs Emerald

Letters to the editor

Pseudoscience of the stars

Last week, the 199th Meeting of the American Astronomical Society took place in Washington, D.C. Some of the highlights at this gathering of top United States astronomers included new star structures in the halo of the Milky Way, an incandescent fog of multimillion-degree gas around a supermassive black hole in the center of our galaxy, images from the world's first sub-millimeter array and discovery of what may be "planetesimals" — precursors of Earth-like planets and first discovery of a planet orbiting a giant star.

On the same date, the Emerald ran a front-page story on the "predictions" for the world and Eugene by a local astrologer ("Dark star rising," ODE, 1/10). The contrast between science and pseudoscience is sharp in the real world, but not evident

to the Emerald. Astrologers either know their lame predictions are false, and thus they fully understand that they prey on the weak of mind and the weak in spirit. Or they actually believe their nonsense and are not aware their work has no foundation in reality, in which case, they are plain stupid.

As a human interest story, the article contained nothing of interest to us thinking humans.

James Schombert
 astronomy professor

Joey was worth the money

Robert McShane wrote that the University wasted \$250,000 on "some jock" ("Harrington hype was too costly," ODE, Jan. 14). I completely disagree.

The \$250,000 spent on the "Joey Heisman" billboard was an investment in every sense of the word. They invested in

a young man, who, in turn, represented an entire University as well as any six-figure representative. That billboard (and entire campaign for that matter) was a huge responsibility to put on one student's — or athlete's, or person's — shoulders.

The easiest thing to do in that situation is to fold; collapse under the pressure. But Joey stood his ground and for the entire season stood as high as that billboard projected him. What does that say about the University? It says we create winners, both on the playing field and off.

Did you even watch the Fiesta Bowl, Rob? There's a reason his nickname is "Joe College." It's because he is the student body here, and you couldn't pick a representative for an entire University better than our Joey Harrington.

Jeff Hadley
 junior
 accounting