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## Chairman of Foreign Languages Department Address Language Requirement Issues

Ed Alsene  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

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# ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY /BLOOMINGTON, ILL. 61701

Jerry Bidle, Director of  
Public Relations

Phone (309) 556-3181

Ed Alsene, Director of  
Publicity and Sports Information

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Shortly after becoming chairman of the Foreign Languages department at Illinois Wesleyan University in 1975, Dr. Sue Huseman received a jolt.

Answers to a questionnaire she circulated indicated that most of the faculty in other departments felt that study of foreign languages was useful only for students headed for graduate school. Such an attitude wasn't rare in higher education at that time; many colleges and universities were dropping their foreign language requirements.

Such action never came about at Illinois Wesleyan, and members of the university's board of trustees could understand why today after hearing Ms. Huseman describe the progress the program has made in the last 6½ years. She spoke during the trustees' annual winter business meeting in Memorial Student Center.

In those 6½ years, the number of majors has more than doubled. In addition, students in many other disciplines are finding that a Wesleyan innovation, a Certificate of Fluency in German, Spanish or French, is adding to their marketability upon graduation.

"We started a program to educate faculty and students about the professional applications of foreign languages," she said. The campaign paid off, and the general faculty and administration responded with overwhelming support not only for the foreign language requirement for the bachelor of arts degree, but for further development of relations between foreign language and other disciplines.

The innovative program that has been developed by Ms. Huseman, a faculty member since 1969, and her seven colleagues in the department has been of benefit to non-majors and majors alike.

One of the first developments was the FLASK program (Foreign Language as an Ancillary Skill), one in which non-majors taking only the basic sequence are divided into groupings by interest areas. The first such program was designed to help nursing majors, who might find themselves working with Hispanics.

Career-related Spanish was later expanded into other areas and similar programs have

been developed with French and German.

A logical extension of the FLASK program was the development of a Certificate of Fluency for non-majors who continued beyond the three-course requirement. "We developed this in the mid-70s because we had many really talented students who wanted to continue their language study but not complete a major. We talked with the people in our Career Education Center and developed a certification process for students who completed four semesters in a language beyond the basic sequence and had at least a B average in the courses. It gave the students something concrete as an indication to potential employers that they had a special talent to offer," Ms. Huseman said.

Starting next fall, she said, the fluency requirement will be increased to five additional courses.

Majors follow two basic tracks--modern language and literature or secondary education. The program for those planning to teach is even more demanding than the language-literature track.

Students planning to teach must demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the aesthetic and intellectual history of the culture and its present-day manifestations, the ability to understand and analyze and explain literary works in the foreign language, a command of the language in written and oral communication, and the training qualities needed to teach others. Only students with excellent training in language, literature, culture and pedagogy should be certified for teaching jobs in today's market, Ms. Huseman said.

Double majors--students earning majors in related fields such as business, sociology and pre-law as well as in a foreign language--have become more numerous in recent years. "The majority of foreign language majors now are double majors. This makes our program highly individualized and provides excellent pre-professional preparation," she said.

Versatility is a necessity for handling such a wide range of programs in a small university like Illinois Wesleyan and Ms. Huseman reported that the department faculty members have been chosen with that in mind. "They were selected for their commitment to quality teaching as well as for their reputations as scholars. It is an exciting department. Most of our faculty are trilingual, which makes it possible to adjust to the needs of students and provides an international flavor," she said.

The bottom line, of course, is the quality of the students leaving campus for the

business and professional world, Ms. Huseman pointed out.

"We've had at least one of our students win a Fulbright award for study abroad in six of the last seven years and we have graduates in an amazingly wide range of occupations," she said.

Both while in school and as graduates, Wesleyan students have contributed to the betterment of their communities and professions, she said.

A senior served as a court interpreter for Hispanics while interning in Bloomington. Another intern worked this fall for a Chicago branch of a French bank and spoke French on the job.

Another student took advantage of an Independent Study opportunity to compile a booklet for Hispanics. It listed public social, medical and legal services available in Bloomington-Normal.

One graduate works for the Bank of Indo-China in Chicago, with French used as the official language. Another graduate became a steward on Pan-American Airlines, a position which required fluency in French and Spanish, and recently declined an offer to join Pan-Am management in order to continue his travels.

One graduate is a reference librarian in New York City, another represents a cabinet-maker from Germany, many have gone on to obtain a master of business administration degree in international business, many are involved in community outreach services and others have become teachers.

"We're proud, justifiably, we believe, of the achievements of our graduates. After all, that's why we're here," Ms. Huseman concluded.

In his administrative report to the trustees, University President Dr. Robert S. Eckley noted that a North Central Association Visiting Team has recommended reaccreditation for 10 years. Final action will be taken by the North Central Association Executive Board in April, Eckley said. The four-member team visited IWU Nov. 8-10.

The president also reported that the university's teacher education program has been approved by the Illinois Teacher Certification Board following a five-year review.

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