

**REPORT OF THE 2011 FACULTY SENATE FOREIGN LANGUAGE
IMPLEMENTATION TASKFORCE (FLITF)**

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A Cautionary Note Prior to Reading the FLITF Recommendations: Inconsistent Use of Regents

The Foreign Language Implementation Task Force's proposal recommends a phase-in period during which the foreign language requirement for transfer students in Harpur College, CCPA, and the School of Management would be the second-level college course in foreign language. A high school proficiency equivalency would need to be identified for second-level college foreign language. This is where the Task Force ran into what could be a major issue for implementation of its proposed phase-in plan.

There is currently an inconsistency between how we apply a score of 85 on the New York State Foreign Language Regents Exam (or equivalent)¹ for incoming transfer students, Watson Computer Science and Decker students (equal to one semester) and for incoming Harpur, CCPA and SOM freshmen (equal to two semesters). Although this is inconsistent, it has not been an issue because the foreign language requirement to date has been set at either one semester or three semesters of college foreign language.

The current General Education foreign language requirement has the following high school proficiency standards. They differ by population because these groups have different foreign language requirements.

1. For current transfer students, Watson Computer Science and Decker students: A Regents score of 85 equals one semester of college foreign language for current transfer students and Watson Computer Science and Decker students, all of whom have a one-semester language requirement. (For students from non-Regents high schools, the standard is a grade of 85 in the third unit of high school foreign language).
2. For current freshmen in Harpur, CCPA and SOM:
 - A course grade of 85 in the fourth unit of high school foreign language (or a grade of 85 in the third unit of two high school foreign languages) counts as the third level of college foreign language and marks Harpur, CCPA and SOM freshmen as proficient.
 - A Regents score of 85 equals two semesters of college foreign language, allowing students to fulfill the requirement with two semesters of a different college foreign language. (For students from non-Regents high schools, the standard is a grade of 85 in the third unit of high school foreign language).

Because there is no current cohort for whom two semesters of one foreign language satisfies the language requirement, we do not currently have an explicit statement about the number of high school units that would demonstrate proficiency. The proposal of this Task Force recommends a transitional two-semester requirement, for which we would need to explicitly identify the high school proficiency level. Consequently, the phased approach recommended by this task force can only be implemented in conjunction with a Faculty Senate resolution which establishes high

¹ Because New York State is discontinuing the Regents exams in foreign language as of the end of this year, a proposal is pending before the Faculty Senate to revise the text of the foreign language to allow the standards that have been in place for non-Regents schools to apply to New York State students who are no longer able to take the Regents exam. That is, a grade of 85 in the third unit of high school foreign language will be allowed for New York State students who are no longer able to take the Regents exam.

school proficiency equivalency for second-semester foreign language. It should be noted that if we set the Regents 85 as equivalent to two semesters of high school foreign language, we would be setting a higher equivalency for the Regents 85 than SUNY does; SUNY equates the Regents 85 with one semester of college foreign language.

While not part of our charge, FLITF provides some potential options for setting the high school equivalency for two semesters of college-level foreign language at Binghamton University in Appendix A of this report.

We repeat the final sentence of Appendix A here: “In no case, however, can the recommendations of this report be considered apart from this fundamental question.”

THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Charge. The charge of the FLITF was to report on “how a third-level foreign level requirement for transfers can be implemented” by 2013.
2. Previous Conclusions. Previous conclusions that Spanish language coursework would dominate an increased foreign language requirement proved to be incorrect because the possibility that students would choose alternatives among a broad range of foreign language offerings was not considered.
3. The Need to Conduct a Comprehensive Analysis. It became clear that the paucity of data on course-specific demand, student interests, and the implications of a 3-semester foreign language requirement on the future transfer pool, among other considerations, required the FLITF to conduct information gathering from a number of constituencies.
4. The Dilemma. Binghamton University faces a dilemma. It must consider the strong desire/need to prepare students for participation and leadership in an increasingly global society against the uncertainties in a period of economic downturn that limits state budgets and demographic change that suggests a strong need to increase transfer enrollments. Other state expectations, including transfer ease between SUNY institutions, major to major course transferability, and time to degree, require careful consideration of the future transfer pool at a time when the potential impact of an increased foreign language requirement on BU transfer pool is unknown and uncertain.
5. Support for the 3-Semester Foreign Language Requirement. Despite the paucity of good data and the uncertainties surrounding implementation of the 3-semester foreign language requirement, the FLITF believes that this requirement provides clear advantages to Binghamton University, including differentiating Binghamton University from others due to its emphasis on globalization, internationalization and diversity. There is a need, then, to balance the implementation of the foreign language requirement with the practical realities of implementation.
6. The Findings
 - a. Binghamton University transfer students, while disproportionately enrolling in Spanish in high school, also show interest in a wide range of foreign language courses.
 - b. More than one-half of Binghamton University transfers met the foreign language requirement prior to transferring to B.U. However, there must be a disclaimer with this claim because their grades were not provided in the data.
 - c. There is a need for placement of transfers based on proficiency examinations.

- d. Some current transfer students indicated they would be “unlikely” or “absolutely would not” transfer under the 3-semester requirement.
- e. There will be the need for financial resources in teaching, monitoring, and implementation of the 3-semester foreign language requirement.

7. The Recommendations of the FLITF

- a. We do not recommend full implementation in 2013-14.
- b. After considering three options, the recommendation is for a 4-year phase-in plan that consists of partial implementation for 3 years and full implementation in the 4th year (2016). The details are provided in the main text of this report.

8. Cautions Associated with the Recommended Plan

There are a number of cautions associated with implementation. They include:

- a. The FLITF takes seriously the Faculty Senate’s charge of developing options for the implementation of a third-level foreign language requirement. Despite this, the FLITF has grave concerns about the financial and logistical ramifications of a rapid implementation of any new standard, especially the enormous uncertainty of costs and space needs.
- b. There must be flexibility in the implementation, and the Faculty Senate must evaluate the implications of new information on demand, costs and impacts with the Provost.
- c. Multiple constituencies will be influenced by the implementation. For example, some students may experience time-to-degree and financial problems.
- d. All parts of the proposed phased-in implementation deserve support and careful implementation.
 - 1. For example, academic advising is crucial for the successful implementation of the new foreign language requirement for transfers. The requirement as it stands is extremely complex and requires explanation to guidance counselors, advisers, students and parents. It also is imperative that high school and college transcripts be received prior to arrival at Binghamton University for orientation.
 - 2. The future decisions of the Faculty Senate must be informed by data gathered during the implementation period.
 - 3. Foreign language courses create special space needs, which also require attention during the implementation period.

e. Cost Estimates and Uncertainty

1. The ability to predict cost implications to implement the first phase (second-semester requirement) is much stronger than predicting the final phase (full implementation).
2. The implementation cost of the first phase is much lower than the costs of full implementation.
3. The presence of multiple shifting factors over the next several years provide a serious challenge to accurate prediction of the proposed implementation plan, especially in 2016, when full implementation is recommended.

Introduction

In 2000 the Binghamton University faculty added a third-semester foreign language requirement to its General Education requirement, exceeding the SUNY requirement. It strengthens the University's Strategic plan 2010 with its emphasis on internationalization and globalization. Instituted in 2000 with exceptions (Watson and Nursing), it has yet to be implemented for transfer students (See the "Report of the Task Force on General Education Issues," March 2, 2011).

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee appointed our Task Force and provided its specific charge in the March 2, 2011, document referenced above.

"A joint implementation task force should be formed with a charge of reporting to the Faculty Senate by December 2011 on how a third-level foreign language requirement for transfer students can be implemented. We foresee that implementation will involve changing the way that foreign language courses are structured and scheduled, commitment of faculty and support services, and development of innovative approaches. If the implementation task force concludes that implementation in Fall 2013 will not be possible, the Faculty Senate should reconsider the foreign language requirement for transfer students. It is not tenable to continue the situation of having a requirement that is never implemented."

A Summation of the Issues Provided to FLITF

The March 2 report and a meeting between the Chair of the FLITF and the Faculty Senate leadership provided the issues related to implementation of the three semester foreign language requirement, including the perceived inability to meet the budgetary demands of foreign-

language coursework required for transfer students, the inability of some transfer students to begin at level two without remedial coursework (due to the time lapse between taking a language in high school and transferring to Binghamton). It also, in some cases, is due to lack of proficiency because the students have not taken coursework that prepares them to meet the demands of a level two course at Binghamton.

Another issue is the belief that a disproportionate number of transfers will request coursework in the Spanish language, which will create very significant resource needs for that unit, including new full-time faculty and a language-course coordinator. An associated belief is it is highly unlikely that an adequate number of adjuncts are available to fill this demand.

Additional pertinent issues include a serious concern that the three semester foreign language requirement will increase the time to degree for transfer students due to language remediation and language-course scheduling. This is not only a local concern, but also a serious economic concern for families that has captured national media attention. This serious issue and the others stated above could have an impact on the number of future transfer students entering Binghamton. This could happen at a time when the SUNY system expects transfer students to play an increasingly important role in local enrollments that carry funding implications. The SUNY Chancellor has made transfer students a high priority and has resolved to promote better student mobility throughout the SUNY System. Included are initiatives for increased transferability of major to major courses between campuses in an effort to provide timely degree completion opportunities for transfer students. In addition the Chancellor's plan is to increase transfer enrollment within SUNY. These contexts are important to the proposed changes to the foreign language requirement for transfers. We must be careful that increasing the foreign language requirement for transfer students to the 3rd college semester level will not have a

significantly negative impact on transfer students enrolling at Binghamton and graduating in a timely fashion. We are at a time when economic resources for the University and the SUNY System are at an all time low. We are already stretched to our maximum capacity and are being asked to do more with less. We know that increasing the foreign language requirement for transfers from one college semester to three college semesters will mean more students taking foreign language courses and that there will be a need for additional resources to handle additional sections and instructors.

Some of these issues present serious concerns that have delayed the implementation of the foreign language requirement, which went into effect in 2000, but never was implemented for transfers. They remain important issues and require careful consideration because of their current and future implications for Binghamton University.

It is also important to note that the complexity of the 3-semester foreign language requirement presents a challenge as we move forward with implementation. Currently, advisors from referring colleges and universities and transfer students once at Binghamton require an explanation despite the posting of this requirement on the Binghamton University website.

Clearly communicating the increased foreign language requirement to transfer students is critical to any implementation plan. However, the foreign language requirement is the most complicated of Binghamton's General Education requirements, with numerous options, waivers, and equivalencies. There are three possible choices for fulfilling the requirement in college, four possible standards of high school or equivalent proficiency, a full waiver for students in one program, and a partial waiver for students in two other programs. In addition, one of the options for fulfilling the requirement in college has its own high school proficiency standards. Due to its complexity, foreign language is the only General Education requirement with its own page on

the General Education website. That page provides a detailed text explanation of the current requirement, links to past requirements for students entering in previous catalog years, information for non-native English speakers, and information for students with disabilities.

Research Undertaken by FLITF

The Task Force felt that the initial information provided for such an important decision was inadequate for our charge. Some of the foundational arguments provided to FLITF were based on a single year of transfer student transcript analysis, from six years ago. Much may have changed in that period or different results might occur if a longer study period was used. For these reasons, we set an agenda to secure input on these issues using various sources. These appear below and are still quite limited but our charge was to complete our report in a single semester.

- Six years of data (2005-2010) reporting foreign language courses taken by transfer students by course. These data were helpful in establishing the interest and opportunity in foreign language coursework by students without a language requirement.
- A discussion with foreign language departments to establish current views on the issues and other issues they may have.
- A survey of recent transfer students to cross-check the earlier transcript analysis that suggested Spanish is the overwhelming language of choice, to determine the proportion of transfer students that had completely or partially satisfied the foreign-language requirement, and the potential impact of a three semester foreign language requirement on their transfer decision, and other topics.
- A meeting with Vice Provost Michael McGoff to gain his historical perspective and the potential costs of implementation.

- Responses from foreign language departments regarding the potential impacts and costs associated with the implementation of the foreign language requirement for transfer students.
- An additional request for specific estimates from the Romance Language Department.
- A discussion and feedback from advisors about a phase-in plan.

During this information gathering enterprise, the FLITF considered potential strategies for the implementation of the requirement.

The results of our information gathering appear below.

Summary of FLITF Findings

The OIR Data: Foreign Languages Taken by Transfer Students, 2005-2010

The anecdotal information provided to the FLITF suggested that as much as 80% of the foreign language course demand would likely be in Spanish language courses. This task force deemed it essential to substantiate this expectation by examining recent “hard data” on student demand.

The OIR data provided the opportunity to track student demand over the six years indicated above. We examined these data on an annual and on a total 6-year-demand basis.

The first finding was very revealing. For this 6-year period, three quarters of the transfer students enrolled in foreign language courses other than Spanish. Spanish language courses in 2005 accounted only for 16% of the transfer students enrolled in a foreign language course. In the period 2005-2008, the Spanish language enrollments varied between 16% and 19% of the total transfer students enrolled in foreign language courses. Increases occurred in both 2009 and 2010, to 22% and 30%, respectively. These are noteworthy increases that should be tracked for

continuity in future years. However, these percentages are dramatically lower than those that presented to our Task Force.

Another finding revealed an annual variation among the foreign languages that attracted the highest percentage of transfer student enrollments; one year it was Spanish, another Japanese, another year something else. This finding may suggest that there is a strong correlation between the foreign language course offerings and the student enrollment patterns. This may also suggest a correlation between foreign language adjunct appointments in a given year and transfer student enrollments.

The other obvious finding from these six years of data is that transfer students at Binghamton are interested in a variety of foreign languages. In fact, the variety of foreign language options is strength of this institution that deserves wide acclaim and that should be incorporated into strategies to implement the foreign language requirements for transfer students.

The Meeting with Representatives of Foreign Language Departments

The FLITF requested a meeting with all foreign language teaching departments and encouraged attendance by the Chair, Undergraduate program Director, and interested teaching faculty.

Departments were encouraged to report on concerns related to the implementation of the foreign language requirement for transfer students, to respond to some of FLITF ideas for implementation, and to offer their own ideas.

A substantial amount of the discussion of this meeting surrounded the issues of resource needs and related topics, and to proficiency and placement of transfers. A summary of those discussions follows.

1. Resource issues are linked to a number of concerns of foreign language departments, including the types and frequency of foreign language courses offered on a regular basis, existing large classes, the need for full-time tenure track faculty, and the inability to estimate resource needs due to insufficient data on transfer demands. The foreign language departments were unanimous in their position that limited faculty resources have caused an increase in size of their classes to levels that exceed the ideal class size for teaching language courses. Some also emphasized that the current lack of faculty resources results in an inability to repeat the same 100- and 200-level foreign language courses in subsequent semesters, which would benefit transfer students. It also limits the ability to teach upper division foreign language courses to some extent. These limitations have resulted in larger foreign language course enrollments that exceed ideal class size.

It was noted that rising enrollments have caused many Harpur departments to increase class sizes that exceed desired limits for seminars and other courses. For foreign language departments, rising enrollments, more transfer students in the future, and the more stringent foreign language requirement implemented for transfers results in a situation that demands more full time teaching faculty. Foreign language teachers and administrators at this meeting felt very strongly that adjunct faculty alone is not acceptable for meeting the increasing enrollments in their classes. They specifically noted that assigning adjuncts to upper division language courses was often unacceptable and that the local and regional pool for foreign language teachers was simply inadequate to meet their course requirements in the future.

When asked if a mix of full-time and part-time faculty were necessary to handle the implementation of the foreign language requirement for transfer students, those present were reluctant to offer estimates, indicating that there has been insufficient data to determine demand.

A number of strategies for implementation of the requirement for transfer were briefly presented, including summer and winter courses, distance learning and a bridge course for transfers deemed lacking in proficiency. None was endorsed by this group. It was noted, however, that some mix of full-time and adjunct faculty might be possible in the future. Nothing specific was discussed.

2. Proficiency and Placement were two other important topics discussed at this meeting. One faculty member noted that these two topics were “fundamental” issues in teaching transfer students. Many present agreed. Faculty noted that transfers, although taking courses at the same levels, reach different levels of proficiency. There is also an issue with the different proficiencies and needs of native and heritage speakers of a language, which results in different course, advising and tutoring needs. This adds to the real cost of structuring courses and providing services. Implicit in this is the proper placement of transfer students in appropriate courses. Some faculty also expressed an enrollment concern over implementation of the more rigorous requirement for transfer students, noting that if other SUNY schools are not doing this, it would make other SUNY schools more attractive than Binghamton. Others, however, argued that the more rigorous foreign language requirement could increase the perceived quality of a Binghamton education, thus compensating for any hardships created by the requirement. These statements actually frame the dilemma

and different broader viewpoints associated with the implementation of the three semester foreign language requirement for transfer students. The academic argument is that Binghamton is a premier academic institution that is preparing all students for an increasing globalized world and should have a standard, more stringent foreign language requirement (than other schools) for all of its students. The other viewpoint is a cautionary one that warns of a shrinking and highly competitive transfer pool from many different locations around the state. These submarkets, especially in upstate New York, differ from those in downstate in important ways, including finances. The fear often associated with this concern is that some feeder schools, especially those in upstate New York, will furnish fewer transfer students in the future due to both a more stringent foreign language requirement and an increased time to degree (and, therefore, higher cost) as a result of the newly implemented requirement.

It is clear that proficiency and placement are important issues in their own right; they also are tied to resources issues. It was agreed that foreign language departments may benefit from future inter-departmental discussions of proficiency exams used in other universities and that automatically score placement. This could standardize efforts and reduce time spent doing proficiency assessments using precious time of departmental faculty. The potential use of a for-credit bridge course to prepare students found to be unprepared for their next level of a foreign language was discussed, but received no serious support.

The Survey of Recent Transfer Students, 2011

A random survey of transfer students entering Binghamton University in 2008 and 2009 was conducted by FLITF in the Fall 2011 semester. The purpose of the survey was to cross-check the results of a previous transcript analysis and to begin gauging the potential impact of the implementation of the 3-semester foreign language requirement on student decisions to transfer to Binghamton. The 2008 and 2009 number of transfer email addresses was 2,500. All students were offered an opportunity to participate in the survey and reminders were sent twice to enhance the response rate. A total of 385 transfer students responded to the survey, yielding an approximate 15% sample of the universe (See appendix). The results of this survey are summarized below.

1. About one-half of this transfer population (52%) had taken Spanish as their foreign language in high school. Only 3% took no language in high school. Thus, 45% enrolled in a language other than Spanish in high school. Notably 18% of the total transfers had taken French in high school.
2. Nearly one-third (31%) of the transfer sample completed a third-level language course in high school and another 47% took a level 4 or 5 foreign language course.
3. In response to a question as to whether students enrolled in a second foreign language in high school, 70% said they had not. Of the 30% who did take a second language, the languages taken were quite diverse, representing seven (7) languages.
4. One important concern for Binghamton language departments is proficiency and placement. The survey asked the amount of time that had lapsed since the transfer student's last foreign language course and their enrollment at Binghamton. Forty-two percent (42%) reported that their last language course was taken 3 or more years prior

to entering Binghamton University. This may suggest the need for a bridge course or careful placement for those who would still require a third foreign-language course to meet the newly implemented foreign language requirement. The point is that we do not know the level of achievement without some measure, such as a placement/proficiency exam.

5. The sample transfer students who did take a foreign language at the college/university attended prior to transferring to Binghamton took a wide variety of languages. The three most frequently taken were Spanish (17%), French (7%), and Chinese (5%). It is noteworthy that nearly one-half of these surveyed students (47%) selected a wide range of foreign languages prior to transfer.

6. It was important to measure transfer preferences for meeting the 3-semester language requirement. These transfer students were asked to state a preference for either:
a) taking an additional (third) course in the same language previously taken, or b) taking the first two courses in a new foreign language requirement.

Nearly two-thirds (66%) reported a preference for remaining with their existing foreign language by taking a third course. However, one-third (34%) expressed a preference for taking two courses in a new foreign language. This flexibility and broad interest could have significance for planning foreign language coursework as we move to the implementation stage of the 3-semester foreign language.

7. A follow-up question to the language preference asked which second language might be preferred by those opting for a new language and two courses. Given the previous broad interests among this sample population, it is not surprising that a range of foreign languages was included in their responses: 20% selected Italian, 17% chose

French, 15% selected Chinese, and 10% opted for German. There also was interest in Russian and other languages. Again, this flexibility and broad interest in a variety of foreign languages may have important implications for the planning of the implementation of the 3-semester foreign language requirement for transfers.

8. The final question on the survey addressed the potential loss of transfers due to a more stringent foreign language requirement for transfer students. The question posed to this sample transfer population was: would you still have enrolled at Binghamton University if the language requirement for transfer students had been 3 semesters of a foreign language? The results to this question should be interpreted with caution. First, the complexity of the options available within this requirement prohibits a complete explanation within the survey question. Second, these transfer students have had the benefit of time to absorb the many benefits offered by Binghamton University and to become part of its culture. These facts allow for bias in both negative and positive directions.

Nearly one-third (32.7%) indicated that “Yes, absolutely” they would still have transferred to Binghamton. Another 43% indicated that they “probably” would have transferred under the more stringent foreign language requirement. Thus, nearly three-quarters of this sample of transfer students would not be negatively influenced by the 3-semester foreign language requirement.

On the other hand, one-quarter of the same transfer population either would be “unlikely” to transfer or “absolutely” would not transfer under the new requirement.

Approximately 5% indicated “absolutely not.”

When these data were cross-tabulated, the results indicate that one-third of those who had completed only the second level of a foreign language would be unlikely to transfer or absolutely would not transfer to Binghamton under the 3-semester requirement.

While the survey of transfer students is informative in numerous ways, unanswered questions remain. It seems that the transfer pool likely has changed since the 2005 transcript analysis. It is possible that nearly 80% of these transfer students could be proficient at the second-semester level in high school. One-half of the transfer students may have met the 3-semester foreign language requirement. However, we cannot assume this because the requirement is an 85 test score and we do not have that data. In particular, we cannot establish with any certainty the actual percentage of transfer students that met that proficiency level.

One third of the 47% transfer students had not completed two courses in the same foreign language. Of these, about two-thirds would continue in the same foreign language to meet the requirement, while one-third might opt for two semesters of a different foreign language to meet the requirement. The latter may offer opportunities other than the highly anticipated need to focus on a large number of adjuncts teaching Spanish to address the implementation of the 3-semester foreign language requirement (although the interest in Spanish is strong and growing). It is beneficial that foreign language interests are broad among transfer students.

The survey also indirectly addressed the issue of the potential loss of transfer students when the more stringent 3-semester foreign language requirement is implemented for transfers. Although difficult to gauge, for reasons previously stated, there is some

evidence that some transfers would be lost due to the more stringent requirement. As expected, this seems clear for those transfer students who completed two or fewer foreign language courses prior to transferring to Binghamton. This is a potentially serious issue for Binghamton University and requires monitoring as we move forward in the implementation of the 3-semester requirement for transfer students.

The Results of the January 2012 Student Transfer Survey

The Task Force interviewed a sample of transfer students who entered in the current semester (Spring 2012). One hundred fourteen transfer students completed the same survey taken by the Fall 2011 transfer sample. Full analysis of the January 2012 survey of new transfer students has not been completed, but initial analysis shows that responses are broadly similar to those found in the survey of transfer students conducted in Fall 2011. Some of the relevant findings are:

1. Among students who indicated a preference for how they would prefer to fulfill the requirement, 60% indicated that they would prefer to continue with the language previously studied, while 40% indicated that they would prefer to start a new language. This corroborates information gathered in the Fall 2011 survey, where approximately 33% indicated that they would prefer to start a new language.
2. The percentage of students who studied Spanish is somewhat higher (59%) in the January 2011 survey, but still doesn't approach the levels that the task force had anticipated when it began its work. Approximately 17% studied French, and the remainder studied a wide variety of other languages

3. Among students who had the least amount of foreign language study in high school (1, 2, or 3 units), the majority (about 55%) did study a foreign language in college before they arrived at Binghamton
4. Among those who would definitely not have satisfied the 3-semester foreign language requirement in high school (1, 2, or 3 high school foreign language units), 84% said that they would "Probably" or "Absolutely" still enroll at Binghamton if there were a higher foreign language requirement at Binghamton. Only 1% would definitely not have enrolled. These findings show a somewhat higher degree of commitment to enrollment at Binghamton than the Fall survey, when approximately 75% responded in the Probably/Absolutely grouping.
5. Other significant observations included:
 - The number of students taking particular languages fluctuates somewhat, but Spanish is still not as prevalent as had been predicted.
 - A substantial number of students state that they would like to try a new language
 - Many students with the least amount of high school foreign language study enroll in language courses at college. We do not know the levels of these courses.
 - A substantial majority of students would almost certainly still choose Binghamton if the language requirement were higher; however, the actual number of those who say that they would "Not Likely" enroll at Binghamton is significant.

The Meeting with Vice Provost Michael McGoff

The Task Force requested a meeting with Dr. McGoff to gain his perspective of the ten years of discussion of the foreign language requirement and to understand the previous cost estimates associated with the implementation of the 3-semester foreign language requirement.

Dr. McGoff outlined the current costs associated with potential instructors for foreign language courses at Binghamton University. These ranged from a full-time graduate student assistant to an

assistant professor. He also noted that the previous effort to estimate the cost of implementation of the 3-semester foreign language requirement for transfer students was a cost prohibitive \$652 per credit hour. Dr. McGoff also noted that given recent budgets, the challenge is attempting to implement a requirement that provides Binghamton University with another academic distinction among SUNY campuses, including high quality coursework taught by full-time faculty and/or numerous adjuncts in an increasingly restricted economic climate, tight budgets and the projected need for more transfer students. The budget has been and continues to be a zero-sum game for the campus, and time-to-degree, while not currently an issue, may become a future issue.

Vice Provost McGoff admitted the difficulty of creating an accurate cost estimate for implementation without adequate demand data. He offered to rerun the budget estimate if better or different data are provided by FLITF.

The Task Force found the information and context provided by Dr. McGoff useful because they provided the range of potential instructors, underscored the inadequacy of demand data, suggested the need to be sensitive to the increased anticipated need for transfers, and the necessity of having resource needs of departments to implement the 3-semester foreign language requirement.

Reports from Foreign Language Departments

The Task Force requested that foreign language departments respond to issues and ideas related to implementation of the 3-semester requirement during the Fall 2011 semester (and prior to the student transfer survey results). The issues and questions to be addressed included reactions to the idea of a bridge course, the potential modification of a third level foreign language course to

include more emphasis on the culture, the role and value of proficiency examinations/assessments for proper placement of transfer students in the appropriate course level, and estimates of the potential resources by the departments to meet the implementation of the 3-semester requirement for transfer students. The departmental responses are summarized below.

Romance Languages

- Faculty are not interested in a bridge course. They believe that we need to look more into transfer courses and equivalencies. For example, BCC's 100-level courses are 4 days per week, and ours are 5 days per week, so those students do not have the level of preparation that our students have. They also believe that the transfer students would be more appropriately placed in the second 100-level course (115) even if they have had two semesters at BCC. The implications of this would be huge. Romance Languages thinks the students can use the review and continuation in the second 100-level course. J. Hassell noted that the department will allow the students to go on if they are ready, but that many students are not ready. The department says we need to recheck equivalencies of all institutions sending transfer students to make sure the courses are equivalent.
- They reported that they need to look into placement tests. This is something the department would be interested in and will be looking into.
- J. Hassell suggested to the department that they look into developing a different kind of Intermediate I class that is not intended to prepare students for another course, with more of a cultural context. The department believed that having two different courses was not a good idea; they want to be able to encourage students to continue, particularly in French and Italian. They cannot necessarily isolate the students who want to go on at the

beginning of the course, so they believe the department would ultimately lose students. This was a significant issue for French and Italian, not so much for Spanish (did not respond to that question).

- They believed that looking at books to bring in more cultural context was a good idea, but they do not want to weaken the teaching of grammar. The structural content would remain. The French teachers were particularly vehement on this and believed their existing books have a strong cultural content.
- With regard to resources, the chair said that there had been some promise for increased resources in the past and that those had never materialized.
- Essentially, the department not only does not want a bridge course, but wants to define students back a level. This would represent a huge increase in students.
- These findings provide a strong rationale for mandating proficiency examinations for transfer students.

Asian and Asian-American Studies

- The general view of the faculty is that each program had placement tests for students (transfer and freshmen) so that they are placed in the correct level. They did not see the point of a bridge course. The faculty believed that even with a general increase in the transfer population, their department will not see a deluge of students. Thus, there is no need to think about special courses such as bridge courses for transfer students. There are differences among the languages.
- Japanese is strictly taught as a foreign language. There are no heritage speakers (maybe one per year who wants to take the third year).

- In Chinese, more than half of the 101 students are heritage students. The number increases Chinese 101 to Chinese 306 with more heritage students in the higher years. If there were resources, they would be interested in creating heritage-student courses.
- Korean has a lot of heritage students, too, and has a fourth-year level for Korean students who went to high school in Korea.
- All faculty reported that they incorporate culture in the courses at each language level. No one was interested in a terminal course that was primarily focused on culture. They would welcome the return of adjunct money to increase first- and second-year sections.

Latin

- The faculty are not certain how many students would take Latin and thought that they could absorb the extra students. They do not see the need for any type of bridge course because they don't think they will get the numbers. If they need an additional section of Latin, they believe that they could add that.

The Second Request for Resource Needs of the Romance Language Departments

Based on the anticipated demand for foreign language courses from the Romance languages Department, the Task Force sent the Department a second request for resource estimates required to implement the 3-course foreign language requirement for transfer students. In our request, we asked that the Department please consider the potential use of some adjuncts in their response and to consider the resource needs in all languages taught by the Department. We urge the reader to take into account the context in which the Romance Language Department responded to this request.

First, and foremost, the Department believes it has inadequate data to be completely accurate. With this in mind, Professor Hassell, a member of that department and of the Task Force, provided these estimates, which the FLITF considered when formulating its estimates.

Pre-Recommendations, Observations and Advice for Implementation of the 3-semester Foreign Language Requirement for Transfer Students

Prior to making any recommendations, we offer the following observations and advice.

1. We have made an effort to secure or create information to support our recommendations due to the lack of information provided to the Task Force at the beginning of this process. We were instructed to be creative and to attempt to find potential means to implement the requirement, or recommend its reconsideration by the Faculty Senate. It is difficult to be creative in the absence of knowledge and information.
2. Despite our best efforts in a single semester, we approach our final task with some trepidation, frustration and uncertainty given the lack of solid information required in such decisions.
3. As we move forward, we must monitor the potential impact of this implementation on the number and quality of the transfer-student pool.
4. We advise flexibility and review of the decision to move to the 3-semester foreign language requirement, if necessary, based on the monitoring of the real costs of implementation and its impact on the transfer pool. There is a need to balance the desire for a language requirement that is unusual in the SUNY system and that strengthens Binghamton's emphasis on globalization and internationalization, with

the practical realities of costs during restricted budgets and the necessity of future enrollments from student transfers.

The Task Force considered a number of methods to deal with the perceived issues related to implementation of the 3-semester foreign language requirement. These included proposals for a bridge course, improved proficiency examinations that might improve placement in courses, summer and winter teaching, distance learning, and modification of third level courses to include a stronger cultural component. These received little or no support from the foreign language departments, perhaps with the exception of investigating the use of proficiency examinations. It became clear that resources were the overriding concern of the foreign language departments. The absence of good data made it difficult for them and for the Task Force to make accurate estimates for transfer-student demand for their courses and, therefore, the number of sections required for implementation of the requirement. The Task Force sought input and data from a number of constituencies. These were helpful but not definitive, in determining resource needs and the impact on the number and quality of future transfers. Despite these problems, the Task Force attempted to make recommendations for implementation of the 3-semester foreign language requirement.

We considered three options. One involved requesting a change in the requirement from mandating three semesters to mandating two semesters of foreign language for transfer students. A second option was a variable foreign-language requirement (three semesters for freshmen and sophomores and one semester for junior and senior transfers). The Task Force concluded that these two options were not in keeping with the intent of the faculty that the same 3-semester requirement be the same for all. Also, the charge of the Task Force was to try to find means to implement that requirement for transfers. While the Faculty Senate can discuss these two options

at will, the Task Force settled on a third option- it is our recommendation for the uniform implementation of the 3-semester requirement for all students. (We would maintain the existing waiver for Watson Engineering's students and the one-semester requirement for students in Watson Computer Science and in the Decker School). We offer this recommendation with what we believe includes necessary action items for any hope of successful implementation of the plan. The recommendation is outlined below.

Recommendations for a Phased Implementation of the 3-semester Foreign Language Requirement for Transfer Students in 2013

Given the uncertainty of demand related to a lack of data and the potential negative impact on the transfer pool, we cannot recommend the implementation of the 3-semester foreign language requirement in 2013. However, given the merits of that requirement, we recommend a 4-year, phased-in implementation plan for the 3-semester foreign language requirement for student transfers. This plan, to begin in 2013, permits time to assess both demand and effects. The four years would entail the following:

Year 1(2013-14) A 2-semester foreign language requirement for transfer students (except Watson and Decker students) during assessment of demand and potential impacts, as well as a calculation for additional resource needs to implement the 3-semester requirement.

Year 2(2014-15): Continuation of the 2-semester foreign language requirement for transfers, as data collection, analysis and planning for Year 3 continues (with

same exceptions noted above).

Year 3(2015-16): Continuation of the 2-semester foreign language requirement for transfers, as data collection, analysis and planning for Year 4 continues (with the same exceptions noted above).

Year 4(2016-17): Assuming that the findings of years one through three allow for full implementation, the 3-semester requirement becomes permanent for all transfer students (same exceptions).

If, at any time, the analysis of demand exceeds the University's ability to provide adequate resources, or if there is clear evidence that the transfer pool has been diminished in quality, then the Faculty Senate should be alerted and should reconsider the 3-semester requirement. We believe the necessary action items and resource estimates that accompany this recommendation are prerequisite to its implementation.

The Necessary Action Items Prior to and During the Phase-in Implementation Plan

We have noted throughout this report that the data necessary to make sound judgments regarding foreign language course demand and to assess the potential impacts of the implementation of the requirement for transfer has been lacking. For this reason, we argue that routine data collection and analysis are vital during the four-year period of implementation period. We also have emphasized the complexity of the current foreign language requirement structure at Binghamton.

The following are specific recommendations regarding data and analysis needs and advising that begins with referring campuses and is enhanced on the campus.

Advising and Admissions

Advising begins with Admissions informing feeder schools of the foreign language requirement and the options available to meet that requirement. Given Binghamton University's implementation of this requirement, it will be essential for University representatives to inform referral sources clearly in a simple language, with examples. They should also seek feedback on any reduction of interest to transfer to Binghamton due to the more stringent foreign language requirement.

As transfers seek advisement and proper placement in a foreign language course, it is essential that advisers have all necessary information about the transfer in hand. The receipt and processing of the final high school transcript in a timely fashion is essential for the accurate advisement of transfer students on the foreign language requirement. At present, this is problematic. Submission of the final high school transcript at the time of admission is not required for transfer students entering with 24 credits or more. When a final high school transcript is available, there is often a long delay in entering this information to the student's record. The frequent unavailability of information from the high school transcript at the time of initial advisement at Orientation often has the effect of delaying student progress on the foreign language requirement and also increases the chances that a student will be misadvised. For these reasons, the FLITF committee recommends that submission of the final high school transcript be required of all transfer students at the time of admission. Furthermore, the committee recommends that processing of the final high school transcript occur at the time of the preliminary transfer credit evaluation so as to present the most accurate picture possible concerning the foreign language requirement.

Action Items for Improving Communication

The Task Force proposes the following actions for improving communication about this requirement:

1. Requiring the high school transcript from transfer students upon application, discussed elsewhere in this document, will allow advisors to focus directly on what students still need rather than trying to encourage them to remember what they might have had.
2. The General Education Coordinator has developed an on-line “Foreign Language Requirement Calculator” to help students work through the steps to figure out their foreign language requirement based on their school and whether they entered as a freshman or transfer.
3. Preparing publicity that correctly illustrates Binghamton’s distinction in the range of foreign languages offered and the roles of foreign language courses as a tangible asset in the student’s preparation for future life experiences and employment prospects.

We believe that the foreign language requirement can be presented within the context of being one of Binghamton University’s major strengths. Students transferring to Binghamton have the benefit of studying in a university that leads in internationalizing the curriculum and prepares students for opportunities in an increasingly linked, global society where the ability to speak foreign languages fluently and to understand global cultures is an increasingly important asset in public service and employment opportunities. Binghamton provides a very large number of foreign languages from which to choose that prepare students to maximize study abroad opportunities in many countries.

Data Collection for Determining Future Demand, Monitoring Transfer Student Progress, and Assessment of Changes in the Transfer Pool

The Task Force also recommends a 4-year effort to collect data from feeder schools and from transfer students. This can take several forms, including routine surveys of transfer advisers at feeder colleges and universities, surveys of transfer students as they enter and monitoring their progress and any problems they incur, including performance and graduation rates. The FLITF has agreed to continue its work during the Spring 2012 semester and to analyze a survey of the Spring semester entering transfer class. This can be a model for the future. It is essential to have data that direct the progress toward full implementation of the 3-semester foreign language for transfers and to assess the potential impacts on the future transfer pool.

Minimum Resources Required Executing the 3-Semester Foreign Language Requirement in a 4-Year Implementation Plan

Three types of resources are required for implementation of the proposed 4-year foreign language implementation program for transfer students: advising support, collection, monitoring analysis of transfer student data, and faculty resources.

1. Advising of transfer students for the three-year plan must be intensive at particular periods, beginning with the communication of Binghamton University advisers with the transfer advisers at other universities and colleges in the appropriate seasons and intensifying at transfer advising orientations at Binghamton. It is likely that additional advising support will be required, either on a half-time, but more likely a full-time basis to handle the challenge associated with transfer foreign language issues. As

noted previously, this amounts to speaking with other campus advising offices, our foreign language departments, and transfer students. It also means meeting with those analyzing the data collected from transfer students. This likely is an SL-2 level position with an annual salary of \$37,873.

2. The collection of transfers-related data will be crucial to the successful monitoring of the major issues associated with implementation of the 3-semester foreign language requirement over the 4-year period, the demand for particular foreign languages at particular levels and any potential negative impacts of the requirement's implementation on the Binghamton transfer pool. The Task Force recommends that a full-time graduate student assistant with the proper skills in data collection and quantitative analysis (likely from an analytical social science background), oral and written communication skills, and the ability to work independently be used for this purpose. That student probably should be under the direction of the Harpur College Dean's Office to work with Admissions and Advising. The costs are a \$10,000 stipend per academic year, a summer stipend of \$3,000, and a tuition scholarship of approximately \$9,000. The total projected annual cost is \$22,000. This approach avoids the creation of a permanent position.

Our recommendation for faculty resources is drawn from our analysis of the OIR data, the transfer student survey, discussion with foreign language departments, and the tentative estimates provided by the Romance language Department. All of the data we analyzed did not support the projection we received at the beginning of this process, which suggested 80% of transfer students will enroll in the Spanish language courses. Despite this, the recent trend is one of a smaller, but important, increase in

interest in Spanish language courses and this is also reflected in the estimated resource needs supplied to us by the Romance Language Department. So, as we believe that with proper advising many transfer students will select other languages and that some Binghamton foreign language departments indicated an ability to absorb some of these students, we recommend more resources for Spanish language courses in the initial implementation phases. We also are sensitive to the position of the foreign language departments that they cannot and should not rely strictly on adjuncts to handle the increased enrollments associated with the implementation of the requirement for transfer students. Thus, our recommendation is as follows. Using the course estimates provided by the Romance Language Department, their perceived necessity to have full-time and adjunct faculty to implement this plan, we propose the following hiring plan for Year 1 of the recommended plan.

3. Year 1 (2013):
 - a. One-full-time Spanish language professor appointed in the Romance Languages teaching a six-course load: two introductory level Spanish courses and one advanced undergraduate Spanish course for transfer students each semester, while also serving as a coordinator for the languages in the department to standardize proficiency examinations for future transfer students, to work with foreign language faculty on appropriate transfer student course placements, and also as a liaison to the advising person hired under the previous recommendation. This hire will teach a significant proportion of the anticipated transfer demand for the initial year of implementation, while serving the other needs associated with a successful implementation. The estimated cost is a \$50,000 salary.

- b. The remaining adjunct needs associated with teaching the Romance Language coursework include 2 Spanish, 2 French, and 2 Italian courses. If demand does not support one of these sections, the resources should be shifted at the discretion of the Romance Language Chair to fill another foreign language transfer need. The cost for each course is an anticipated \$4,500. The total cost of adjuncts, therefore, is \$27,000.
- c. We also recommend a contingency \$15,000 for the possibility of an underestimation of adjunct faculty needs.

d. The total first year cost can be summarized as:

1. Advising:	\$37,873
2. Data Analysis	\$22,000
3. Faculty Resources	\$77,000
4. Contingency	<u>\$15,000</u>
	\$ 151,873

A fringe benefit rate will likely be applied to some of these expenses and probably would result in **a total budget of approximately \$ 213,000 for Year 1.**

4. Year 2 (2014):

The two-course requirement for transfer is maintained in Year 2. The resources do not change unless a shift in adjuncts is required based on the internal analysis described earlier.

5. **Year 3 (2015):** The two-course requirement for transfer is maintained in Year 3. The resources do not change unless a shift in adjuncts is required based on the internal analysis described earlier.

6. Year 4 (2016):

Full implementation is required in Year 4, which adds a third level course for all transfers. By year 4, the University should have a better understanding of the impacts and resource needs of the full implementation costs of the 3-semester foreign language requirement. The cost estimate and assumptions for Year 4 are more complex and substantially higher on an annual basis.

The third semester implementation comes with major challenges and complications. The first complication that provides a challenge is due to the Binghamton University "deemed equivalency" dilemma. Currently, the University awards the equivalency of second semester to students with a HS Regents score of 85, or a course grade of 85 for the third unit of foreign language in high school. The problem is that the functional proficiency does not necessarily match the courses completed. The official SUNY policy states that a Regents 85 is about the same as one college semester of foreign language. Binghamton University's current guidelines actually support both equivalencies according to the BU website:

- The Foreign Language requirement for transfer students in any school is fulfilled by one college course in foreign language at any level. This requirement may also be fulfilled in high school by demonstrating a level of proficiency equivalent to passing the corresponding Regents foreign language examination with a score of 85 or higher (See the [Transfer Student](#) page for more information and see Note 4.).

Currently, this is a logical inconsistency but presents no real functional problem. However, as soon as we require the third semester, the issue becomes very different.

Perhaps, most importantly, we must acknowledge that SUNY's functional proficiency estimate is probably more accurate than our more generous deemed proficiency; three foreign language units in HS is not usually the same as two semesters in college.

The real problem for implementation strategy is creating plausible budget estimates under uncertainty and in the face of the inconsistency identified above. Perhaps examining a few scenarios helps clarify the challenge.

Below are two plausible scenarios when a three-semester foreign-language requirement is implemented for transfer students in the fourth year of the proposed phased-in approach.

Scenario One

The total incoming transfer students in 2016-17 is estimated to be 1,743. Now, of the incoming transfer students subject to the three-semester foreign-language requirement (SOM, CCPA, Harpur), total approximately 1400,

Of the 1400, those with less than two semesters of proficiency are estimated to be 460
Of the 1400, those considered having two semesters of proficiency are estimated at 460.

The remaining students will have satisfied the foreign-language requirement.

The big change in 2016-17 is that the ground rules are fundamentally different than in previous years.

1. It may still be most likely that students with less than two semesters of foreign language credit will prefer to continue with the language they studied previously; this would require them to take two semesters of foreign language (at the 2nd and 3rd semester level). Otherwise they would have to take 3 semesters of a new language, or one semester of their previous language and two semesters of a new one.
If we assume that all of these students will opt for 2nd and 3rd semester in their previous language, this would result in:

460 students will take two courses (one at the second semester level, one at

the third semester).

2. Students with three units of high school foreign language, however, may make a more difficult choice. Either they opt to continue with one semester of their previously studied language (which we know is going to be quite difficult for them, based on the discrepancy between the SUNY “functional” proficiency guideline and our “deemed” proficiency guideline), or they will take the first two semesters of a new language.

If they continue at the third semester level, (the second option above), they may struggle more to be successful academically. It’s likely that some will want to (or need to) back down to the second semester level and will end up taking two semesters rather than just one, perhaps as much as one-third of these students would return to second semester. (Note 5.)

The results for those who continue with first language are:

$\frac{2}{3}$ take one course at third semester level

$\frac{1}{3}$ take two courses (one at second semester level, one at third semester level).

Second Scenario

In a second scenario, students decide to start a new language. All of these students will require two courses (one at first semester level, one at second semester level)

According to our survey data, approximately one-third of the students would start a new language rather than continue with their previous language. If we apply these percentages ONLY to those who have the toughest choice to make (i.e. those who were given the equivalent of 2 semesters credit), the results are as follows.

The total affected students is approximately 460.

The number of transfers continuing with previous language is approximately 300.

Of these, approximately 200 would require only one course (third semester), while another 100 would require two courses (second semester and third semester).

The number starting a new language would be approximately 160.

All 160 would require two courses (first semester and second semester).

Thus, the total courses required for full third semester foreign-language implementation are:

Approximately 160 would require one first semester and one second semester course
Approximately 560 would require one second semester and one third semester course
Approximately 200 would require one third semester course

The additional required seats when the requirement is fully implemented are:

160 seats at first semester
720 seats at second semester
760 seats at third semester

The exact allocation of these seats into language sections is currently impossible to predict, but if we take a conservative estimate of 25 seats per section, we will have:

6 sections at first semester level
29 sections at second semester level
30 sections at third semester level,

or 65 total sections.

It is likely that the majority of courses at the second semester and, especially, the third semester level will be in Spanish, but there will be significant numbers added elsewhere, especially at the first semester level.

Wherever these sections may be allocated, it seems very likely that new full-time faculty hires must be part of the equation. However, it also is likely that adding full-time faculty must be in some combination of T-T / lecturer, especially since it is not easy to find competent, or even available, instructors locally for the less commonly taught languages. If sections are added at the ratio of: 1 t-t + 2 lecturer + 1 adjunct, we would come up with the following estimated personnel plan for 65 additional sections:

4 t-t faculty (16 courses)	= \$ 240,000
6 lecturer (36 courses)	= \$ 270,000
13 sections	= \$ 75,000
Approximate total	= \$ 585,000

This approximate total is not in addition to that calculated for the two-semester amount, but rather the new total. This would also represent a phased-in total, since some of the

added demand would occur the year AFTER full implementation of a three-semester foreign-language requirement is implemented. Not every student will try to fulfill the requirement during the first year.

Furthermore, the budgetary assumption that tenure-track faculty will teach all of their courses in the General Education language sequence appears unrealistic. Almost all tenure-track faculty will teach both language and content courses.

Summary and Conditions of Uncertainty

There is a fundamental difference between the way students will approach the two- semester and the three- semester foreign-language requirements. The calculations in the report reflect the two-semester scenario fairly well. However, the three-semester scenario is far more open to error. If proficiency testing reveals that students with three units of high school foreign language are unprepared for BU third semester courses, then these numbers could change dramatically in one of two ways. Either more students will take second- and third-semester foreign languages, or more students will take first- and second- semester foreign languages.

In short, there is a very high level of uncertainty in all of these estimates, but especially those used to estimate enrollment for a third semester implementation. Uncertainty is due to:

- a) Not knowing what our enrollment will be in 2016-17,
- b) Not having accurate data on the functional proficiency of students with three years of high school foreign language,
- c) Not knowing how many students really prefer to start a new foreign language, rather than continue with the one they studied previously, and
- d) Not knowing how many students who were below our third semester foreign language requirement completed a second semester or third semester of foreign language at their previous college before transferring to Binghamton.

The suggestions made in this report are complicated and uncertain. However, given the

complexity of the BU foreign language requirement and its logical inconsistency for transfers, as well as a paucity of reliable data on transfer students necessary to good budget estimates, the recommendations cannot be more specific and must be taken with substantial caution.

End Notes

Note 1. This is still just an estimate, since it will depend on how many of these students took another language course in college.

Note 2. Two recent FLITF surveys asked for the number of students who studied Spanish in high school. In the Fall survey, it was about 52%. In the January survey, it was about 65%. So we used 60% as a working number.

We assumed that after the first year, BU will continue to grow at the rate of annual increase of 120 transfer students/yr subject to the revised foreign-language requirement (CCPA, SOM, and Harpur). Of these, about 40/yr would not have completed the second semester requirement.

By 2015-16, this would result in a total of about 460 transfer students/year that haven't completed 2 semesters, so there would probably be an additional few sections necessary by that time.

Note 3. It could be that future demand analysis will reveal increasing shifts to another language (e.g. Chinese), which would suggest a shifting from one language course to another, for example, one of the Italian sections to Chinese. That's the kind of necessary research that must be ongoing to track demand between now and implementation dates.

Note 4. Students who have completed a fourth-level high school language with a passing grade or third-level high school language with a Regents score or (for students from non-Regents high schools only) a course grade of 85 are considered to have completed two semesters of a college-level language and can fulfill the requirement by completing either the third semester college-level course of that language or the second semester college level course of a second foreign language.

Note 5. If we had proficiency test results, a much clearer picture might be available. Perhaps more of these students really are ready for third semester but we cannot be certain.

Appendix A: Suggestions for Setting a High School Proficiency Standard for Second-Semester Foreign Language

There are several possible approaches we can take to setting the high school equivalency for two semesters of college-level foreign language:

1. We extend the two-semester proficiency standard currently in place for freshmen to transfer students: the Regents 85 (or its equivalent) will equal two semesters of college foreign language, even though this is inconsistent with the SUNY standard. The recommendations in the Task Force's report are consistent with this approach.
2. We revise our proficiency statement to match the SUNY equivalency for all students: the Regents 85 (or its equivalent) will equal one semester of college foreign language. The implications here are enormous; there is a domino effect that seems to work nearly logarithmically.
 - A Regents score of 85 or three units of high school foreign language with a grade of 85 in the third unit would now equate to one semester of college-level foreign language.
 - Four units of high school foreign language with a grade of 85 in the fourth unit would now equate to two semesters of college-level foreign language.
 - This new equivalency would have to be applied to both freshmen and transfer students going forward, meaning that a huge percentage of our freshmen would also need to take more language courses.
 - The increased costs would depend on whether we are trying to get transfer students to second semester or third semester, but in either scenario the costs would be substantially more than even the full three-semester estimate in the Task Force report. If we are trying to implement the third semester for transfer students, we would probably be looking at a \$1M to 1.5M increase. We would have to analyze our current students' foreign language background in high school to know for sure.
3. We develop a middle-of-the-road approach, in which we rely on a combination of high school foreign language courses and proficiency testing to assess actual abilities. This proposal could even be adopted as a global, across-the-board approach so that we start giving foreign language waivers based on demonstrated proficiency rather than counting high school courses. The benefit of something like this is that it completely avoids having to define proficiency by course credit in high school. The Task Force is not able to assess or predict the curricular implications of this approach.

In no case, however, can the recommendations in the Task Force's report be considered apart from this fundamental question.