



Date: November 5, 2021

To: Hossein Saiedian, University Senate President  
Faculty in the Department  
Barbara A. Bichelmeyer, Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor

From: Karen Moeller, Chair Academic Policies and Procedure committee

Re: Program Discontinuance in Humanities

In Accordance with University Senate Rules and Regulations USRR 8.2, the Academic Policies and Procedures committee (AP&P) has reviewed the documentation and held an open public hearing on October 13, 2021, regarding the recommendation to discontinue the following active programs in the Department of Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Kansas:

- BA in Humanities
- Minor in Humanities
- Minor in Peace and Conflict Studies
- Graduate Certificate in Peace and Conflict Studies

In the submitted documents titled "Recommendations for Discontinuance of an Active Academic Program" and "Humanities Program Review Submitted to the Kansas Board of Regents January 2021 as Part of its Review of Low Enrolled Programs," the College recommends discontinuance of all Humanities' degrees due to continual decline in attracting majors and minors to the program and failing to meet the 25 majors (juniors-seniors) minima per Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) criteria. The College reports a decline in student credit hours (SCH) but notes that "the unit continues to produce a large number of credit hours for the size of the faculty" and that courses in Humanities are "highly valuable to KU and its students." The College does recognize the many strengths in its faculty including strong research productivity, well-designed courses, high teaching evaluations, and teaching awards. It recommends that tenured/tenure track faculty and teaching professors be placed in new units so the teaching and research mission at KU are met. The report recognize that 2 FTE positions may be discontinued.

At the public hearing on October 13, 2021, eleven people spoke out against the discontinuance of Humanities. Seven written testimonies were received before the hearing. Common themes in their arguments were the following:

- KBOR and the University using major counts as a primary metric for program discontinuance
- Absence of faculty/staff involvement in recommendations for discontinuance
- Lack of transparency in proposed relocation plans (courses and faculty positions)
- The value of these courses to the KU curriculum.

Several speakers challenged the metric of having 25 majors in the program as the main reason for program discontinuance. Speakers questioned how the 25 number was determined and why it was a standard across all disciplines when units vastly differ in size and budget. Testimony cited the KBOR

“Program Review Criteria and Instructions for Programs Reviewed During AY 2020” document. While faculty acknowledge that the KBOR document states units with fewer than 25 majors will be identified, there is no mention of the consequences of failing to meet this benchmark. Moreover, this same document acknowledges that interdisciplinary programs (e.g., Humanities) may "have few students or faculty" and that "some disciplines may fail to meet a stated criterion, while at the same time maintaining exceptional quality and/or serving a crucial role within the university." Speakers note the exceptional quality of teaching as recognized by teaching awards and the large SCH production (annual average of 5,279) for their small department. Efforts to focus on high SCH production was in response to the university's revised budget model that focuses on SCH production. The faculty expressed that, in recent years, following the shift from the older model of General Education courses in which several Humanities and Western Civilization courses were required, they have devoted their efforts to new course development so that Humanities could be an integral component of the KU Core. As a result of this recent effort, Humanities now offers courses that fulfill all goals of the KU Core. The department expressed that if they knew that major count was the main benchmark to achieve, it would have adjusted their offerings and activities to recruit more students in the major and minor.

Lack of inclusion in the decision for program discontinuance was frequently mentioned in the hearing and written testimony. Faculty/staff expressed the desire to offer suggestions for program redesign or a possible merger with another department. This was also highlighted with the Peace and Conflict minor/graduate certificate being relocated to Global and International Studies (GIST). Faculty in Peace and Conflict program stated they have not been consulted on the possible relocation plans and expressed the value of these classes for the whole university. Faculty expressed frustration that it has not been explained why certain programs which also did not meet the KBOR minimum of 25 majors were allowed to continue or merge with other programs, while Humanities has not been given this option. Several faculty/staff indicated they have not been told where their courses or position would be relocated if the discontinuance is approved. Faculty fear their courses will disappear without a clear plan.

Lastly, speaker and written testimony emphasized the unique topics of their courses, numerous teaching awards, and uniformly high teaching evaluations. They also point out that Western Civilization is still a requirement for four different degree programs at KU. Speakers state that a potential loss of these courses will be a disservice for students at KU.

During the hearing, a statement of discrimination was made. The committee recognizes these concerns; however, evaluation of discrimination is outside the scope of this committee. The AP&P committee encourages anyone with concerns of discrimination to work with the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX at The University of Kansas to address these issues.

On October 22, 2021, the AP&P met to discuss the submitted documentation, written testimony, and the statements expressed at the hearing. AP&P recommends by a majority vote that all degrees (BA, minor, Undergraduate Certificate and Graduate Certificate) in the Department on Humanities be continued. The committee concluded that discontinuance was not in the university's best interest and that adequate provisions had not been made for the rights of faculty and staff in the program.

The committee determined that a potential loss of the Humanities classes would significantly impact students across the whole university and conflicted specifically with KU's mission sections on Instruction and Values. Humanities courses are the heart of the Values section of the mission statement as their courses are dedicated to the teaching of what it means to be human and the responsibilities that it

entails. These courses embrace cultural traditions, historical events, and political issues and encourage students to evaluate diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) issues. In submitted documentation by both the university and members of the KU community, the Humanities courses are continually referred to as having high value to the students. As there is no clear plan for course relocation for the humanities course including the peace and conflict studies program, the committee determined that a potential loss of these courses would be a significant loss for students and faculty, and instruction would not be "comparable to the best obtainable anywhere in the nation."

The committee also felt that adequate provisions had not been made for the rights of faculty and staff in the program. The announcement of the discontinuation of their program has led to significant stress on both faculty and staff. In both the written and public testimony, faculty report no involvement in the plan to discontinue and an inability to propose program redesign or a possible merger with other units, as has been allowed with other program discontinuances. This includes lack of involvement in the Peace and Conflict program merger with GIST. Some faculty members also reported they have not been informed of their potential new unit placement or where their courses would be rehomed. Without potential relocation plans, there is uncertainty if other units will accept their courses and how they would be marketed in their new unit (e.g., required versus elective). As part of *Jayhawks Rising*, a key goal of the strategic plan is to "Increase Workplace Satisfaction." The plan acknowledges the importance of faculty and staff having a 'feeling of worthiness.' The lack of clear criteria for program discontinuance (with no clear explanation of why this program cannot continue or merge with another unit) and the lack of a clear plan for transition has put this goal out of reach for the faculty and staff in the Humanities program. Discontinuance of this program is likely to also impact faculty and staff morale more broadly at KU.

Lastly, the committee concluded the department did not have adequate knowledge that failure to achieve the KBOR minima of 25 majors could be used as the primary benchmark for program discontinuance. The committee recognizes that the Department of Humanities has experienced struggles with the loss of Western Civilization I and II as required classes for undergraduate students but recognizes that the department has made significant achievements in its adaptation and creation of new courses to meet all the KU Core's six educational goals. Furthermore, the Humanities Department has designed courses to attract students outside of Humanities in the social sciences, STEM departments, and professional schools. Although the Humanities Department has a low number of majors, and the number of majors has decreased over the past five years, Humanities produces a high load of SCH with a five-year annual average of 5,279 SCH. The committee believes that this high SCH production should be equally valued and recommends that the faculty in the program be given time to refocus their efforts on program design in an effort to attract more students to the major and minor.

Regarding financial savings, the committee was unable to determine the cost saving in the closure of the department. In reviewing the two documents submitted by the College (Recommendations for Discontinuance of an Active Academic Program and the Humanities Program Review), neither stated how discontinuing the program would lead to a cost-saving for the University. It can only be implied that the cost savings comes from the two FTE that may be eliminated.

In conclusion, for all of the reasons stated above, the AP&P committee recommends that the Humanities programs along with the minor/graduate certificate program be continued. It recommends that the Humanities program enhance its recruitment efforts to attract new majors and minors to the program. The committee also recommends that the Humanities department be provided with clear metrics for program success.

Documentation Reviewed by the Committee:

1. Recommendation for Discontinuance of an Active Academic Program, January 2021
2. Humanities Program Review Submitted to the Kansas Board of Regents January 2021 as Part of its Review of Low Enrolled Programs, January 2021
3. KBOR State University Program Review Criteria and Instructions for Programs Reviewed During AY 2020
4. Humanities Course Brochure
5. Written statements (available on [governance.ku.edu](http://governance.ku.edu) webpage) by Acosta-Fox, Froth, Chappell, D'Ottavio, Van Nuys, and Vensteeg

C: John Colombo, Interim Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences