

TO: Douglas A. Girod  
Chancellor



Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor

DATE: February 4, 2022

RE: Recommendation to Discontinue Humanities Program

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University Senate Rules and Regulations ([USRR](#)) [Article VIII](#) outlines procedures for program discontinuance of active programs. An active academic program is defined in USRR 8.1.2 as “a program which has accepted students within the last three years and in which students are currently pursuing a degree.” The Humanities program is active and the following were submitted by the Interim College Dean for discontinuance:

- BA in Humanities (HUMA-BA)
- Graduate Certificate in Peace and Conflict Studies (PCCNSTD-GC)
- Minor in Humanities (HWC)
- Minor in Peace and Conflict Studies (PCCONFSTDS)

Several reasons were cited in the Dean’s recommendation for discontinuance including “prolonged, significant difficulty in attracting majors and minors” that is neither cyclical nor temporary. Enrollments in the degree program have declined from a high of 52 majors in Fall 2000 to seven in Fall 2019. Degree awards have declined by 75%, from eight (AY 2016) to two (AY 2020). No students have enrolled in or graduated from the undergraduate certificate which was first offered in Spring 2017. From Fall 2016 to Fall 2020 the Humanities minor averaged 1.5 students enrolled and the graduate certificate averaged 2.2 students enrolled. From Fall 2016 to Fall 2020 awards for the Humanities minor and graduate certificate each averaged 0.8 students annually.

The submission noted “the department offers two service courses that regularly attract over 200 students per year (HUM 110, HUM 204), but this has not translated into a consistent pipeline of majors and minors. Despite strong effort and leadership and well-enrolled recruitment courses, the unit has not been able to stop nor reverse long-standing declines in majors.”

Though the program has had difficulty attracting majors, College values the contributions members of the unit make to the university. “With numerous teaching awards among the faculty and consistently high teaching evaluations across the board, the faculty offer thoughtfully designed courses that explore multiple facets of the human experience, including cultural traditions, historical events, and pressing political problems. The tenured/tenure track faculty show high research productivity. Thus, although closure of these programs and the department is recommended, tenured/tenure-track faculty and teaching professors will be moved to new units to continue to contribute to the research and teaching mission of KU.”

Regrettably, closure of the program, if approved, will result in the following positions being discontinued: 0.5 communications specialist position, 0.5 lecturer position, and one full-time position (0.5 associate

specialist/0.5 associate director). Beginning in November 2020 and in continuing conversations, all instructional personnel and staff in the Humanities program were informed of the Dean's recommendation to discontinue the program and of plans to move tenured/tenure-track faculty and one teaching professor to other units should the discontinuance be approved.

In the recommendation to discontinue, the Dean noted KU continues to support its mission in regard to the Humanities. "Although the interdisciplinary humanities training program will no longer continue, the College will maintain a diverse array of humanities disciplines (including majors, minors, certificates) to support student interest and demand." In addition, tenured/tenure-track faculty and teaching professors will continue their contributions to the humanities in other existing units.

Furthermore, in the request to discontinue the Humanities program, the Dean indicated plans to retain the minor in Peace and Conflict Studies (PCCONFSTDS). It is "being considered for transferring to another unit, in which case discontinuance will not be necessary. But approval of the discontinuance is requested in case transferring it to another unit does not prove to be in the best interest of the university." The Dean has subsequently indicated the Peace and Conflict Studies minor has found a proposed home in Global and International Studies and he wishes to continue that program.

#### Recommendations From University Governance

The request to discontinue the Humanities program was submitted to the Committee on Academic Policies & Procedures (AP&P). AP&P recommended the program continue. On December 2, 2021 University Senate concurred with AP&P's recommendation, with the following rationale:

- "Discontinuance of these programs is not in the best academic interests of the University, as required in USRR Article VIII for discontinuance. – In its review of the program, the College found that the faculty are highly productive and recognized for their research, highly effective teachers, and that the program's impacts reach units across campus thanks to efforts of the faculty to build ties with and support other academic units.
- Furthermore, this Department, which has fewer than 10 faculty, has recently had a 5-year annual student credit hour (SCH) average over 5000. This is a considerable teaching load that serves students and units across campus. It is larger SCH production than many programs not being considered for discontinuance.
- Discontinuance on the basis of low-enrollments alone, which was the basis articulated by the KU administration, is inconsistent with KBOR's request to "review low-enrollment programs ... to assess viability". Reliance on this basis for discontinuance also violates USRR Article VIII, which requires a "bona fide academic and educational reason", and AAUP guidance on program discontinuance, which states that acceptable "[e]ducational considerations do not include cyclical or temporary variations in enrollment."
- Adequate provisions for faculty and students have not been articulated, as required in USRR Article VIII for discontinuance. Some affiliated faculty still have not been made aware of plans for reassignment in the event the program is discontinued.
- The lack of clear criteria or justification for discontinuance, the lack of explanation of why this program cannot continue or merge with another unit, and the lack of a clear plan for transition also do not meet the standards necessary for program discontinuance."

#### Provost's Recommendation

I appreciate University Senate's desire for clear criteria for discontinuance; the focus of my evaluation was based on the USRR-established criteria of academic mission and educational considerations – criteria for

evaluation upon which I understand that reasonable people can disagree. Each program proposed for discontinuance is evaluated on its own merits – not in comparison to other programs proposed for discontinuance. Such comparisons appear outside the scope of USRR.

The Kansas Board of Regents strategic program alignment process asked universities to not only assess program viability, and also to “strengthen the efficiency of degree program inventories”. Regardless of KBOR’s alignment review, USRR focuses program discontinuance considerations on academic mission and educational considerations. In reviewing the information provided by the Dean, University Governance, and in the program review, I find discontinuing the Humanities program is in the best academic interest of the institution based on educational considerations.

I fully agree with governance that the faculty are productive scholars who contribute to the scholarly work of the university. At the same time, the program’s 20 years of declining enrollment is neither cyclical nor temporary. With so few students in the Humanities program, its students are deprived of a strong and diverse cohort to facilitate peer learning and engagement experiences that are hallmarks of an exceptional learning community. Such experiences are critical and essential for comprehensive and robust learning, and are germane to the educational considerations for students at our institution. Students’ educational experiences and learning environments are central to our mission of “offering the highest quality undergraduate, professional and graduate programs comparable to the best obtainable anywhere in the nation.” The ability to have a robust cohort of peers who engage in peer-to-peer learning is one fundamental experience students have a right to expect as part of their education. These expectations can be met through their enrollment in one of the many humanities disciplines KU is known for – and is indeed a leader in our state.

While I support discontinuance of the Humanities program I recognize the strength of its faculty, who have received numerous teaching awards and consistently high teaching evaluations. Their work in designing courses that seek to explore the human experience is commendable, and their publication productivity and research funding awards are impressive. In addition, their many collaborations with other departments and schools at KU have provided meaningful impact to the institution. This is why I support the Dean’s proposal to move these faculty to existing units and to not pursue USRR 8.4. Tenured/tenure-track faculty and the teaching professor can continue their robust and meaningful contributions to the University in existing units.

While I understand University Governance’s concern regarding faculty placement, I find adequate provision has been made under USRR 8.2.5 which includes “relocation of faculty of the program in another academic Unit of the university.” All tenured/tenure-track faculty and one teaching professor have been informed that should program discontinuance be approved they will be relocated. Such plans have not been finalized as that action cannot predate your decision about the program.

University Governance did not detail why it determined inadequate provisions have been made for students. I note the Humanities program is interdisciplinary and draws heavily on courses from 20 other disciplines in the College including African & African-American Studies, American Studies, Classics, History, and Political Science, and according to the Dean “makes use of many cross-listed courses.” These units will continue to offer courses so that Humanities students may finish their program, and the Dean has indicated that required unit level courses in Humanities and Peace and Conflict Studies will be offered so students can complete their program in the timeline prescribed in USRR.

Notably, 1) the Humanities program draws heavily on courses from other disciplines in the College, 2) many of the HUM and PCS courses taught by Humanities faculty are cross-listed with other departments, and 3) faculty in other departments teach courses that they cross-list with HUM and PCS; consequently, most of the program's courses can continue to be offered. The interdisciplinary nature of the Humanities program makes it conceptually difficult to merge into another department, and also impractical due to the fact that existing cross-listed courses will continue in other departments, two tenured faculty already have partial appointments in other units, there are numerous units the program collaborates with, and faculty have a variety of educational backgrounds (e.g., History, English, Hispanic/Latin American Literature, and Comparative Literature). Furthermore, relocating individual faculty to units in their specific disciplinary areas, while undeniably and regrettably disruptive, provides opportunities for those faculty to contribute meaningfully to the research, students, and curricula in their areas of disciplinary expertise.

Though, as noted earlier, each program is evaluated on its own merits, I will address how the Humanities program differs from others identified for merger. Three programs identified for merger (Contemporary East Asian Studies, Latin American & Caribbean Studies, and Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies) had no tenured/tenure-track faculty assigned other than a half-time position as Center Director, and for each the Director position will continue. Furthermore, the Centers themselves will all continue and are not being merged. Given this, and given those academic programs' natural fit with programs in the Center for Global and International Studies (CGIS), the CEAS, LACS, and REES programs were recommended for merger. While the CEAS, LACS, and REES programs are low enrolled, a merger with programs in CGIS GIST will also provide students with robust peer-to-peer learning experiences – an important educational consideration that is foundational to an exceptional learning community.

The Humanities program is also different from the proposed merger of the German Studies program, faculty, and staff with the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures (SELL). The German Studies Department has faculty with the same disciplinary expertise, and a merger with SELL creates a departmental structure seen at Association of American Universities (AAU) members such as the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Merging the German Studies and SELL is within disciplinary norms with peer AAU institutions. However, at these same AAU institutions and others, disciplinary norms typically do not place an interdisciplinary humanities program within a discipline-specific humanities unit. The very nature of an interdisciplinary humanities unit is its interdisciplinarity – and this uniqueness is difficult to retain if merged with a discipline-specific humanities unit.

While student credit hour production is not a criterion by which to evaluate a program for discontinuance according to USRR, the Humanities program's student credit hour production has decreased, in part, because of the College's decision to reallocate funding for graduate teaching assistants in part, because of recent retirements in the unit, and because of declining enrollment. Since GTAs have routinely taught more than 50% of the program's student credit hours, historical credit hour production is not an indicator of future credit hour production. GTAs last taught for the program in AY 2020, and the program offered a total of 2,917 credit hours. In AY 2021, the unit, without GTA's, taught a total of 1,434 credit hours, though this decline was also impacted by retirements.

A strength of the program is that it offers 100-level and 200-level courses in fulfillment of the KU Core, two of which, HUM 110 and HUM 204 have previously routinely enrolled more than 200 students per year. However, many sections of these courses were taught by the faculty member and lecturer who both recently retired. Others are taught by tenured/tenure-track faculty and teaching professors whose positions have been recommended to continue. These courses may continue being offered – though in different units.

In addition, while these HUM and PCS courses fulfill KU Core Goals 1.1, 2.1, 3 (Arts & Humanities), 4.1, and 4.2 – students have more than 300 options to fulfill Goal 1.1, more than 40 options to fulfill Goal 2.1, more than 180 options to fulfill Goal 3 (Arts & Humanities), more than 120 options to fulfill Goal 4.1, and more than 350 options to fulfill Goal 4.2.

The field of humanities is important to KU's mission. This is evidenced by the numerous discipline-specific humanities programs at KU, as well as in the work of the Hall Center for the Humanities and the Institute for Digital Research in the Humanities. These efforts will be additionally supported by recent investments from the Provost's Office to create the Institute for International and Global Engagement (IIGE). This new institute will provide an inclusive institutional structure that spans the university, with particular focus on the Area Studies Centers, and will connect our institution's internationalization efforts to support discipline-specific work in the humanities. In sum, though I disagree with University Governance's program recommendations, I wholeheartedly agree with their perspective that the humanities are critical to KU; therefore, we must work to ensure the scholarship and education in the work of humanities will continue to thrive at KU through new and existing programs, institutes, and centers.

#### Next Steps

USRR VIII requires that you evaluate the recommendations and communicate your final decision for or against program discontinuance to the appropriate faculty, dean(s), and governance bodies. To aid in your decision-making the following documents are included in this packet:

- 1) A copy of the discontinuance request which provides the rationale for the discontinuance along with how such discontinuances will impact students, faculty, and staff; and
- 2) A copy of the memo from University Senate President Hossein Saiedian and Faculty Senate President Rémy Lequesne outlining University Senate's recommendation for the program.
- 3) A copy of the memo from AP&P outlining its recommendation for the program.
- 4) A copy of the program review submitted to Kansas Board of Regents.

Your signature, decision, and date of your decision are required on the following page. The Provost's Office can communicate your decision to the relevant units. If you approve these requests, our office will also inform the Kansas Board of Regents and the Higher Learning Commission that this program has been discontinued.

Cc: Rémy Lequesne, Faculty Senate President  
Hossein Saiedian, University Senate President  
Jean Redeker, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs  
Matt Melvin, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management  
Nick Stevens, Chief Data Officer  
Brian White, General Counsel & Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs  
Kathy Reed, University Governance Executive Assistant  
Jenn Anderson, Director of the Policy Office  
Jen Roberts, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs & Graduate Studies  
John Colombo, Interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
Ben Eggleston, Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
Margot Versteeg, Director of the Humanities Program

Your signature and the date of your decision are required for one of three options. A discontinuance date of June 1, 2026 is recommended (Option 1) though USRR allows you the discretion to lengthen the phase-out period for discontinued programs beyond June 1, 2026 (Option 2), or to continue the programs (Option 3).

- Option 1: I approve retaining the minor in Peace and Conflict Studies and discontinuing the following programs effective June 1, 2026:
  - BA in Humanities
  - Graduate Certificate in Peace and Conflict Studies
  - Minor in Humanities

**Chancellor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Option 2: I approve continuing the minor in Peace and Conflict Studies and discontinuing the following programs effective \_\_\_\_\_:
  - BA in Humanities
  - Graduate Certificate in Peace and Conflict Studies
  - Minor in Humanities

**Chancellor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Option 3: I approve continuing the following programs:
  - BA in Humanities
  - Graduate Certificate in Peace and Conflict Studies
  - Minor in Humanities
  - Minor in Peace and Conflict Studies

**Chancellor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_