



Dartmouth College HANOVER • NEW HAMPSHIRE 03755

Department of French and Italian • TELEPHONE: (603) 646-2400



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TO: Margaret Bonz, Co-chairperson, 504 Committee

FROM: John D. Lyons, Acting Chairman, French and Italian

RE: 504 Department Self-Evaluation

At its meeting of February 4 the Department considered at length the recently circulated documents on Section 504 in view of the requested response from teaching departments. The Department has long felt that the College has neglected these issues, particularly in conjunction with the operation of off-campus programs. However, we have serious questions about the way in which the College is handling the evaluation of curricular preparedness for compliance with section 504. We feel that the College has failed to understand the magnitude of the problems facing individual departments in dealing with this issue. Indeed, the College's attitude towards institutional self-evaluation strikes us as verging on the cavalier.

Review of the curriculum in French and Italian. It appears to us that the Departmental self-evaluation cannot be carried out in serious and professional way without the participation of educators specifically trained in the teaching of the handicapped. Any effort on our part to anticipate the ways in which a multitude of impairments would affect learning in our courses would be, at best, the work of well-intentioned amateurs. Moreover, to conduct such a review would require that several members of the Department be relieved of their teaching duties to devote the appropriate amount of time to this new task. We propose that a specialist in these matters review our syllabi and visit a number of our classes in order to prepare for the Department an evaluation that will allow us to make provision for the eventual teaching of the disabled.

Accessibility of classrooms. Dartmouth Hall, where most of our teaching takes place on campus, has no provision to facilitate access to students with difficulties of mobility. Even a student with sprained wrist would have difficulty opening the doors of the building. Chairmen of the departments in Dartmouth Hall have complained in general terms about the poor state of the building. Preparedness for the handicapped is merely a concrete example of the neglect of this facility.

Off-campus programs. The issues raised by section 504 insofar as they concern off-campus programs cannot be discussed without an understanding of the frustration of our Department at the College's failure to provide adequate student services for these programs.

There is a long history of an unhappy relationship between our directors of LSA and FSP and the College health services. Among the most glaring of these problems is the withholding of pertinent information concerning the physical and mental impairments of students already admitted to the LSA and FSP. We have received no cooperation from the medical services. Information has been withheld in such a way as to jeopardize the welfare of afflicted students, their classmates, and members of host families. Once a student has been admitted to these programs, fear of discriminatory exclusion is not justified. On the other hand, if no provision is made for their impairment then grave risks may be run. We again request that all pertinent information about student health, mental and physical, be provided to the Department prior to departure for the program site abroad.

The College must also assume responsibility for assuring that medical care and all other necessary facilities are made available to students who require them. In other words, if a student must see an English-speaking psychiatrist during the term, the College medical services must see to it that such a professional is available in the program site.

In regard to the more traditional forms of physical and mental disability, the College must understand that France and Italy do not conform to U.S. standards for handicap access. If the College wishes to send handicapped students on these programs, the College must make its own provisions for such students. These provisions will probably include hiring someone to work full-time with the disabled student. The person hired will have to be bilingual and to have special training to deal with the disability.

The College may also have to provide special housing for handicapped students abroad. The Department cannot guarantee that all program sites have host families willing or able to house students with special needs.

I will be happy to discuss with the Committee further steps towards a resolution of these problems.