Dear Stakeholders –

For at least the past eleven years, those of us who teach Classics have been engaging constantly and consistently in assessment and experimenting – I cannot speak to the time before I joined the faculty, but I know that my colleagues were hard at work even then; indeed we assessed our programs before assessment came to mean what it now does. At one time, for example, we gave in to peer pressure and began offering language classes two days per week instead of four. When we realized that our students were struggling on that schedule, we re-introduced a four-day schedule for Latin and Greek (both Ancient and Modern). Further, many students were abandoning language study after the third semester because their only option after that was to dive directly into advanced courses with students who were much more experienced; as a result, we designed additional courses at the intermediate level (LAT and GKA 2020) to give them more practice reading at a less demanding pace. Observing that our majors were graduating without a sense of the totality of Greek and Roman literature, we created Survey courses on those topics. All of these changes were implemented as a result of examination and rethinking of our curriculum, and all have been successful to a greater or lesser degree, in spite of the challenges current staffing shortages have caused. We continue to tinker and fine-tune.

A further change has been to streamline our various major programs. An incoming student can easily complete all of the requirements in three years, and can do it in two if they focus. In fact, in exit interviews, 11 out of 15 recent graduates stated that they graduated between 2 and 3 years after they declared a Classics major. Our class schedule is carefully constructed so that the few courses we offer do not overlap each other, thus extending students' time-to-degree. Students who did not finish the major in 2-3 years were those who double-majored (in one case, triple-majored with Physics and Astronomy) or who had personal reasons for not being able to take courses full-time.

Indeed, this speaks to the realities of Wayne State University and our clientele. We have several alumnae who were on the books for close to ten years because they were working full-time and taking one or two courses at a time. A few years ago, I had a gentleman in Latin who was very proud of the fact that he was graduating in five years – just not in a row! He had started some 20 years previously, and then life had happened. Now, after retiring, he had returned to finish what he had started so long ago. We have followed up with students who dropped out very close to graduation and have recently gotten two of them to complete their degrees.

The success of our students is worth noting. The graduation rate for students of color in our program is 100%. In recent years, some of our students have won national awards in the field. After college, our students are moving to a variety of fulfilling careers in law, library science, academia, banking, health professions, et cetera. As I like to say when a student asks what s/he can do with a degree in Classics, “What can’t you do with a degree in Classics?”

The University’s mission statement declares our goal to “prepare a diverse student body.” To go further, our area’s mission is to provide a quality Classical education to students who did not traditionally have access. This includes diversity in age, race and ethnicity, socio-economic background, etc. We continue to do so, even while we are given fewer and fewer resources. It is hard to implement improvement plans when all of our professors of Ancient Greek either have or are in the process of retiring. Nevertheless, we still engage in self-examination, self-criticism and attempted self-improvement.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Classics Area,
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