

Date: May 15, 2003  
To: College of Liberal Arts Curriculum Committee  
(via Associate Dean Sharon Nelson)  
From: Robert W. Adams, Director  
Social Science Education Program  
Subject: Request to Increase Grade Point Admission Standard

I ask consent to raise the Social Science Education admission grade point average (GPA) from 2.0 to 2.5 effective fall quarter 2003. Currently there is, in effect, an “open admission” policy that fails to recognize the more demanding, atypical, program requirements facing students entering the major. All other College of Liberal Arts entrance criteria would be unchanged.

Social Science Education, like the Integrated Language Arts major, is, in practice, a dual bachelors and masters degree program. As undergraduates Social Science Education majors undertake a rigorous, 95-credit hour, multi-disciplinary program representing all social science disciplines. Academic content is the focus. Only 15 credit hours of professional work are required for the B.A. degree. An important effect of this concentration on academic courses (including College of Liberal Arts language and research methods requirements) is, that, upon graduation, Social Science Education students are expected to enter the Masters in Education program. That is where they satisfy most of the professional field experience and coursework requirements Ohio mandates for licensure as Integrated Social Studies teachers.

At present, there is a significant “disconnect” between the most basic program entrance standard and the expectation (indeed, the virtual mandate) that social science education majors be eligible to enter the School of Graduate Studies. For all 138 students registered for spring 2003 classes 58 (42%) are below the standard. In the spring quarter 2003 30% (18 of 60) of registered Social Science Education seniors have GPAs below the minimum 2.7 for admission to graduate study. In reality these seniors have already “flunked out” of the program because they will be unable to complete the equally important second stage. Some may enter upon successful petition---but that is an uncertain prospect, at best. I contend that a nearly one-third (prospective) failure rate indicates the need to strengthen admission standards. These numbers are unhappy harbingers of frustration for a large number of students. With a higher program entrance standard, they might be encouraged to consider more appropriate investments of their resources and hopes. Over time some

students will close the gap between their entering and graduation GPAs. However, as the data above indicate, many may not. But even those who get off to a bad start in their undergraduate programs would be encouraged to work harder and do better.

Students initially denied admission would have unlimited opportunity to reapply upon achievement of the minimum standard. And special circumstances such as compiling two or more quarterly GPAs of 3.0 or above, that may still leave a student below the minimum 2.5 admission standard, could lead the program advisory committee to recommend conditional admission to the program director.

There is precedent in the College of Liberal Arts for program admission GPAs over 2.0. The department of English recently increased its grade point standard to 2.5 for applicants to the Integrated Language Arts program. Students in that program, like Social Science Education majors, for all intents and purposes, must qualify for graduate study in order to meet professional standards for state licensure. Communication, Urban Studies and Criminal Justice also impose higher than minimum standards. And majors in these programs are not expected to enter graduate school as a condition for, completing their educations.

There is a welcome, growing commitment to higher quality evident among all stakeholders in Ohio public education. The Ohio Board of Education in December 2002, for the first time ever, adopted detailed, more rigorous academic content standards for teaching social studies from kindergarten through grade 12. Similar efforts are underway or have reached fruition in the other teaching fields. Model curricula will be developed reflecting the new standards. New high school graduation achievement tests based on the new standards will replace the current proficiency tests in 2008. Consistent with this concern for quality would be a stronger demonstration of high academic potential for future social studies teachers than the current 2.0 standard requires.

In conclusion:

1. Increasing the basic admission requirement for social science education would be a practical way to increase the probability of student success in this program
2. A higher standard would be consistent with the significantly enhanced academic performance requirements in current Ohio teacher education standards that stress strong academic content
3. It would also be consistent with the new K-12 social studies standards that will drive revised high school graduation tests that will go into effect in 2008.

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4. There is precedent in the College of Liberal Arts for higher than minimum admission program requirements; students in the language arts education English track already are subject to a higher admission standard.
5. Finally, students initially denied admission will have unlimited opportunity to petition the social science education program committee for reconsideration based on demonstrated improvement in their academic performance.

I would be happy to respond to any questions from the committee.