

The Physical Activity Requirement at the College of William and Mary

Proposal to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences:

The EPC proposes to eliminate the two-course (or equivalent) physical activity requirement for undergraduate students and to continue permitting students to count a maximum of 4 physical activity credits toward the 120-credit graduation requirement. The Activity Program will be retained on an elective basis, and the Department of Kinesiology may pursue the option of continuing some courses on a fee basis as is currently done with Judo and Self-Defense classes. The activity requirement for Kinesiology concentrators will be addressed as a separate issue within the department.

Background:

The driving force behind this recommendation is a budgetary one. The cost of the current physical activity requirement is very high due to the dependence on a large number of adjunct faculty. The current budget situation is forcing the Faculty of Arts and Sciences to examine its programs and make some hard decisions regarding the retention of requirements. The EPC believes that this requirement cannot be sustained in the current economic climate.

The EPC supports the philosophical basis for continuing to make activity classes available to William and Mary students. The movement dimension of learning can help cultivate mind/body unity which in turn affects learning on an intellectual and emotional level. These types of classes can introduce students to new experiences which may develop into lifetime pursuits. The activity program also offers courses with a focus on wellness through the development of a healthy lifestyle. This type of education helps counteract the sedentary habits that have become common in U.S. culture.

Encouraging the continuation of physical education in the William and Mary curriculum is supportive of the overall mission and goals of the College. Many of our current students already demonstrate an ability to balance their intellectual and physical lives, however removing the requirement may permit students who would most benefit from these types of experiences to avoid them. If this is the outcome, and if that outcome becomes a detriment to the overall experience of students at William and Mary, this requirement might need to be revisited in the future.