

Western Michigan University
Board of Trustees
October 29, 2026

PROPOSAL: Delete the Doctor of Philosophy in Spanish

Background

The Graduate Studies Council of the Faculty Senate has approved the deletion of the Doctor of Philosophy in Spanish offered by the Department of Spanish in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The faculty of the Department of Spanish has voted to permanently close our PhD program in Spanish because it is no longer viable. Given other programs that must be supported by current faculty numbers and low numbers of PhD applicants in recent years, we cannot offer a sufficient variety of courses at the graduate level for doctoral-level students. Doing so would directly compete with and harm our successful MA program. Moreover, we face limits to the number of graduate assistantships typically available for our students and must maintain a delicate balance to keep both our MA courses and Basic Spanish language program viable. This is because our GTAs serve as instructors for the many sections of Basic Spanish our department offers each semester, freeing up faculty to teach intermediate and advanced courses for minors and majors, WES courses, and graduate-level courses. A PhD student typically requires a longer period of funding than the two years required for the MA program, meaning fewer GTAs overall. Between course enrollment minima and funding limits, there is no longer any way to make the math work. Our department's doctoral program was always intended to fill a very specific, regional niche, and did so very successfully for a long time. But interest in the program was already declining in the years before the COVID-19 pandemic, and we have not accepted any new students into the program since then, with the last student graduating in 2024. After putting the program on hiatus for several years, we made the difficult decision to have it removed from the catalog.

Recommended Action

Delete the Doctor of Philosophy in Spanish.