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**Cc:** "Thompson, Amy" <[athompson@usf.edu](mailto:athompson@usf.edu)>

**Subject:** Florida Senate Bill 104 (Computer Coding)

Dear Colleagues,

I am e-mailing you, the Faculty Senate Presidents/Chairs of the SUS for AY16/17, about an issue that has recently arisen at one of our Faculty Senate meetings. Senate Bill 104 would allow high school students to substitute 2 credits of computer coding for foreign language class requirements beginning AY19/20. While this proposed legislation is targeted to K-12 education, it will also have effects on Florida colleges and universities. Amy Thompson from our Department of World Languages has put together a brief summary of the bill and its potential impacts (attached).

I would like to ask you all if there has been a similar discussion at your Faculty Senate meetings. We are considering putting forth a Senate resolution opposing this bill and thought it would have more impact if we had a joint resolution with our sister SUS institutions. Alternatively, putting forward similar resolutions from the different Faculty Senates at the same time, during the legislative session, would likely achieve the same result.

If any of your Faculty Senates would like to co-sponsor a joint resolution, I propose that we have a committee with a representative from each institution to draft the resolution, which can then be put forward.

Please let me know if this is of interest (or not) to your Senators. I apologize if I have sent this message to a past President and would appreciate it if you could forward the e-mail to the correct party.

Best regards,  
MT

Michael Teng, Ph.D.  
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President, USF Faculty Senate  
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## **Information on the Computer Coding bill: SB 104**

Bill summary: Started in the 2019-2020 AY, high school students would be able to substitute computer coding classes for foreign language classes (2 credits).

### Negative impacts for Florida State Institutions:

1. College system institutions and state universities would be required to accept these credits as foreign language credits (even though parents and students would have to sign a statement saying that they are aware that these coding credits may not meet out-of-state foreign language requirements).

2. Students could take these courses at the Florida Virtual School if their high schools don't offer courses, and state universities would likewise be required to accept these credits.

3. The Florida department of education would be responsible for the oversight of the courses that would count for credit. It's not clear from the way the bill is written if universities would have any input in these decisions.

3. According to the 2011 census data Florida is the state with the 4<sup>th</sup> largest population of individuals who speak a language other than English at home (roughly 5 million people). Taking away the foreign language requirement could result in less understanding of people with different cultural backgrounds. Some succinct, easily accessible information is found in articles in "The Conversation" by USF faculty members regarding the benefits of foreign language study <https://theconversation.com/how-learning-a-new-language-improves-tolerance-68472>, as well as why automatic translations are likely not viable in the foreseeable future: <https://theconversation.com/could-the-language-barrier-actually-fall-within-the-next-10-years-54805>

4. Each university likely has more specific policies and initiatives that would be negatively impacted by the reduction of foreign language study. USF, for example, has initiated a "Global Citizen's Project," part of which includes language study and study abroad. Similarly, USF is in the process of applying for membership into Phi Beta Kappa, which requires no less than an intermediate level of a foreign language for all potential inductees. In both cases, USF students would be behind the curve if no foreign language study was required at the high school level.

In sum: Although computer coding and technological literacy is of utmost importance, these courses should not substitute for foreign language study. Both skills are crucial in our increasingly globalized society, and students should not be required to choose one at the expense of the other.