

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

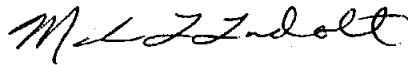
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November 16, 1998

To: Lee L. Huntsman
Provost

From: Marsha L. Landolt
Dean and Vice Provost



Re: Germanics 10-year review

Recommended action:

At its meeting of October 8, 1998, the Graduate School Council recommended continuation of the authorization to offer BA, MA and PhD degrees through the department of Germanics. The department deserves recognition and commendation on many levels. The last review remarked on internal dissention among the faculty. In contrast, this review found the faculty to be collegial, active, productive, of high quality and intellectually diverse. The faculty has become capable of frank and open disagreement without enmity. The department is actively seeking ways in which to diversify its offerings and maintain student interest in Germanics as both an area of specialization and an adjunct to other programs and majors. The leadership of Richard Gray as departmental Chair was particularly complimented. The self-study, report of the review committee and a separate letter from the external reviewers (which shares the tone of the committee report) and the departmental response to the committee report are attached.

Background:

The Department of Germanics was last reviewed in 1987. It has made several successful hires since that time. It was ranked 12th out of 32 in 1995 by the National Research Council, a rank the reviewers from outside the University actually thought was lower than the department in fact deserves. A faculty member from this department has won a University distinguished teaching award and the program is regarded nationally as a model for foreign language instruction. It includes an exemplary training program for TAs (some graduate students actually choose the department specifically for its reputation in this area), which contributes both to the quality of undergraduate instruction and to the employment prospects of its PhD recipients. The self-study reveals a department that highly values teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels and is ambitious and successful in its range of offerings. The diversity of its course offerings and academic expertise affords a considerable ability to respond to new opportunities and developments. The academic standards of the department are high and students at all levels must demonstrate considerable accomplishment to obtain degrees. The department places high value on the teaching of language. Even though this endeavor is often taken for granted, the

department recognizes it as the foundation upon which any of its other educational efforts is based.

Unfortunately, the department suffers from declining numbers of language majors and the self-study describes several initiatives through which the faculty have endeavored to respond to flagging enrollments. For example, the department notes that Germany is the financial and economic center of the European Union and is an important trading and business partner for the State of Washington. The department has offered Business German since 1993 and has found it to be an area with continually increasing demand. This effort may be worth expanding, perhaps in collaboration with other European language programs or the Center for West European Studies. Such offerings may be bolstered by hiring a scholar with expertise in the politics and history of 20th century/contemporary Germany. The Germanics faculty, perhaps more than many on campus, is capable of examining its composition and selecting and supporting a new faculty member who would extend the current capability in areas of opportunity. This ability is the key to both their present and future success. The department is interested in developing an undergraduate minor that would compliment several majors. Offering minors may increase interest in the Germanics Area Studies track in the present BA and link more strongly to business and European studies programs.

The review committee suggested that the department consider developing a certificate program in translation, perhaps in collaboration with other language departments. Such a program would require a specialist in translation and is not a high priority for the department. The committee also suggested naming an external advisory board, which the department will discuss.

The Graduate School Council noted that approximately 80% of graduate students entering the program leave with an MA. The attrition rate appears to be high. The Chair professed no insight as to why students leave the program short of their original goal. There are a sufficient number of TA lines in the department to allow students to continue. Since each entering cohort numbers only about 11 students, it appears that an accounting of reasons for leaving the program is feasible and should be undertaken.

This industrious and productive faculty, which is devoted to teaching as well as research, cites the inability to schedule teaching in a way that maximizes productivity. This is an area in which the University could be of help. Occasional quarters with no classroom responsibilities would be welcomed. In addition, the department feels that five credit courses focus too much of the student's attention on learning in the classroom as opposed to teaching themselves through more independent study. Apparently overlooked is the fact that a five credit hour course does not require five weekly hours of "seat time". The department may need to discuss this issue with Dean Campbell. The department also notes that the recruitment funding provided by the Graduate School would have a greater impact if it could be used more flexibly. I hope to see the department take advantage of the new funding system the Graduate School has introduced.

The review committee makes the point that decreased demand nationally for instruction in German may actually be an opportunity for a University with an unusually strong Germanics program. It is their opinion that less strong programs at other universities are likely to decline, to the advantage of those robust programs at fewer institutions. Although this argument may be overly optimistic, continued support of this program clearly is indicated. The department and the review committee argue that Germanics should be allowed to increase by one faculty FTE and be allowed to keep a position that is expected to be vacated by an upcoming retirement. The Graduate School Council did not support the addition of a faculty FTE given the competitive

situation in Arts and Sciences generally and the falling demand for German language courses. While the strength of this department should not be allowed to erode, the department needs to think carefully about using any future hires to respond to those areas of instruction that are in demand and likely to remain so. The department has been very successful in hiring outstanding new faculty in the last few years and is likely to continue to do well as opportunity allows.

Enclosures

- c. David C. Hodge, Acting Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
- Michael R. Halleran, Divisional Dean, Arts and Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences
- Debra Friedman, Associate Provost for Academic Planning
- Frederick L. Campbell, Dean and Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education
- George S. Bridges, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education
- Richard T. Gray, Professor and Chair, Department of Germanics
- John L. Slattery, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Graduate School
- Graduate School Council
- Review Committee