



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

*The Graduate School*

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February 21, 2001

To: Lee L. Huntsman  
Provost

From: Marsha L. Landolt   
Dean and Vice Provost

Re: Department of Linguistics 10-year Review

*Summary and recommended action*

At its meeting of October 19, 2000, the Graduate School Council met with members of the Department of Linguistics review team and Departmental and College representatives. The Graduate School Council recommended continuation of all degree programs offered by the Department. The Council was particularly impressed with the opportunities presented by the Department's emerging strengths in phonetics and computational linguistics. It urged that the Department and the College pursue energetic development in these areas.

The self-study, the report of the review committee, the Department's response and correspondence to the Department prior to the second meeting of the Council are attached.

*Background*

The Department was last reviewed in 1990. The Department offers BA, MA and PhD degrees. Over the past 10 years, the Department has gone from 8 BA recipients annually to 100 enrolled undergraduate majors. Graduate enrollment has remained steady following a Graduate School imposed reduction of enrollment in 1992. The Department currently awards about 5 MA degrees annually and 2-4 PhDs. The Department includes 11 tenure track faculty and one research Professor. One of the challenges faced by the Department is that demand for linguists in the technology sector is so high that retention of students has become an issue. At the same time, faculty view this demand as a very positive situation and are addressing it in prospective ways.

All faculty participate in both lower division and upper division undergraduate instruction. Their teaching is well regarded. The Department is limited in its undergraduate role by the number of TA lines. All available TAs are assigned to a single course, LING 200, with quarterly enrollments of approximately 225. LING 100, a technical course intended to acquaint students with basic grammatical concepts, currently serves approximately 95 students at each offering. There are more students who would like to take the course but the Department has had to cap enrollment because of the lack of TA's. The curriculum for the course has been tailored to accommodate the scant ability to interact closely with students.

The Department's graduate students were considered to be outstanding and well mentored. The Department hosts a phonetics lab, founded with an NSF grant awarded in 1993. This is a considerable asset that is well equipped and used for graduate instruction. The lab is too small and understaffed for undergraduate access. It has no technical support. The fact that the Department is widely dispersed limits intellectual exchange.

The review committee considered the Department of Linguistics to be in the second tier nationally, in the company of such programs as University of Pennsylvania, USC, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, University of Illinois Champagne-Urbana, and University of Illinois. The top tier was considered to include MIT, UCLA, Ohio State University, University of Massachusetts, Stanford and Rutgers. The strengths of the UW program are in contemporary syntactic theory, romance linguistics, second language acquisition, Native American language studies and phonetics. The program is also seen to be in transition, broadening its areas of strength by shifting resources from syntactic theory into phonetics. This increase in breadth was judged to be healthy, particularly for a program in the Northwest. The emerging emphasis on phonetics well positions the Department for work in phonological theory, the study of human language processing and speech technology.

The Department is committed to maintaining high quality activity on each of its fronts. It particularly seeks to increase its profile in NSF and NIH supported research. Along these lines, it views a computational linguist as its highest hiring priority. In the opinion of the review committee, the Department could, with sufficient resources, consider offering a terminal MA in this field, producing highly sought graduates. The Graduate School Council strongly endorsed this suggestion. The Department is receptive, provided a strong program can be built and supported. The inclusion of the Department of Linguistics in development efforts is strongly encouraged.

#### Enclosures

c: Richard McCormick, President  
Julia Herschensohn, Professor and Chair, Department of Linguistics  
Debra Friedman, Associate Provost for Academic Planning  
John Slattery, Associate Dean for Academic Programs  
David Hodge, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences  
Michael Halleran, Divisional Dean, Arts and Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences  
Frederick Campbell, Dean and Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education  
Members of the Review Committee:  
Professors Charles Barrack (Chair), Marc Cohen, Carol Stoel-Gammon, Peter Culicover  
(Ohio State University), Patricia Keating (UCLA)  
Graduate School Council  
Augustine McCaffery, Assistant to the Dean  
Danielle LaVaque-Manty, Assistant to the Dean