

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

The Graduate School

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To: Lee Huntsman
Provost

From: Marsha Landolt
Dean



Re: Department of Speech Communication, 10-year review

Recommended Action:

The Graduate Council recommends that the Department of Speech Communication be authorized to continue to offer BA, MA and PhD degrees for 10 years. I concur with this recommendation.

The review committee recommended that the Department strengthen its programs by working more closely with the School of Communication and other intellectually complimentary units. The Department has joined in a planning process with the Department of Political Science and the School of Communication to identify areas of common interest and to develop mechanisms for working more closely with one another. This effort will result in a Tools for Transformation proposal, which should be anticipated.

Background:

The Department of Communication is housed within the Division of Humanities of the College of Arts and Sciences. It is comprised of 11 faculty FTE. Because of the mix of scholarly interests in the department, there has been some consideration to moving it from the Division of Humanities to the Division of Social Sciences. However, it could fit within either Division and this is not a major issue with the Department or the College. The faculty of the Department is comprised of individuals remarkable for their appreciation of one another's academic interests and the value they place upon their intellectual diversity. The Department includes 181 undergraduate majors, 45-50 graduate students and awards approximately 100 BA, 5-8 MA and 6-9 PhD degrees annually. The Department offers the only PhD in the field in the Northwest. The 30-hour minor offered through the Department is the sixth in demand (53 students in Spring quarter 1998) within the College of Arts and Sciences. Eighty-two percent of the BA graduates remain within the State. The self study, review committee report, a separate report prepared by the outside reviewers, Departmental reply and later correspondence from the department describing their new initiatives are attached.

Both the faculty and the Department are highly regarded nationally. A 1993 study showed the Department to be third nationally in editorial board membership. In 1996, three

members received special recognition from the Speech Communication Association for their scholarly work. In 5 of 6 years ending with a 1994 survey, all doctoral students secured their first job preference upon graduation. Many of these graduates are at teaching institutions. About two-thirds of MA students pursue the PhD, the remainder entering nonacademic careers generally within the field. The self-study remarks on the transformation of mechanisms of communication in the latter portion of the 20th century (which, of course will continue into the 21st) and describes its response to these changes.

Time to degree is very good, with 4.1 years to the BA for non-transfer students, 2.9 years to the MS and 6.2 years to the PhD. In autumn quarters of the years 1993-1996, approximately 3500 students have been enrolled in courses offered by the Department. Summer enrollment is in the vicinity of 400 students. Students are highly satisfied with the program. There has been a decline in enrollment in recent years due to the recent consideration of the elimination of the Department. The elimination action still effects the Department's psyche even though the College has taken efforts to reassure the Department that it remains a valued part of the College.

As mentioned above, the Department's faculty have a range of research interests that is remarkably diverse. The review committee (particularly the external reviewers) remarked on this feature and recommended that the Department identify its outstanding strengths and develop them to attain a stronger national identity for these specific strengths. The department in fact proposed in the self-study to hire faculty within existing areas of strength, but remarked in their response to the review that they highly value their intellectual diversity and are convinced that it is an asset in the education of their students. The new initiative with intellectually complimentary units (described below) suggests that the issue of depth *versus* diversity may be addressed through alliances with these units. Although the Department does have ties with other units at a variety of levels, this new initiative is larger and more formal than previous relationships.

The new initiative with the Department of Political Science and the School of Communications is the result of joint meetings in which these units identified areas of overlapping research interests. These are:

Global and Cultural Communication

Politics, Media and Public Life

Technology and Social Change

Analysis of Discourse and Interaction

This joint planning activity has the enthusiastic support of the Dean of the College and should lead to exciting developments in accord with the directions the University is taking under the new administrative initiatives that have been announced.

In addition to the recommendation to consider depth *versus* breadth, the review committee recommended that the Department consider ways to:

1. Decrease the burden on junior faculty (which is difficult given resources and departmental responsibilities).
2. Develop a visiting committee that would aid in outreach efforts. These efforts might include development of partnerships with the local business community to provide programs in communications that would be of interest to those seeking education in this field to aid professional advancement.
3. Develop model clusters to guide students through respective programs.

The department replies that the last of these issues is being considered but the other two have not yet been discussed.

It was also urged that the College and University recognize that service courses are over-subscribed and that they cannot logically be taught by TAs from other departments.

In summary, this is a productive, high quality and academically healthy unit central to the mission of the University. The new interdisciplinary initiative in which the department is participating speaks well of its ability to innovate.

- c John Simpson, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
- Michael Halleran, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
- Barbara Warnick, Chair, Department of Speech Communication
- Debra Friedman, Associate Provost
- John Slattery, Associate Dean
- Members of the Review Committee
- Graduate Council