



Interdepartmental Correspondence

18 April 2000

TO: John T. Slattery, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Graduate School, Box 351240

FROM: Frederick J. Newmeyer, Chair, Linguistics, Box 354340

RE: Comments on Linguistics Review Committee report

I have now had the chance to discuss the final report of the Linguistics Review Committee with the Linguistics faculty and with a representative of our student organization. In a word, we are thrilled with the report. It is comforting to know that we were not deluding ourselves in our largely positive appraisal of our program in the self-study document. We are very pleased that the Committee applauds the major moves that the Department has taken in recent years — in particular, the broadening of our program and the decision to move into computational linguistics, if possible.

The Committee did identify a couple areas for improvement. One was to institute a more explicit set of milestones to measure graduate student progress. That is an excellent idea — we have already initiated discussions as to how that might be carried out. Another was to be less pessimistic about the possibility of laying the groundwork for an interdisciplinary program in Cognitive Science. We are sure that the Committee is right — it is time to try again. The players have changed both within our Department and without. The soon-to-be chairperson, Professor Herschensohn, in conjunction with two or three members of the Department, vows to make the appropriate initial contacts her first priority next academic year.

I feel a little bit shy about using this letter as a forum for reiterating the Committee's recommendations as to the ways that the administration can help *us*. However, the following, we feel, are so central to the success of our program that they need calling attention to. The most important are:

- The provision of a permanent TA for LING 100. As the report noted, there has been no increase in our Department's TA allotment for over 30 years, despite an astronomical increase in enrollment. This quarter there were 154 requests to register in LING 100.
- The assignment by the College of a technical support person for the Phonetics Lab (who would not need to be full-time).

- The provision of a work space for Professor Wassink and more offices for TAs.

We will, of course, be in close contact with the College with respect to hiring in computational linguistics.

Thank you very much for you work in coordinating the review process. We in Linguistics all feel that it was a beneficial experience from beginning to end.