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Introduction

This report constitutes the 10-year review of the Department of French and Italian Studies (FIS), assessing the quality of the undergraduate and graduate degree programs, and making recommendations for strengthening them. The committee is unanimous in recommending that the current undergraduate and graduate programs continue in their current status and that the next review of the department take place in ten years. We also recommend that a “check-in” from the department to the Graduate School (to Deans Eaton and Aanerud, with A&S deans copied) be made in three years concerning changes in the graduate program. With the information from the Self-Study, the site visit on November 2-3, 2015, and additional information that was furnished to us, we find that the department has responded positively to the recommendations of the 2006 report. Careful mentoring has led to promotion of several Assistant Professors who are now poised to be promoted to Professor. Generally, the morale is quite good compared to an earlier period before FIS became recognized as a “department.” This recent change in status has been a vote of confidence by the University that has been helpful to faculty, staff and students of FIS. We describe below in greater detail the successes and challenges of the department in the past and future.

Successes

Faculty: The leadership of FIS has been very strong under Albert Sbragia, the first chair from within the group since French & Italian became a separate unit. Albert followed in the line of his predecessor John Keeler, who was described in the 2006 report as first-rate and as “leading to a genuine culture of participation.” Albert and his successor Richard Watts likewise have been praised by faculty, staff and students for their leadership and mentoring.

The faculty is recognized as quite promising in their scholarship and as being state of the art in current research agendas. They are collegial, get along well and have a number of interdisciplinary networks outside the department. They are strong at mentoring undergraduate and graduate students. Their research agendas are current, dealing with forward-looking and interdisciplinary topics such as post-

colonialism , eco-criticism, cross century and cross disciplinary perspectives. As one committee member commented, the faculty are strong and thriving, “their best years are ahead.” These strengths indicate a positive trajectory for the department. The problem of no full professors noted in the 2006 review is still true, but does not seem to be so for long, with several promotions anticipated in the near future.

Undergraduate programs: Both French and Italian lower division programs are well managed (despite drops in Italian enrollment; see below) and are setting up internationally recognized assessment for second year, DELF, DALF for French and PLIDA for Italian. We highly commend this and commend efforts of Hedwige Meyer, H el ene Vilavella Collins and Giuseppe Tassone in this regard. The programmatic contacts with the French consulate and the Italian contacts with the Dante Alighieri Institute for the implementation of these assessments are commended. There is strong teaching at all levels as indicated by student evaluations; FIS rates are higher than other A&S and Humanities or equal. Evaluations for teachers at all levels are very positive, generally above 4.0.

The undergraduate curriculum has been strengthened by addition of 2xx level courses for lower division. They attract 50-100 non-majors and may lead students to major or minor in FIS. Denyse’s fairytale course (French 214) is a model for large 200 courses that has been copied by other tenure line generated courses that are cross-listed and taught for up to 100 students.

Community outreach: The advisory board in Italian has been a great resource from several perspectives, their contributions and support of the Rome Program, and their resources for students of Italian who have opportunities to interact with Italo-Americans and to profit from study in Italy. Giuseppe Leporace was instrumental in establishing the board and making the Rome connections. We note that the board activity has dropped off and should be revived, especially with respect to the Rome program. The French program is also involved in community outreach; this should be continued and expanded, for example with French consulate programs that involve community outreach presentations.

The Rome program is popular and successful, as attested by the undergraduate students who have participated in it. It could be extended to the graduate level in two respects, 1) encourage Rome alumni to apply to MA in Italian; they form a logical cohort and expressed interest in pursuing an MA in Italian during our interview with them. 2) involve Italian graduate students in the Rome program.

The department has a good interface with the Simpson Center for the Humanities and other units on campus. For example, graduate student Lise Lalonde is a Mellon Fellow through Simpson. FIS has made progress on diversity, both ongoing and especially by hiring Maya Smith. She is a strong addition for both diversity and interdisciplinarity. Collegiality and mentoring has been acknowledged by both graduate students and junior faculty who have praised the support they’ve been receiving.

Challenges

The challenges that the department faces relate mainly to enhancing its extant strengths, as well as finding innovative ways to stem the loss of students due to changes in the language requirement, a national trend. We focus on three areas, the Graduate Program (fore-fronted by the Self-Study and prominent in our conversations with department members in the site visit), the Undergraduate Program, and intradepartmental communication.

Graduate: FIS offers MA degrees in French and Italian and the Ph.D. in French. Faculty members and graduate students alike feel the moment is right for recasting the graduate degree programs. The current program is rather traditional, with reading lists and “century” requirements that are not compatible with the research of either the UW faculty or the grad students themselves.

Both French and Italian need to a) redraft requirements and program; b) replenish the numbers of graduate students through active recruiting with attractive funding packages; c) communicate a strong upbeat enthusiastic message about the dynamic faculty and graduate program through the website and publicity pieces; d) be aware of positive employment opportunities for professions in teaching institutions that are not necessarily in R-1, but equally worthy as sites where graduate degrees are sorely needed; the students need not be clones of the faculty and their employment profiles). We wish to reiterate the imperative of strengthening and reconfiguring the graduate program over the next year to get a critical mass of graduate students and to give them TA support. At the three-year mini-review, results should already be in place and some rise in numbers should be discernible.

Graduate programs in French and Italian need to be reframed: there are too many requirements; the current program does not reflect the reality on the ground; the interdisciplinarity of the current graduate students is indicative of the future directions, yet is not reflected in the current requirements that are based on “lists” and centuries etc. Both the French and Italian MA and PhD need significant streamlining and sharing of a portion of curricular offerings.

The Italian MA might have rapprochement with art history, Germanic Studies and the Rome program, as means of broadening the perspectives. Furthermore, there is a definite need for a pedagogy course for Italian TAs and training for TAs working in the heavily enrolled 2xx classes. TAships must be carved out for students in Italian to make MA study at the University of Washington a financially attractive option for applicants. The future of the Italian MA program could be in a more interdisciplinary “studies” context, in which students would take courses in other disciplines/ departments, starting of course with the programs with which FIS is already collaborating. While we recognize the concern for retaining a certain amount of specificity in the Italian program, careful collaboration across disciplines with the right faculty in Art History, French, and History can insure that this is the case.

The French-Italian revisions need to be expedited, but in the long term, the PhD would benefit from an interdisciplinary program such as that of USC; Committee member Norvindr provides the following description of the USC interdisciplinary PhD.

The Comparative Studies in Literature and Culture (CSLC) doctoral program at the University of Southern California is a very young program. It has an innovative design that awards its degree according to different tracks. By combining the graduate programs of the departments of Comparative Literature, French & Italian, and Spanish & Portuguese, it has brought together a very diverse group of faculty and attracted a strong contingent of students. The first of these are now beginning their dissertations and will start searching for academic positions in 2016. The most unusual feature of the program is its Track I, Comparative Media and Culture, for which there is no comparable degree program elsewhere. It has had consistently a very strong applicant pool.

CSLC was established in 2011 and admitted its first entering class in the Fall of that year. Although the impetus for this new organization of PhD programs in the original four participating departments came from the then Dean of the College, most faculty in these units were also eager to seize the opportunity to redesign doctoral training in their fields. Many of the faculty in the French and Spanish departments were already accustomed to collaborating through their joint appointments in Comparative Literature, which has long functioned as a hub within the College for literary studies and theory, as well as cultural and film studies outside the other College departments, in particular the Department of English. Even though it was somewhat eccentric to this configuration, the Slavic Languages and Literature PhD was also included within the initial plan for CSLC and it remained part of the program until Fall 2015, when it was allowed to reconstitute its stand-alone PhD.

CSLC is unique in the field in several respects. Its organization as a joint PhD program affiliated with but also distinct from its three participating departments means that there is a high degree of cross-fertilization among the many research areas represented by its faculty. This possibility is further encouraged and supported by the 20-unit CSLC core curriculum required of all students in the four Tracks that define the degree fields administered by the program (Track I, Comparative Media and Culture; Track II, Comparative Literature; and Track III, National Literatures and Cultures comprising French and Francophone Studies, and Spanish and Latin American Studies). A major CSLC innovation is its Comparative

Media and Culture track. It was designed in response to the high level of interest in the field at large in the critical and theoretical investigation of visual, digital, and audio media in a framework not limited to Anglophone cultures. It has proved very successful in attracting a growing number of high quality applicants to the program. Finally, the required core curriculum of three introductory seminars (501, Comparative Media and Culture; 502, Literary Theory; 503, Comparative Studies in Culture) and one advanced seminar (601, 602, or 603 under the same three rubrics and offered on a three-year cycle) as well as the two professionalization courses or workshops (600, Publication; 700, Applying for Positions) is a distinctive feature of CSLC.

All of the features mentioned above set CSLC apart from traditional Comparative Literature doctoral programs as well as from other, less traditional degree configurations, including those in French and Spanish. There are some parallels to the Program in Literature at Duke University, which like CSLC fosters comparative study of a broad range of Western and non-Western cultural production with a strong theoretical foundation and a solid grounding in a national tradition. Stanford University's Modern Thought and Literature Department's PhD also has a core curriculum, like CSLC, and is very interdisciplinary, including faculty in political science, history, art history as well as comparative literature, French, German, and Spanish. It too is a freestanding doctoral program but PhD's in Comparative Literature, French, German, and Spanish are offered through Stanford's Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages. There is thus a different distribution of these fields across the several degree-granting programs. The Department of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Minnesota also has some comparable features with CSLC. It offers two distinct PhD's, in Comparative Literature and in Comparative Studies in Discourse and Society. The latter somewhat resembles USC's Track I, Comparative Media and Culture, with some emphasis on media other than literature. But it has no required comparative element and students work mostly on Anglophone cultures. Likewise, the Modern Culture and Media PhD at Brown University resembles in some ways CSLC's Track I, although Brown's program is also designed for practicing media artists, which is not the case at USC.

The committee believes that FIS could benefit from a more interdisciplinary PhD program such as the ones described above, both as a reflection of the current research interests of faculty and students and as a means for better training future graduate students. We believe that a coalition approach incorporating already existing strengths such as media, film, national literature, and comparative literature would greatly enhance the FIS graduate program.. To that end, we envisage a "rebranding" of the program that will necessitate revision of the

requirements as well as dissemination of information on the new revised program to attract new students. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of “rebranding” the programs and their strengths, once the coalition has been established.

We feel that FIS needs to be much more assertive in attracting well-qualified graduate students. For graduate recruitment, faculty members in the relevant areas of interest should contact applicants individually and encourage them to come to UW. Faculty should follow up if the student doesn’t come and ask the student where they have chosen to go and why. A committee member noted that students like to have access to a faculty member from the discipline they want to go into, especially when they are trying to make a decision about the program. Admitted students should be guaranteed at least five years of support in the form of TAs or other graduate support. In addition to other changes in requirements, there should be a professionalization course where students could learn about publishing, professional presentations, writing cover letters for job applications, preparing the cv, etc. The TA training course and the links to the Second Language Certificate should be maintained and encouraged..

Finally, there needs to be a more positive discourse that is used in speaking of the graduate program. Many faculty members expressed “lack of confidence” in the programs and suggested that for graduate PhDs there were no jobs; some wondered if it was irresponsible to admit and mentor PhDs who would not be able to find jobs (premised on academic jobs in R-1 institutions). This self-doubt is deleterious to the morale of both faculty and students. Rather, faculty should be self-confident and proud of achievements and look forward to the future. There are many options for graduates with the MA or PhD, as some of the recent placements have indicated and as the Modern Language Association has emphasized in its ongoing efforts to make employers aware of the skill set that MA and PhD students possess, thanks to their training in cultural, literary, and critical analysis.

Undergraduate (UG) program and teaching: Loss of enrollment in 100-200 language courses is a big concern, much more so in Italian than in French. The department needs to vigorously pursue alternatives (that it has indeed been exploring), such as hybrid and online language course offerings and new configurations of the course schedule to capture enrollment outside of the tradition timetable. The faculty are encouraged to consult with the ever-growing number of universities that have improved their numbers through these strategies. Other options include business or medical language courses for outreach, though we note that the sheer enrollments in the first- and second-year classes need to be addressed first. Other areas of exploration might include translation, honors and undergraduate research. The advantages of these three options is that they can be taught across language areas, serving to create the kind of interdisciplinary cohorts to which a new configuration of MA and PhD programs would ideally aspire. The expansion of the large 2xx courses has been a welcome addition, but one needs to be cautious in asking junior faculty to overextend themselves.

The recent UG curriculum revisions need to have all aspects brought into line to make sure that the updates have been processed through all necessary channels (e.g. Time Schedule, Course Catalogue). It is imperative that the information be accurate, current and easily accessible. We have the impression that faculty are teaching too many independent study courses, a bad situation for all involved, including the students who think that this is a normal way of operating, even though they don't seem to appreciate the amount of work that it entails for the faculty. Rather, there is a need to strengthen the regular core curriculum and to have students take what is offered. It may be that the lack of full professors in the department has deprived the professoriate of some of the authority they might otherwise have in presenting these classes in a compelling way to the graduate students. Indeed, the independent study situation is untenable. Faculty cannot do a good job in that many independent studies. The graduate students should take the courses that are offered, the courses that they have determined to be the most valuable to them as future employees, professors, and researchers. Student complaints that "they don't like what is being offered" need to be addressed firmly, but especially through a set of attractive courses that will assuage their concerns. These student management issues must be addressed.

Advisement presents some anomalies. We do not understand why there are three UG advisors. A small department should need no more than a 50% UG advisor. Since Sabrina Tatta is UG advisor, GPA and PT instructor, it is unclear why she has so many jobs and so many helpers. One 50% UG advisor, one GPC and one GPA for FIS should be more than sufficient; there is no need for two GPCs or three UG advisors. It appears that this overlap in advisement personnel increases work and may also be confusing to students.

Intradepartmental communication: The 2006 report contained a section entitled "issues of balance between tenured/ tenure track faculty and lecturers," noting that French had 4.75 TT and 3 FT lecturers, while Italian had 1.75 TT and 5.61 lecturers. The 2015 numbers are French 5 TT, 3 FT lecturers and Italian 3 TT, 4 FT lecturers.¹ The number of faculty in French is stable, while in Italian it has risen in the past ten years; however, the number of UG majors has fallen in French from 104 to 61 and in Italian remained at 20. There is a need to address the disproportion of instructors between French and Italian, since the total number of students in the two languages does not correlate with the nearly equal numbers of instructors in the two wings. Graduate TAs should be prioritized over instructional staff, at least for the maintenance of the graduate programs. We note that the survival of these programs will be at significant risk should drastic steps not be taken to populate the graduate programs, especially in Italian. The 2006 report made a similar point, observing that "we encountered a very strong sense of entitlement among lecturers, some of whom told us that 'they were hired to teach 6 courses.' Our sense is that if lecturers are not

¹ There are in addition 2.5 PT instructors in both French and Italian, for a total of 10.5 in French and 9.5 in Italian.

teaching the notional load, these lines may as well be converted to tenure-line tracks in order to increase the research profile of FIS faculty.”

We are concerned about the view among some of the faculty that the graduate students are ill prepared to assist in the teaching of the large, lecture classes. Graduate students cannot be sacrificed to preserve lecturer positions, especially in a program, Italian, whose performance in the area of graduate student admittance and completion has virtually closed the program. We wish to express in the strongest of terms how damaging the loss of the Italian MA program will be to the future of the entire Italian wing and to the Department as a whole. May this report serve as a wake-up call for swift, proactive change in the configuration of the program and its promotion to future MA candidates. The Italian wing needs to work systematically to create a welcoming environment for grad students and provide them with work. There can be no delay in this imperative.

Not unrelated is the apparent lack of communication among various constituencies of the department, particularly the Italian wing. There is a need for more transparency and interface among TT faculty, lecturers, graduates and undergraduates. This need for increased transparency relates to course assignments, promotion, merit raises, faculty meetings, and interface between the two wings. It relates directly to the self-generated questions on “equal distribution of faculty resources and demands.” The unit needs much more transparency and open discussion on distribution of costs and benefits and how all constituents contribute to achieving the goals of the FIS mission. We note that more resources should be put into the development of pedagogical strategies in the language program that will augment enrollment. Faculty in these programs should be allowed to travel to other programs to observe how they are doing online and hybrid teaching for example. Funding for the rewriting of course syllabi using innovative techniques should also be supplied. We strongly recommend that the administration offer this funding for retooling to the Department, with clearly spelled out expectations and deliverables.

Some concern was voiced about the involvement of the French faculty with the Italian graduate program. As program reviewers, we were actually quite impressed with the collaboration across the two wings that we saw, for example, in the “From Song to Book” graduate class.

Conclusion

The Department of French and Italian Studies has emerged from a period of instability with a team of well-qualified faculty, a developing undergraduate program and a trajectory of promise in the graduate program. We are hopeful that once FIS implements the series of changes outlined in the review, they will be poised to meet the challenges presented by the reconfiguring of humanities disciplines within the university. We also emphasize that they need to be ready to report results over the next three years. We hope they will take advantage immediately of the current graduate admission period to increase their ranks. With

a strong presence of both Italian and French in the advising of future graduate candidates, we believe that it will be possible to improve the joint admissions process currently in place. Revising the graduate requirements to broaden the areas of inquiry will accommodate the actual research interests of current faculty and students as well as being a strong draw for new graduate students. Admissions collaboration will strengthen both programs, enabling them to develop strong cohorts every year with compatible interests. Finally, we believe that increased transparency will facilitate communication and equitable teaching across the department.

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