



February 28, 2023

To: Dianne Harris, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
 Brian Reed, Divisional Dean of Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences

From: Joy Williamson-Lott, Dean
 Kima Cargill, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

RE: Review of the Department of Linguistics (2021– 2022)

This memorandum outlines the Graduate School's final recommendations from the academic program review. Detailed comments on the review can be found in the documents that were part of the following formal review proceedings:

- Charge meeting between review committee and administrators (June 15, 2021)
- Self-Study (December 6, 2021)
- Site visit (January 24-25, 2022)
- Review committee report (February 22, 2022)
- Department of Linguistics response to the report (April 5, 2022)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review at its meeting on (November 17, 2022)

The review committee consisted of:

Christopher B. Teuton, Professor, UW Dept. of American Indian Studies (Committee Chair)
 Guntis Smidchens, Associate Professor, UW Department of Scandinavian Studies
 Lisa Davidson, Professor and Chair, New York University Department of Linguistics
 Diane Lillo-Martin, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor and Department Head, Linguistics,
 University of Connecticut

The Department of Linguistics offers the following degree programs:

- Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics
- Bachelor of Arts in Romance Linguistics
- Master of Arts in Linguistics
- Master of Science in Computational Linguistics
- Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics
- American Sign Language Minor
- Linguistics Minor

Brian Reed, Divisional Dean of Humanities and Richard A. Wright, Professor and Department Chair of the Department of Linguistics attended a Graduate School Council meeting to discuss outcomes from the review. The Council reviewed all documents from the review prior to the meeting. A summary of the review documents and the Graduate School Council discussion are attached to this memo.

Graduate School Council Recommendations

The Graduate School Council commends the Department of Linguistics on the strength of its programs, faculty, and students. After discussion, the Council recommended the following:

- Full academic program review in 10 years (2031-2032)

We concur with the Council's recommendations.

cc: Mark Richards, Provost and Executive Vice President
Patricia Moy, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs, Office of the Provost
Richard A. Wright, Professor and Department Chair, Department of Linguistics
Chris Partridge, Interim Director, Academic Program Review, the Graduate School
Academic unit Review Committee Members
GPSS President

Attachment

Summary prepared by the Graduate School Interim Director of Academic Program Review

Site visit date: January 24-25, 2022

Degrees/Certificates included in the review:

- Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics
- Bachelor of Arts in Romance Linguistics
- Master of Arts in Linguistics
- Master of Science in Computational Linguistics
- Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics
- American Sign Language Minor
- Linguistics Minor

Overall Review Committee Recommendation: Continuing status for all programs with a subsequent review in 10 years.

Program Strengths (as described in Review Committee Report)

- The purview of the Department of Linguistics has expanded to reflect the movement of the field at large into experimental approaches to linguistic research, evidenced by recent faculty hires.
- They retain strengths in several subfields of linguistics, including phonetics and phonology, sociolinguistics and computational linguistics.
- Computational Linguistics, a unique strength compared to peers (both the MS program and the track in the PhD program), trains students for competitive jobs in technology who practice ethical and altruistic approaches to technology.
- American Sign Language Minor is also a unique strength; 3 levels of programming that consistently has an enormous waiting list.
- The department has been successful in attracting funding, from sources including the Computational Linguistics MS program, CFR endowments, and external funding for their research.
- Faculty, staff, and students consider it a welcoming and supportive environment. Each constituent felt the department took diversity, equity, inclusion, mental health, and department climate seriously, for example a year-long professional seminar covering topics including diversity, equity, inclusion, and mental health.
- Undergraduate students were asked whether they felt the content of courses has been inclusive of the diversity of experiences among students at UW. The consensus was that this is indeed the case. One highlight of the courses at UW is that discussion of ASL is incorporated into many different classes since this is a strength of the department.

Challenges & Risks (as described in Review Committee Report)

- The department only has one professor each in syntax and semantics, two core subfields of linguistics; this leads to constraints in course offerings and advising ability. In comparison, other peer departments often have 3-4 syntacticians and 2-3 semanticists.
- The addition of new labs over the past couple of years has meant that there is a more critical need for IT support. Many of the labs are running servers, maintain corpora, or need programming support to carry out online research, or simply need someone to maintain their machines. There is no one currently in this role; it is critical to hire someone to support these facilities.
- Some faculty have found that certain university regulations have hampered their ability to carry out research, in particular, restrictions on the use of Prolific (www.prolific.co) to collect data online. Review committee was not familiar with another university that prohibits its use.
- Department does not currently have enough administrative support for its grant seeking and management.
- Need for greater clarity concerning tenure and promotion guidelines.
- Need to further diversify both the graduate and undergraduate student body, the numbers which have remained stagnant over the past several years.
- A perception among the graduate students that those who get RA positions are being better prepared for their future as compared to those who are primarily TAs, since they may get publications out of the RA position.
- In the past 10 years, 28 of 37 PhD graduates (76%) are in non-academic (non-teaching or research) positions (i.e. tech or data science corporations...). The department may wish to determine whether the current coursework and milestones are best suited to prepare students for industry careers.
- In 2021, the department moved undergraduate advising from the department itself to Humanities Academic Services (HAS), where advising staff serve all departments in the Humanities Division. Both faculty and students report that the transition to the new advising system has been a bit rocky, but it is very new and may require time for adjustment.
- One concern is whether the department's position in the division of humanities was appropriate considering the research done in this department. The review committee does not necessarily recommend a move, but it seems that a conversation about resources would be helpful; administration does not necessarily have a clear understanding of the department goals and activities regarding external funding.
- Mismatch between some linguistics courses that students would like to take and what counts for the major. Some students are interested in many of the 200-level courses but don't have enough space in their schedule if the courses don't count toward the major.

Areas of concurrence (as described in Unit Response)

- *Regarding preparation of PhD students for non-academic careers:* Clarification that there is already information about this topic in the proseminar which all first-year graduate students are required to take; however the faculty will continue to discuss the issue to try to come up with additional ways to give students more career options.

- *Regarding faculty hiring:* Hiring a syntactician has been the highest departmental hiring priority for a couple of years and we have just received word from Arts and Sciences that we can begin to search for a syntactician.
- *Tenure and promotion guidelines:* Agreement that better written guidelines are important, and this is in fact a top priority for the department, but Linguistics did state that drawing up guidelines is not simple and straightforward and there is danger in being too specific about how to obtain tenure as typical routes vary by subfield.
- *Staffing:* Agreement that a grant specialist would not only facilitate grant submission by faculty who regularly submit grants but might also stimulate other faculty to submit grants.
- *Diversity, equity and inclusion:* Agreement that it would be better to have a more diverse student body; clarification that the department offers a departmentally funded diversity scholarship for incoming grad student and is considering offering a one-quarter scholarship to an undergraduate senior from URM background.

Areas of Disagreement (as described in Unit Response)

- *Increasing UG major electives:* Many of the 200-level courses referenced have no prerequisites and were designed for non-linguists. They don't count toward the major, but students could still apply them to the total 180 credits required to graduate. Currently, the department does not have the faculty to develop and regularly teach upper division courses analogous to these.
- *Space:* Review committee did not comment on space allocated to the department, since it was a virtual site visit. The department sees a bigger office for ASL faculty as high priority; there are not enough offices for current and anticipated future hires.

Summary of Graduate School Council Discussion on November 17, 2022

Department Chair Richard Wright and Divisional Dean of Humanities Brian Reed attended the Graduate School Council meeting to discuss outcomes from the review. The Council Discussion included the following key topics:

- *Is the Division of Humanities the most appropriate home for the Department of Linguistics?* The field of Linguistics has evolved significantly. As a result, some faculty in the department could fit within other departments or divisions, while others continue to identify with the Division of Humanities. There may not be a more appropriate or perfect home. This question of organizational fit within the institutional framework may continue to emerge more often as disciplinary boundaries blur.
- *Facilities and space needs in the Department of Humanities:* The unit response highlighted space as a significant issue, but the review committee notably did not comment on it. This may have been overlooked because the site visit had to be conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council asked for more information. Several examples were provided, including the fact that many Linguistics faculty share offices, in some cases up to four full time faculty to one office.

- *Philosophical tension regarding fee-based program:* The department shared that its fee-based Master of Science in Computational Linguistics program has been an immense success since its inception. Today, the revenues from this program subsidize other areas of the department. Linguistics originally developed this program based on a request from the UW and was instructed to partner with UW Continuum College (then called Professional & Continuing Education). The department chair acknowledged that operating a fee-based program in partnership with UWC2 creates an inherent tension between the missions of Linguistics as an academic unit and UWC2 as a self-supporting enterprise. A couple of members of the Council agreed that this is a theme in other units at UW as well.