

## Departmental Response to Linguistics Ten-Year Review Committee Report

First, we thank the committee for participating in the grueling site visit and for providing us with a thoughtful report. In this response we briefly note what we are doing or could be doing better in each of the areas highlighted by the committee. We also bring up one point that we feel is important but was not mentioned in the review committee's report. We end this response with a departmental to-do list.

### General linguistics graduate program

#### Preparation for non-academic careers

[Committee recommendation #4] The report noted that 76% of Linguistics PhDs in the last 10 years have gone into non-academic jobs. Given this high percentage, they raised the question of whether we should offer more courses geared towards non-academic jobs. They suggested a discussion with the grad students would be the best way to start thinking about it.

The lack of academic positions for linguists with PhDs is a long-standing problem in our field. We note that there is already information about this topic in the proseminar which all first-year graduate students are required to take. Specifically, guest speakers from local tech companies talk to students about skills such employers are looking for, and how to market a Linguistics degree. However, the faculty will continue to discuss the issue and try to come up with additional ways to give our students more career options.

#### Graduate student support

The report stated that "members of the Committee were surprised by the degree to which TA positions are funded by the internal resources generated by the CLMS program; we recommend that the administration ensure that appropriate levels of funding for assistantships per class size are provided from central funding."

We agree that there is demand for our undergraduate courses that could support an increased number of TA positions. However, we believe the committee's statement reflects a slight misunderstanding of the CLMS-funded TA/RA/SA situation in the general linguistics program, which are of two types. (1) In quarters when there are more PhD students that we have committed to support than we have TA positions, they are awarded an RA or SA position out of departmental revenues, much of which are generated by the CLMS program. In a typical year, two Linguistics PhD students per quarter are supported this way. We strive to assign these equitably among graduate students, but often assignments to TAs are dictated by scheduling considerations. (2) The CLMS program pays for all TAs in the CLMS classes, about 4-5 per year. In the general linguistics program, CLMS pays for only two TA positions per year, for LING 450/550 (Introduction to Linguistic Phonetics), which is a required class for CLMS students.

#### Student progress

The report noted that time-to-degree in the graduate program was not known. At "peer institutions" it is 5-6 years.

While we agree that it would be useful to know and keep track of this information, it is not instantly available from university databases, because students go on leave. But once quarters on leave are obtained for a particular student, that number can be subtracted from “qtrs\_total”. We have therefore asked a staff member to take on the task of calculating the average time to degree in the last 10 years every mid-to-late June.

## Faculty

### Hiring

[Committee recommendation #2] The report recommended that we hire additional faculty in theoretical syntax and semantics.

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. We will revisit our hiring plan every year taking into account programmatic needs.

### Tenure and promotion guidelines

The report suggested that greater clarity concerning tenure and promotion guidelines is needed for junior faculty.

Currently, junior faculty meet annually with the chair. Each junior faculty member is assigned a mentor, but the frequency of mentor-mentee meetings is not dictated. We recognize that better written guidelines are important and this is in fact a top priority for the department, with the goal of adding Linguistics’ guidelines to the A&S website alongside other departmental guidelines. But drawing up guidelines is not simple and straightforward, since as noted on the A&S web page, there is a danger in being too specific about how to obtain tenure, as typical routes vary by subfield.

## Staff

[Committee recommendation #1] The report mentioned the need for better administrative support for grants and grant-funded research.

We would welcome a grant specialist, who would not only facilitate grant submission by faculty who regularly submit grants, but might also stimulate other faculty to submit grants.

## Undergraduate program

### Communications with Humanities Academic Services

The report suggested that departmental communication with Humanities Academic Services needs to be more proactive. Currently, most communication originates from HAS and is directed towards associate chair Hargus (questions about transfer credit, course substitution, etc., for particular students). The report suggested that the department keep HAS better informed about departmental course offerings that may help or hinder undergraduate progress. To that end, they suggested that we form a UG curriculum committee, which would analyze and update course offerings and keep HAS informed of changes.

We in fact already have such a committee, but with only one member (Laura McGarrity). We have expanded the committee to include Betsy Evans, who is involved with course scheduling, as well as the associate chair (currently Hargus).

## Increasing UG major electives

[Committee recommendation #3] The report mentioned courses (LING 233 (Introduction to Language and Society), 234 (Language and Diversity), 269 (Swearing and Taboo Language), and 212 (Infant Brain and Language Development) that undergraduate majors would like to apply to the major's elective requirement but which they are unable to because they're 200-level courses. The report also mentioned that we consider offering a course on research ethics in indigenous or sensitive communities.

We note that 233, 234, 269 and 212 have no prerequisites and were designed for non-linguists. While LING majors can't apply these courses to the elective requirement, they could still take these classes and apply them to the total number of credits (180) required to graduate from UW. And there is in fact a version of 233 which undergraduate majors could take which would count towards the UG elective requirement: 432 (Sociolinguistics 1). We would be happy to develop and regularly teach upper division courses analogous to 234, 269 and 212 if we had more faculty.

It's true that we don't offer a course solely devoted to ethics in linguistic research, but this topic is a component of three existing courses: LING 433/533 (Sociolinguistics 2), LING 453/553 (Experimental Phonetics), and LING 580 (Introduction to Language Documentation). Although 580 is a graduate seminar, it has been taken by undergraduate majors with the appropriate linguistic training.

## Diversity, equity and inclusion

While acknowledging that the department climate is generally welcoming and supportive, the report encouraged the department to diversify the undergraduate and graduate student body.

The graduate admissions committee regularly strives to admit a diverse group of students, both in terms of subfield and personal background. We offer a departmentally funded diversity scholarship for a qualifying incoming grad student. But we agree that it would be better to have a more diverse student body. One thing we are considering is offering a one-quarter scholarship to an undergraduate senior from an underrepresented minority, if departmental budgets allow.

## Interdisciplinary opportunities

The report recommended that the department form a better relationship with American Indian Studies and the Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies, as all have interests in endangered language documentation and teaching.

Profs. Hargus and Lapierre welcome a closer relationship with these units and will ask to be put on their colloquium mailing lists, for a start. We also note that one of our graduate students has taken the distance learning Inuit course offered through Canadian Studies, and another graduate student has an AIS member on his committee.

## ASL program

The report mentioned that the Language Learning Center can help the ASL faculty with their video streaming services and web-based language course development.

ASL faculty will be encouraged to discuss their needs with Russell Hugo, LLC Assistant Director, who has close ties to Linguistics, being a 2016 Linguistics PhD.

## Space

The report did not comment on the space allocated to the Linguistics Department, perhaps because this was a virtual rather than in-person visit.

We see a bigger office for the ASL faculty as the highest space priority for the department, particularly if/when a fourth faculty member is hired to meet the demand for ASL classes. We also need space for lecturers, which currently use an office which the anticipated syntax hire will occupy.

## Summary: departmental to-do list

We have already started to work on our top hiring priority, advertising for a syntactician, so that is not on the following list, which mentions initiatives which will benefit the greatest number of people. The parenthetical is the person or group in charge of the task.

- Continue to discuss ways to create opportunities for industry placement for Linguistics PhDs (faculty as a whole)
- Keep track of time to degree in the general PhD program (staff)
- Develop department-specific guidelines for tenure and promotion that take into account the various subfields (chair, associate chair, faculty representatives of subfields)
- Develop and maintain better two-way communication between Linguistics and Humanities Academic Services (Undergraduate Curriculum Committee)
- Acquire more space for the department (chair)