

SPECIAL REPORT

of the

**ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL, ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL,
GRADUATE COUNCIL AND PROGRAM AND BUDGET COUNCIL**

concerning

**THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF
ASIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES, COMPARATIVE LITERATURE,
FRENCH AND ITALIAN STUDIES, GERMANIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES AND
SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE
TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES, LITERATURES, AND CULTURES**

Presented at the
631st Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
May 6, 2004

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ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL REPORT

The Academic Matters Council endorses the creation of the new Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures through the consolidation of the following existing departments: Asian Languages and Literatures, Comparative Literature, French and Italian Studies, Germanic Languages and Literatures, and Spanish and Portuguese. Our support for this new structure comes with two provisions: 1) The academic integrity of the current academic offerings and degree programs must be maintained and 2) Ongoing consideration should be given to joining into the new department other departments or programs with offerings in languages, literatures, and cultures, such as Classics and Judaic and Near Eastern Studies.

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL REPORT

Report of the APC on the proposal to form a new Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures from the existing departments of Asian Languages and Literatures, Comparative Literature, French and Italian Studies, Germanic Languages and Literatures, and Spanish and Portuguese.

The Decision

In response to the request of the Rules Committee that the APC consider Provost Seymour's proposal "To form a new Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures from the existing departments of Asian Languages and Literatures, Comparative Literature, French and Italian Studies, Germanic Languages and Literatures, and Spanish and Portuguese, the APC voted 10 - 1 to approve the proposal.

The Rationale

All faculty including Department Heads from the affected departments were invited to the first meeting. Dean Lee Edwards, Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts, was invited to the second meeting. The Provost's proposal emphasized that "... no changes are proposed to the programs themselves ... " The APC took as its primary task the question of whether unanticipated changes might nevertheless occur, and, if so, how to evaluate their consequences for the affected programs. The APC considered the cases for and against both the likelihood and the consequences of such changes.

Six faculty came to the first meeting and the council received two e-mails from faculty who could not attend. The chair invited the attending faculty to express their responses to the proposed consolidation and indicated that the special interest of the APC was in how it would affect the various degree programs. Although it was clear that at least some of these faculty had a variety of concerns, some of which were about the motivation for the change, the choice of which departments would be consolidated, why certain other departments had not been included, whether this might somehow be punitive toward some departments, there was almost no comment on how programs might be affected. The comments that did surface were concerned with how the appearance of the programs to those outside UMASS, Amherst might be affected. Specifically, there was some concern about how faculty recruitment might be affected and whether graduate admissions might suffer if the consolidation were viewed as a downgrading of the programs, and that these consequences might in fact have very real and perhaps damaging effects on at least some of the programs.

At the second meeting, Dean Lee Edwards offered the APC her perspective on the consolidation and replied to some of the concerns expressed at the previous meeting. She asserted that there will be zero effect on existing programs in the short term. Long-term changes would depend largely on decisions taken within the new department and on financial conditions which cannot be predicted now.

Dean Edwards denied that there was any punitiveness involved in the selection of departments to be merged. She asserted that there was rather a concern for protecting the continued existence of the departments by moving them all away from the brink of possible elimination due to financial exigencies. She mentioned in particular the programs in Comparative Literature and German which were at risk but can now be sustained in the new department which will be the largest in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts. She pointed out that there has been a long-term discussion of such a consolidation prior to the recent financial problems and that the motivation over the long term has been her conviction that disciplines have moved in interdisciplinary directions and that the kind of change in conversations between faculty in different programs that will result from the consolidation will further the interests of all. She suggested a Ph. D. program in Translation Studies as one program that would likely arise from this consolidation.

Dean Edwards argued that far from the consolidation having a negative effect on recruiting, a large number of "outstanding job applicants" had applied for jobs that have been recently searched with the clear indication that it was likely the position would be in the new department.

With respect to Classics and Judaic and Near Eastern Studies not being included, she stated that the former does not deal with living languages and did not at present need help. The latter was having very successful fundraising as a separate unit and its teaching was more a matter of culture than language, but might well join the new department at some later date if they were so inclined.

The APC concludes that without this consolidation some of the programs will be in danger of elimination, and, furthermore, there will not be significant and immediate changes to the academic programs involved. Therefore, the APC supports the consolidation proposal.

GRADUATE COUNCIL REPORT

At its meeting on March 11, the Graduate Council discussed all four consolidation proposals in the Provost's January 7, 2004, memo to Ernest May. The following action was taken on Proposal #1:

Proposal #1 - Consolidation of Asian Languages and Literatures, Comparative Literature, French and Italian Studies, Germanic Languages and Literatures, and Spanish and Portuguese into a new Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

This proposal generated considerable discussion, and continued over two Council meetings, March 11 and April 14. It was informed by two Council members from one of the affected departments. Although there appear to be no immediate changes to the graduate programs in these departments, the Council was concerned about long-term issues and felt further input and discussion were needed before voting on the proposal. At the end of the March 11 meeting, the proposal was therefore turned over to the Academic Standards and Curriculum Committee (ASCC) for further study. The ASCC solicited input from all members of the affected departments and invited them to a special meeting to discuss the consolidation. Several written responses were received, but no one actually appeared at the meeting. At the Council's invitation, Dean Edwards and Chair Schwartzwald attended the Council meeting on April 14 to offer comments and answer questions. After additional discussion and upon the recommendation of the ASCC, the Council voted unanimously to approve the consolidation. It was felt the effect of the consolidation on graduate programs would be minimal or even salutary, especially regarding interdisciplinary efforts.

PROGRAM AND BUDGET COUNCIL REPORT

April 2, 2004

**New Department of Languages, Literatures, and Culture
from the existing Departments of Asian Languages and Literatures,
Comparative Literature, French and Italian Studies,
Germanic Languages and Literatures, and Spanish and Portuguese**

Professor Robert Schwartzwald presented the overview and strategy behind the consolidation of five existing departments into a new Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. The new arrangements were complex. The committee was told that the new department would maintain the integrity of the existing degree programs, create an excited cadre of colleagues, and sustain excellence in the undergraduate and graduate programs.

Questions were raised about the demotion of departments to programs, the impact of consolidation on the undergraduate curriculum and on teaching loads, and the unequal contributions to the Gen Ed offerings. Some departments and their members see a threat to their autonomy, coupled with the potential deterioration of their organizational culture and professional identity. Questions were raised about the intellectual integrity of the new unit.

It was argued that a new, consolidated department would be an optimum way for the College of Humanities and Fine Arts to offer instruction in a variety of languages and cultures outside the English-speaking world. The Council is not clear why Judaic Studies and Classics were excluded from this consolidation. It was noted and understood by all that the new department would constitute a clear, and large, voice in the affairs of CHFA.

Consolidating five departments into one will affect approximately 350 undergraduate and 125 graduate students. Potential direct benefits to students include a shared departmental vision, interdisciplinary teaching and advising, and the pooling of resources derived from the department's anticipated Gen Ed enrollment.

Brought together under an organizational "umbrella," as Dean Lee Edwards dubbed it, there would be administrative resources and support for the new department. The budgetary rationale for the consolidation remains unclear. It was suggested, however, that there were few negative budgetary implications of the arrangement. The potential liabilities of smallness (for one or two of the existing departments) would be better managed under the new arrangement. In fact, some departments suffering from erosion of faculty and small size will almost certainly fare better in a consolidated, and larger, organizational structure.

It appeared that many of those in languages and literatures were satisfied with the process and outcome, while others were decidedly not. This was the only proposed consolidation before the Council that had faculty members speak against the move. Those not satisfied with the proposal and its "career" through colleague meetings sought more time, more research, and more data, rather than, as one colorfully put it, "mere assertions, assurances, and opinions."

This consolidation attempts to combine five departments and 20 degree programs. It is argued that efficiencies are possible in merging five small departments into a larger organization and that limited resources can be better used. For example, it might be possible for two or more of the original departments to share a single faculty hire, who might teach in both areas. The combination might be cost neutral if it were not for the

awkward governance proposed. Additional faculty time will be demanded to coordinate five independent programs in a way that satisfies the majority. It seems unlikely that the combined department would increase graduate or undergraduate enrollments, Gen Ed teaching, or scholarship. From a budgetary perspective this consolidation may have real costs associated with the overhead of merging and managing the existing departments, but it does provide flexibility in resource allocation.

Program & Budget Council voted 7 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstentions to approve despite outstanding questions about the programmatic justification for this consolidation given the exclusion of Judaic Studies and Classics from the new Department of Languages, Literatures, and Culture.

MOVED: That the Faculty Senate approve the Consolidation of the Departments of Asian Languages and Literatures, Comparative Literature, French and Italian Studies, Germanic Languages and Literatures and Spanish and Portuguese to the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 04-035.