

Items B & C
**Proposal: Merger of Foreign-Language Departments
and Renaming Spanish Department**

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The College of Arts & Sciences seeks to merge the Departments of German Studies, French, Russian and Eastern Studies, and Classics into a single Department of Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures, and Cultures (MCL). (Item B) After considerable discussion, we concluded that it is best to leave the Department of Spanish as a separate entity. At 13 faculty FTEs it is about twice as large as the other foreign-language departments (which account for a combined 27 faculty FTEs), and it includes the only foreign-language Ph.D. program in the Commonwealth. Combining the Spanish Department with the others would thus create a very large and administratively cumbersome new unit in which the Spanish faculty might very well come to possess a disproportionate influence as a result of their large size and their Ph.D. program. While Spanish will remain a separate department, we intend to move the responsibility and current resources (i.e. a single lecturer) devoted to Italian-language instruction (currently housed in the Spanish Department) to the new Department of Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures, and Cultures.

In addition, the Spanish Department will henceforth be known as the Department of Hispanic Studies, (Item C) a title that better reflects the extensive scholarly and pedagogical work the Department's faculty members undertake in areas of the Spanish-speaking world beyond the Iberian Peninsula. This new departmental title also reflects trends in scholarship over the last decade, as traditional literary studies have tended toward a broader approach generally described under the rubric of "cultural studies."

We would like to see the new MCL Department up and running by July 1, 2002. Over the last several months, Phil Harling (Associate Dean for Humanities), Richard Greissman (Assistant Dean for Faculty Affairs) and I have carried out extensive negotiations regarding the structure and functions of a merged department with the chairs of the departments to be consolidated and with acting Provost Nietzel. We have worked out a blueprint for the requisite organizational and financial arrangements. Faculty members of the relevant departments have been fully apprised of the details of the proposed consolidation, and on January 8 we met with all of them in order to give them an opportunity to ask any lingering questions. The chairs and faculty of the departments in question are to be commended for the hard work, good will, and cooperativeness they have shown throughout the deliberations. While they have expressed some of the concerns one can reasonably expect from people who are being asked to change their group identity, it is clear that all parties concerned want the proposed consolidation to succeed, and are more than willing to put in the work that will be required for lasting success.

Anticipated Advantages of the Merger

This proposal has been prompted by the many significant advantages we see arising from a merger.

- **It ensures the budgetary viability of the units in question.** The College will reinvest in the MCL Department all savings accruing from the merger. The recurring savings will largely be generated from the contraction of staff positions in the units in question (from four to three, as the result of a retirement), and from the elimination of several chairs' supplements as well as several course reductions. The savings left in the department will give it considerably greater flexibility in setting spending priorities and in managing the occasional budget cut.
- **It facilitates the training of foreign-language instructors (a top priority of the CPE and UK's central administration).** The new department will be centrally involved in a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program in the foreign languages, which is now housed in the College of Education. Details remain to be worked out, and negotiations will proceed very rapidly once the College of Education has named a new dean. At the moment, the Provost envisions a jointly-administered and more content-rich program in which the faculty of the new MCL department will play a pivotal role. The end result will be teacher candidates who are better prepared to step straight into the classroom after graduation. We are also confident that the new arrangement will enable some of our best foreign-language instructors to play a more prominent role in addressing the present teacher shortage by devising a master's program which ensures that our best teaching candidates stay in the Commonwealth and teach in its currently underserved regions.
- **It facilitates the more widespread adoption of "best practices" in the classroom.** All four of the smaller foreign-language departments are widely known for their excellent and innovative teaching. Membership in a single department is bound to lead to a broader conversation about teaching, and as colleagues are exposed to novel and salutary pedagogical ideas they are likely to try to incorporate them into their own classes.
- **It frees up more faculty time for research and teaching.** Experience strongly suggests that the faculty of larger units are burdened with less departmental service work than their counterparts in smaller units, simply because there are more hands to do the work, and because the amount of work that needs to be done is greater, but not proportionally so. It is thus reasonable to anticipate from the merger considerable savings in faculty time, which the faculty members in question are certain to put to very good use.

- **It simplifies the lines of communication between the Dean’s Office and the units in question.** Deliberations between the Dean’s staff on budgetary, personnel, and a host of other matters will be considerably simplified by the merger, freeing up a considerable amount of time all around for dealing with the other important matters .
- **It preserves the integrity of well-established degree programs.** We anticipate no changes in the degree programs offered by the new unit, and indeed no changes in the names of these programs. The French, German, and Classics divisions will continue to offer BA and MA degrees in French, German, and Classics, and the Russian and Eastern Studies division will continue to offer the BA in Russian and Eastern Studies. The only anticipated change in the allocation of TA lines will be the addition of a single line in the Classics division, in order to facilitate its very popular introductory Mythology course and as partial compensation for the looming departure of from Classics of a full-time lecturer. In short, the only impact the proposed merger will have on degree candidates is to ensure the long-term stability of the degree programs in which they are enrolled.
- **It ensures the future vitality of foreign-language study and scholarship at UK.** Providing a rich and variegated foreign-language program is central to our mission as the state’s flagship university for the study of the humanities. Consolidation will enable us better to sustain this vital part of our mission at a critical moment in the history of higher education in the Commonwealth.

In recent years, the Council on Post-Secondary Education (CPE) has closely scrutinized the UK foreign-language programs that we propose to merge, along with all other foreign-language units in the Commonwealth whose degree programs have been placed in CPE Category 2 (“the program should be continued but altered in some form”). The CPE has hitherto measured “degree productivity” simply as the five-year average of degrees produced, with established thresholds of twelve degrees per year at the BA/BS level, seven per year at the MA/MS level, and five per year at the Ph.D. level. None of the degree programs administered by the four departments that we propose to merge have come close to meeting the established thresholds.

Table 1. Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees Awarded, 1997-2001

		1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Classics	BA	4	4	5	3	6
	MA	1	2	2	4	1
French	BA	6	10	5	13	4
	MA	0	8	1	4	2
German	BA	2	7	2	4	3
	MA	1	5	0	2	4

Source:

<http://www.uky.edu/LexCampus/dsi/degree/level/degrees.deglev.y19922001.as.shtml>

The CPE and the UK administration have always perceived Category 2 as a means of facilitating and then highlighting alterations that are real improvements. Over the past several years, our smaller language departments *have* carried out an impressive range of curricular reforms, and have worked extremely hard to promote their course offerings. While the departments in question have long been among the most vigorous innovators in the College of Arts & Sciences, placement in Category 2 certainly encouraged some of these initiatives. The more unfortunate news, however, is that in spite of these laudable efforts, the perception lingers among agencies that have considerable authority over our degree programs that the programs in the smaller foreign-language units remain “problems” that somehow need to be solved.

The proposed merger will take much of the pressure off the non-Spanish foreign-language programs. Acting Provost Nietzel and the CPE are now putting the finishing touches on an alternative productivity measure that is likely to be beneficial to a number of programs that are currently in Category 2, including the new MCL Department. We deeply appreciate their efforts. Acknowledging that the original productivity measure did not adequately take into account the full range of faculty teaching services, they are developing a new one that will be calculated on the basis of student credit-hour production rather than on number of degrees, and that will be calculated at the *department* rather than the *program* level. While the threshold for the new department has not yet been established, it will be one that reflects the fact that enrollments in first- and second-year foreign-language courses are routinely and indeed unavoidably limited here at UK and at comparable institutions to the relatively low maximum of 20-25 students per section, a limit necessitated by the intensive nature of foreign-language instruction.

The point of this exposition is to show that (with the aid of the new productivity measure) the merger will enable faculty members to go about their excellent teaching, research, and service work without having to spend so much of their time and energy justifying the existence of their units. Not surprisingly, the close scrutiny of recent years has had an adverse effect on their morale, and has made it difficult for the College to give them the unequivocal assurance that they deserve to have: i.e. that as the Commonwealth’s flagship college charged with the advancement of the humanities (as well as the natural and social sciences), the College of Arts & Sciences considers scholarship and teaching across a range of foreign languages as one of its central missions. This is a mission it has no intention of compromising, and intends to uphold through the proposed merger.

Anticipated Disadvantages of the Merger

- **Loss of Departmental Identity.** It is with considerable hesitation that we ask our esteemed colleagues in the smaller foreign-language departments to part with their well-established departmental identities. Those identities are strong, and they have been very positive. We are struck by the collegiality, cohesiveness, and pure good will of the faculty members in all of these departments. But we are equally struck by their good-natured acceptance of this merger, which has been much easier to contemplate because of the cast of characters involved. This is a group of faculty members who are predisposed to cooperate with each other, and who already have a well-developed idea of what constitutes the common good. There is every reason to believe that old relationships will continue to flourish in the new department, and that its creation will facilitate the development of new ones that will be every bit as constructive and good-natured.
- **Perception of a Loss of Status.** There is no use denying the widespread perception in academia that consolidation brings with it a loss of status. Will colleagues at other institutions who learn of the merger initially see it as a mark of diminished prestige? Yes, at least in some cases. But those who draw this conclusion will do so because they do not understand the chief reason for the merger, which is to *preserve* the long-term vitality of the programs in question. Inaction is likely to lead to the erosion of these programs, and as such they would *truly* suffer a diminution of status if they did *not* merge. Departments of relatively modest size, moreover, are even more likely than their larger counterparts to be judged according to the quality of their individual faculty members and the ways in which they pool their talents, and in this sense we have little to fear from a merger. To name but one of many relevant examples, let us turn to Classics, which would not have succeeded in recently hiring a candidate who was in the running for a tenure-track position at Harvard had the candidate in question (who was fully cognizant of the pending merger) not been convinced of the high quality of the Classics faculty and not been aware that Classics administered an internationally renowned program in spoken Latin. In short, scholars who are “in the know” care much less about the name and shape of administrative units than they do about the achievements of the faculty who inhabit them, and it is their opinion that truly matters.

Structure of the merger:

The organizational structure of the MCL Department will be as follows:

1 Chair (1 course release per semester and 10% salary supplement)

4 Division Directors (1 course release per academic year each): Division Directors to serve as an advisory committee to the chair & DGS , with additional advisory responsibilities incl. P&T, FMER, hiring priorities, & course scheduling)

4 DUSs (no course release)

1 DGS (1 course release per academic year.; Division Directors act as advisory council to DGS)

Of course, it will take some time for faculty members to adjust to the new ways of doing business that will inevitably arise from this new departmental structure. What we are striving for is an effective federal system in which the chair has the same powers that chairs have in all the other departments of our College, but in which a considerable amount of the decision-making is undertaken in consultation with the division directors, who for obvious reasons will be in the best position to judge matters specific to the divisional units. It may well be that the division directors will initially be asked to shoulder a bigger part of the administrative burden than they can reasonably be expected to handle through a one-course release, and the College is prepared to adjust their teaching schedule in the first couple of years if this is deemed necessary. But once the MCL Department has been properly launched, we expect the division of labor between chair and directors to have been established in a way that is both efficient and fair to all concerned.

Having now stated what we deem to be all the relevant particulars, the College of Arts & Sciences submits this proposal to your notice. My staff and I look forward to answering any questions you may still have in a face-to-face discussion.

The Senate Committee on Academic Organization and Structure recommended approval of the creation of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures and Cultures (NCL) by a non-unanimous vote. The Committee recommended approval of the name change of the Department of Spanish to the Department of Hispanic Studies by a unanimous vote.

The Senate Council considered the proposal for the Department of Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures and Cultures in a meeting at which associate dean Phil Harling represented that Italian courses (and the major if reactivated) would be taught in the new department. The Senate Council recommends approval of that new department by a non-unanimous vote. The Senate Council recommends approval of the name change of the Department of Spanish to the Department of Hispanic Studies by a unanimous vote.