

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

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To: Lee L. Huntsman
Provost

From: Marsha L. Landolt
Dean and Vice Provost



Re: Department of Classics 10-year Review

Recommended Action: At its meeting of June 3, 1999, the Graduate School Council recommended that the BA, MA and PhD degree programs in the Department of Classics continue. We found an unusually meritorious department whose reputation is increasing at such a rate that the 1993 NRC rankings appear no longer to apply. I concur with the Council's recommendation and agree that the Department of Classics is exemplary.

The self-study (with addendum), the report of the review committee (including letters from the external reviewers amplifying the comments of the report in key areas), and the Department's response to the report are attached.

Background. The 1993 NRC rankings place the UW Department of Classics sixteenth out of 29 such departments. However, the NRC survey also ranked this department as the most improved over the past decade among all 585 Arts and Humanities programs assessed in 1993. The department rose from 26th in faculty quality to twentieth and from 23rd in program quality to fifteenth from 1982 to 1993. This trajectory has continued. For example, the department's rejection rate of graduate applicants has risen from 15% in 1991 to 73% in 1998. The improvement in nationally perceived quality has been so dramatic that the external reviewers, from UC Berkeley and the University of Virginia agreed that the 1993 rankings no longer apply. The review committee ranked the department as being preeminent among the humanities at this university and considered it to be competitive with the top 10 Classics departments in the nation.

During the past decade the department has grown from nine to twelve faculty FTE. This growth was funded in part by a commitment to offer evening classes. The decision to share the burden of evening teaching among all faculty rather than assigning the task to the new hires is characteristic of a department which seems to be among of the most collegial in the University. Senior faculty are extremely supportive of junior faculty, respecting and embracing differences in intellectual interests and approaches. In both scholarship and teaching, established methodologies are combined with innovations brought by new faculty. A shared vision for reinforcing of the department's traditional strengths while embracing, in fact leading, the evolution of the field is described in the addendum to the self-study provided by Professor Hinds.

The review report cites several definitive publications by departmental faculty over the past decade. In addition, three of the twelve departmental faculty received University teaching awards

in the years 1996, 1997 and 1998, respectively. This combination of scholarly quality and commitment to teaching undoubtedly underlies the high demand for enrollment in undergraduate courses, a demand the department cannot accommodate. Until this year, the faculty shouldered a teaching burden greater than the norm in the Humanities. That load has been cut back to prevent erosion of scholarly reputation. The department has contributed significantly to the intellectual environment of the University by sponsoring three Walker-Ames Professorships. The review committee complimented the interactions of the Classics faculty with faculty in other departments and cited their important role in the Simpson Center for the Humanities.

The department offers four tracks to the major, four minors (one jointly with History) and a number of nonspecialist undergraduate courses. Approximately 3,800 undergraduate students earn 14,000 student credit hours annually in courses taught by Classics, yet only about 69% of the undergraduate demand is currently met. The number of students enrolled in the major (58) exceeds that of all but UCLA among the University's peers. Rigor is not compromised as a way to lure students. The graduates of the BA program are highly sought by graduate programs elsewhere because of their firm grounding in Greek and Latin as well as their mastery of the core literary canon of the discipline. The BA in Classics is not viewed by majors as limiting them to careers in the discipline, however. In the very best tradition of the BA, majors go on to a variety of careers. Students at all levels are enthusiastic about the department and the education they receive. Undergraduate majors are disproportionately recognized with University academic awards.

Doctoral students can concentrate in Classics or participate in joint programs with Philosophy or Theory and Criticism. These students are accomplished, well mentored and have a good record of placement. The department has a teaching portfolio and course development program for doctoral students that considerably aids their competitiveness upon graduation. These students uniformly speak highly of the Department.

The department's service activities also are of high caliber. One example is the annual trip to Rome offered to EOP students in partnership with the Office of Minority Affairs. An unexpected benefit of the visit is that students who have been marginalized as individuals in the US find enhanced identification of themselves as Americans, with an attendant growth of self-confidence and worth.

The majority of the review committee's recommendations addressed undergraduate education and instructional priorities. Among the most important recommendations is the inclusion of more writing in the major and the suggestion that Classics 101 be replaced with a 100 level introduction to Classical Studies. The department has responded receptively to all suggestions and has already made several changes. The department also notes that it has not comprehensively considered the curriculum in the last decade and that it is now time to do so. A curricular review, which will consider in detail the recommendations of the review committee, will be undertaken in the coming year as part of Dean Hodge's requirement of a strategic plan for each department in the College. Beyond issues of curriculum, one of the more exciting initiatives that might be undertaken in collaboration with other departments is the creation of a Center for Antiquity.

Several deficiencies in the University's support of the department are noted, including (1) a leave policy that does not allow sufficient time for career planning and scheduling of research; (2) inadequate connectivity to the campus computer net; (3) space problems, and (4) the need for fellowship support. Suggestions are made with regard to the possibility of increasing external fund raising to support some of these needs. Again, the department has responded receptively and is promptly making changes in response to the review.

The remarkable accomplishments of this department over the past decade are threatened by a uniquely poor salary situation. The faculty of this department are, on average, the lowest paid

among all departments in the College. The disparity of salaries in comparison to the UW peer group at the senior ranks is greater for this department than for any other in the College. Classics is unusually susceptible to raiding by other universities. Further exacerbating the problem is the fact that due to financial need, faculty must teach each summer. The coupling of summer teaching with a high course load during the academic year severely limits time for scholarly work and threatens the quality of scholarship.

In a separate letter, external reviewer Ralph Hexter, Dean of Humanities and Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature of UC Berkeley, lists salaries that these faculty would earn if they were employed at Berkeley. The median difference between the UW and UC salaries is 38%. This difference applies to a faculty member distinguished on the basis of scholarship, service and the receipt of a University teaching award. UW and UC salary differences range from 14% to 77%. Given the qualifications of the faculty and their salary situation, one would expect the faculty to have come forward with matching requests for competitive offers. On the contrary, several examples of refusals to consider solicitations by top ranked departments are listed on pages 70 and 71 of the self-study. In his letter, Dean Hexter confirms from his own experience the refusal of an outstanding member of this department to consider employment at UC. The negative response to external solicitation is attributed to the fact that the productive, intellectually vigorous, methodologically diverse and collegial department that these faculty have built is simply not found elsewhere. Their devotion to such a department is easily understood, but cannot itself be counted upon to continue. Surely these individuals will reach a point at which they will no longer refuse to consider solicitations. Given the resources of our competitors in addition to salary (e.g., sabbatical policy and fellowship support), pre-emptive action would be advantageous.

Attachments

c: Richard L. McCormick, President
Stephen Hinds, Professor and Chair, Department of Classics
Debra Friedman, Associate Provost for Academic Planning
John Slattery, Associate Dean for Academic Programs
David C. Hodge, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Michael Halleran, Divisional Dean, Arts and Humanities
Frederick L. Campbell, Dean, Undergraduate Education
Members of the Review Committee
Graduate School Council
Augustine McCaffery, Assistant to the Dean
Beatrice Greenwald, Assistant to the Dean
(All without attachments)