

To: Marsha Landolt, Dean of Graduate School and Vice Provost



cc: Augustine McCaffery, Assistant to the Graduate Dean
(circulation list to be determined by graduate school)

From: Stephen Hinds, Chair of Classics



Re: Comments of Classics Department on Report of Review Committee

June 1 1999

OVERVIEW

Let us begin by expressing our deep gratitude to all involved in the review process, both intramurally and extramurally. Alike before, during and since the site visit, we feel that we have been heard, and that our Self-Study and supporting materials have received the most thorough and constructive of readings. We believe that the department has been enriched by the process: we look forward to using the outcomes of this review as a guide and stimulus to thinking and planning in the coming months and beyond.

Specifically, we welcome the final report, received just last week: we concur with its overall account of needs and priorities, and find nothing substantive in it to be at variance with our own beliefs, hopes and fears. Our comments in this present memo will focus in the main, as they should, upon the side of the report which makes specific recommendations to the department.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ADMINISTRATION

We are pleased to have earned the very strong advocacy which emerges from the Review Committee's recommendations to the administration on additional funding and resources. The response on the problem of salary, both in the report itself and in the letters from the two external reviewers, is an especially powerful one, and rightly addresses issues both of intramural parity and of peer competitiveness. We are glad that in Recommendations #1 (salary) and #2 (RAships) the Committee effectively prioritizes the same two objectives to which we ourselves gave top priority in the final pages of the Classics Self-Study (pp.80-1): (1) 'to maintain the high quality of our faculty'; and (2) 'to build upon the past decade's dramatic growth in the competitiveness of our graduate program'.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT

The Review Committee's recommendations to the faculty on curriculum and departmental policy constitute a most valuable stimulus, and give us a head-start on the year-long discussion of strategic planning which the Dean of A&S has just inaugurated for all departments for 1999-2000. Without more time to react, we should not yet seek to offer definitive answers to this menu of policy recommendations. What follows is, first, an overall response strategy, and, second, preliminary comment on a few selected details.

Undergraduate curriculum and administrative policy issues:

Most of the recommendations by the Review Committee to the Department address undergraduate outcomes and instructional priorities (#1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7). We very much appreciate the fact that the Review Committee is at pains to state that its suggestions are

offered not in response to any dysfunction, but rather by way of fine-tuning an undergraduate program of proven effectiveness.

First, our overall response strategy. At a department faculty meeting today (6/1/99) we agreed to form a committee for 1999-2000 to review the overall shape of the undergraduate curriculum, both as a natural sequel to our work on the overall shape of the graduate program in 1998-99 (see below), and as a way to address in a structured way the various suggestions made by the Review Committee. For instance, the recommendations concerning 'general education' Classics courses (#1, 2, 7) raise questions which need to be considered under several different rubrics at once.

Now, some recommendations to which we can offer instant or proactive responses.

#3 (overcrowding in Beginning Greek): for AQ 1999 only, unusual circumstances allow us to relieve pressure by offering a second section of Greek 101, taught by a just-graduated PhD: we shall examine the effects of this experiment on enrolment and attrition rates.

#5 (critical writing and senior essay): we need to consider more spacious ways of addressing this (e.g. faculty-taught senior capstone seminar, or writing clinics led by a funded TA); but, as an immediate response, we do anticipate a vote to abolish the one-credit version of the variable-credit senior essay, as suggested.

#8 (TA training): the handbook desiderated for Classics TAs already exists (*Notes for Teaching Assistants*, 8pp.): it is updated annually and distributed in TA orientation week. On the broader issues of TA training, early conversations suggest that our preferred solution may be a structure which goes beyond informality, but which stops short of actual course-work in pedagogy.

#10 (fund-raising): two initiatives anticipated in our Self-Study (p.67) have now been implemented: an alumni evening; and the first annual UW faculty lecture to the Seattle chapter of the Archaeological Institute, firmly scheduled for 2/00. Other new steps already taken this year to upgrade fund-raising include a more extended and pointed pitch to donors in the Department Newsletter (3/99), and a major update of our mailing list (ongoing).

Graduate curriculum:

Recommendation #6 suggests more attention to theoretical and cultural studies in the graduate curriculum, to complement the current focus on language study and on single author courses. Both in 1998-99 and in 1999-2000 (projected), 33% of our graduate courses show a primary emphasis on theoretical or cultural studies. Three of the nine graduate students expected to reach orals in the next 18 months are in interdisciplinary tracks: one student is in the Program in Classics and Philosophy, and two are in the Program in Theory and Criticism. Thanks in part to the interests and priorities of recent faculty hires, the culture of the graduate program is now much more attuned to theoretical and cultural issues than it was just three or four years ago; so that we are now well positioned to pursue this recommendation. The two-quarter seminar idea has already generated some faculty enthusiasm: we shall work on this.

As noted above, we had already embarked on some proactive thinking about the overall shape of our graduate program when the 10-year review process began last autumn. Under the leadership of the GPC, we have gone ahead in recent months with a number of minor but important reforms:

1/99: to encourage more efficient preparation for program requirement exams, a system of course-relief is set up, whereby three 'study' courses (each @ 5 credits of 600) can be

claimed between the MA and the orals; previously only one such reduction, in the actual quarter of the orals, was permitted.

5/99: a pamphlet is published setting out a clarified narrative of the Department's graduate program exams.

6/99: a substantive revision of the graduate Greek and Latin reading lists is enacted.

Other reforms are ongoing:

1998- : the Chair and GPC are in discussion with ancient-world faculty in cognate units (history, NELC, art history) about resource sharing and interdepartmental program initiatives, especially at graduate level.

1999- : plans are now under way (cf. Self-Study p.81) to institute a team-taught graduate Proseminar for the year after next, focussing on specialized professional skills.

ENVOI

Despite the need, which the Review Committee rightly emphasizes, to be aware of worst-case scenarios, the Department of Classics is still in June 1999 a unit whose narratives are mostly happy and upbeat ones. One of our assistant professors, just returned from a week-long visit to another major department, faults the Review Committee's report only in that it doesn't have room to remark explicitly on 'the extremely supportive relations between senior and junior faculty, a very unusual phenomenon in my experience, especially in a group as diverse as we are in terms of scholarly interests and approaches'. In the past quarter, one of our 1998 PhDs has secured a visiting Assistant Professorship at Rutgers; one of our current graduate students has won a scholarship to the American School in Athens; and just today we learned that, for the second year in a row, an undergraduate major in Classics has been named by the Dean of A&S as the outstanding graduating senior in the Humanities.

That is not to say that things are any less fragile than the Review Committee suggests. We attracted what was probably our strongest ever pool of graduate applicants this year, and eventually recruited an excellent Canadian MA, already the holder of a SSHRCC fellowship -- but not without much heartache first in a shortlist in which even the candidates ranked below #10 were routinely coming up with higher-paying fellowship offers from the top Ivy League and UC departments. Success breeds success, but also breeds intensified competition.

Our thanks once more to all concerned, but especially to our extremely thoughtful and hardworking Review Committee.