

September 16, 2006

To: Suzanne T. Ortega, Vice Provost and Dean, and Melissa A. Austin, Associate
Dean for Academic Programs, The Graduate School
From: John T.S. Keeler, Chair, Division of French and Italian Studies
Re: The FIS Review Committee Report

We in French and Italian Studies greatly appreciate the fact that the Review Committee, led by Sabine Wilke, took the time to prepare a probing and wide-ranging report on our unit. Needless to say, we are also pleased that the findings of the report are generally quite positive regarding our unit's performance and supportive regarding our future: our undergraduate programs are deemed "excellent"; our graduate programs are said to have made "substantial progress" since the time of their reinstatement; FIS is portrayed as "an important resource on campus" for many other units; FIS is applauded for offering "excellent opportunities for students to study abroad" and thus contributing "substantially to the UW's aim to maintain 'a globally diverse campus' at both the undergraduate and graduate level"; it is noted that "relations between French and Italian wings [are] generally harmonious"; the chair is praised for having provided "first-rate leadership" and for having done "a marvelous job in putting a fundraising system in place that has already produced a number of endowments"; and looking toward the future, the report states that "*FIS has the potential to provide leadership in the humanities, if AT MINIMUM, resources that are presently allocated to the unit are recommitted*" (capitalization in original, italics added).

On this crucial last point, please note that the report continues as follows: "The major challenges faced by the Unit as identified both in the Self-Study and in our Committee's report have to do with the levels of staffing, particularly at the level of senior faculty... *In order for the Division of FIS to maintain and extend its recent successes, it will be important for the University to recognize the importance of recommitting funds to a senior position in French*" (italics added). "The university made a commitment five years ago by approving the French Ph.D. program and the Italian M.A. program. It is in the university's best interests now to protect these investments."

I must report that, especially in light of the Review Committee Report, the FIS faculty were very surprised and extremely disappointed to learn over the summer that we would not be granted permission to search this fall for a replacement—at either the junior or senior level—for Evelyne Ender, a full professor in French *and our only full professor* who reluctantly (see appendix) left the UW for Hunter College after her husband had been appointed Dean of the College of Education at Hunter. Our surprise and disappointment were compounded by the fact that our Divisional Dean, Ellen Kaisse, said recently that she could not even promise that FIS would be allowed to search for a replacement *next year*. What this means is that French Studies, which has had six tenured/tenure-track lines since the time of the current chair's initial appointment, will now be reduced to five lines for at least the next two years, quite possibly a third, and perhaps much longer—despite the fact that, as Table 1 from our Self Study shows, the

number of French BAs graduated per year has nearly doubled since 1995-1997, graduate degree production has increased (while falling in the case of many other L&L departments), time to degree has been substantially reduced¹, graduate placement has improved, and that the unit's performance has improved dramatically across the board. It should be noted that this reduction in staffing for French Studies was decided upon

**Table 1 from FIS Self Study:
Selected Measures of Achievement by FIS since the late 1990's**

	Increase in Majors and Degree Production from 1993-97 to 2001-05:
Majors	#1 among all UW L&L Depts.
BAs	#1 among all UW L&L Depts. 450% more Italian BAs (22/4) in 2003-05 than 1995-97 92% more French BAs (92/48) in 2003-05 than 1995-97
MAs	#1 among all UW L&L Depts.
PhDs	#2 among all UW L&L Depts.
	Other Indices of Achievement:
Study Abroad Programs	*7 new programs (5 French, 2 Italian) launched since 1997 *The 3 new programs for French graduate students received perfect 5.0 ratings in a December 2005 student survey
Ph.D. Placement	Since 2002, 75% of PhDs have obtained full-time positions at colleges/universities; only 50% did so from 1996-2001
Publications by TT/T Faculty	4 books and 19 journal articles since 2001
Teaching Evaluations 2004-05	Overall 4.4, 0.2 above average for Humanities TAs 4.4, 0.3 above average for Humanities
Development	1 donor \$250 in 1996-97; no FIS endowments 118 donors \$150,771 from 2004-2006; 4 endowments

despite the fact that the report cautions that junior faculty have felt over-burdened by the lack of senior colleagues and that the administration of the French program has thus often been in "crisis management mode."

It is important to stress that the report also notes: "We can volunteer that we heard nothing in our conversations that would point in the direction of any benefit at all from a recombination of FIS with Spanish and Portuguese into a department of Romance. On the contrary, the nice sense of morale that now exists around many issues would be jeopardized. *The self-study proposes that the Division become a formal department in order to simplify administrative procedures. From the outside, this seems like a reasonable proposal*" (italics added). We have received no formal response from the

¹ The twelve doctoral students completing the program from 1993 through 2001 took an average of 10.3 years, and 58% took 10 years or more. The eight students who completed their degrees from 2002 through 2005 took an average of 8.1 years, 2.2 years less, and only 13% (1/8) took 10 years or more.

dean's office to this statement, but Dean Hodge did tell the FIS chair in the spring of 2006 that he was "not inclined at this time" to support formal department status for FIS and for Spanish and Portuguese. If this remains the position of the dean's office, we would hope to have a chance to discuss this issue or at a minimum hear the rationale for the retention of a cumbersome status that has created a number of problems for FIS (see Self Study section I).

I should also comment on a few issues raised by the report regarding FIS administrative practices. First, the report states (p. 6) that "no... discussion exists" regarding the relationship between our language programs and our upper-level undergraduate program. I find this curious, since the Self Study states explicitly (p. 53) that the Italian wing has recently changed its curriculum so as to add "cushion courses" designed to ease the transition from language to content courses. No such reforms have been introduced on the French side to date, but not because there has been no discussion of the issue—the problem has been the lack of sufficient teaching staff to introduce such new courses. Second, the report states (p. 7) that "it might be preferable to have one person in charge of all language courses in French and one person in charge of all language courses in Italian." This may of course be true—but that has not been the judgment of our faculty. On the French side, Hedwige Meyer (100 level) and H  l  ne Collins (200-300 level) have shared the language coordination labors for years, and they have done so in an effective, collaborative fashion with positive results. On the Italian side, Giuseppe Leporace (100/300 levels) and Donna Yowell (200 level) have acted in a similar fashion. Third, the report states (p. 8) that we could do more in terms of graduate recruitment and should produce a graduate program brochure. To this I must simply note that we explicitly requested funding for production of a graduate program brochure two years ago—and our request was denied by the Graduate School. At that time we had no endowment income with which to fund production of a brochure; we now have acquired such funds and thus may produce a brochure in the near future. It goes without saying that many debate whether a brochure is cost effective in the era of websites—but it may help on the margins. Quite frankly, we think an extra faculty line or two would help much more! The thinness of the faculty (especially at the senior level) has, to date, been the main obstacle to enhancement of our recruitment activities.

Appendix: Excerpts of Letter of April 19 from Evelyne Ender to Dean Ellen Kaisse

As I told you, as well as David Hodge, and of course John Keeler, I am leaving this university and my department with regrets and real possibilities--intellectual, pedagogical, academic--cut short. In these circumstances, I would happily consider a reappointment in the future, if a suitable position becomes available, at that point, for my husband.

While it saddens me to leave a department in which I have found excellent colleagues and friends, and a department, moreover, that is in dire need of senior faculty, I must face the stark truth that the University of Washington has not for two years—and is not able right now—to fulfill my request for a reasonable spousal hire for a person with

a senior and distinguished record of academic and administrative achievement. By contrast, Hunter College and CUNY, presented with the counterpart, can and have done so. I would like it to be on record, however, that both David and I would be happy to revisit another script with the University of Washington in the future.