

April 10, 2006

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From: Sabine Wilke, Germanics (chair)  
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Re: Division of French & Italian Studies Review

The departmental review committee is herewith submitting its report to you. The committee as a whole is in agreement about the recommendations. The external reviewers are submitting separate letters. We believe Professor Spackman has already done that, but we are including a copy for your records so that you have the full documentation. Professor Conley's review is attached since the signed copy was sent to the chair of the committee.

#### Executive Summary

It is the unanimous recommendation of the Review Committee that the University of Washington undergraduate and graduate degree programs in French and Italian Studies be retained and with another review scheduled in ten years. The Division of French and Italian Studies can boast of excellent undergraduate programs (with a large and growing number of undergraduate majors in both French and Italian), and has made substantial progress since the reinstatement of its graduate programs in French (MA and PhD) and Italian (MA) in 2000. The Unit is an important resource on campus for the Center for Western European Studies and other programs with an international focus, especially the seventeen-some programs which send students to the UW Rome Center; FIS also provides other units on campus (such as Comparative Literature, Linguistics, even Communications and Asian Languages) with TA-slots. In sum, FIS offers strong academic programs in Seattle and excellent opportunities for students to study abroad; FIS thus contributes substantially to the UW's aim to maintain 'a globally diverse campus' at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

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. With the likely departure of one Professor (Ender) for spousal reasons at the end of 05-

06, the Unit will have no full professors. In order for the Division of French and Italian Studies 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.

Also, although we do not have a mandate to investigate the issue of departmentalization, we can volunteer that we heard nothing in all of 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 exists now 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.

#### Process:

The internal review committee was provided with the divisional self-study including a variety of addenda and a folder containing a copy of the last 10-year review summary and communications related to the reinstatement of the graduate degree programs in 2000. In addition, we requested a few more data from the chair pertaining to the graduate applicant pool, a roster of standing committees, salary data, data on FTE, and size of the graduate program. Our charge meeting with Associate Dean Austin, Executive Vice-Provost Cauce, Acting Divisional Dean for the Humanities Kaisse, and Program Specialist Canfield-Budde took place on January 20 with Tom Conley participating over the speaker phone from Cambridge, MA. The internal committee met with the chair, John Keeler, on January 25, for about 75 minutes primarily to have our most immediate questions answered and to get his sense of the state of the unit. We met again as a committee to review our data and materials, share our first impressions, and began planning a road map for the site visit. On February 10, we set aside an entire morning to meet with the Graduate Program Coordinator, all four language coordinators, the chairs of the undergraduate curriculum committees (French and Italian), the Lead TA, and interested graduate students. Further email communications between all members of the internal review committee solidified our preliminary picture of the successes and challenges the Division has faced over the last decade. The site visit included the external reviewer for the Italian wing, Professor Barbara Spackman, (unfortunately, Professor Conley was unable to be present but has issued an independent report) and took place on February 22 and 23 packed with individual and group interviews. The following report represents our evaluation of the health of the division.

#### Introduction:

The review committee, itself consisting entirely of members of small humanities departments, took the charge that this review ought to be “a forward-looking exercise” (Austin to Keeler in an email 1/25) seriously. We wish to be honest and independent advocates for the division. We have no interest in micromanaging the unit from the outside but instead will suggest some possible ways of framing future discussions that could help improve efficiency and academics. But the unit will need to have these discussions itself.

We are starting from the point of view, deeply shared by all of us, that there is no truly great university without a strong humanities core. All narratives we are currently hearing from university administrators, especially in the context of development, highlight core values. The humanities in their pursuit of questions of value and interpretation make up the essence of what higher education is all about. The study of French language and culture is so important for

understanding literature, philosophy and history that excellence in French is indispensable for excellence in the Humanities more generally. We quote from the letter written by Professor Howard Bloch from Yale on January 15, 2000, reviewing the unit's proposal to reinstate the MA and the PhD in French: he begins by saying that

“it is my assumption that the University of Washington is committed to a graduate program in French and Italian. This assumption is based, of course, on the premise that one cannot image a first-rate university without such a program. Such an argument has an airtight corollary in the centrality of French and Italian to much of what goes on across the Humanities. It is difficult to imagine a program in Comparative Literature, History, Art History and Architecture, or, given French critical theory over the last forty years, even English without a presence on the graduate level of French. For a university of the caliber of Washington not to commit in this direction would be to give up on the humanities more generally, which would, I am convinced, have a house-of-cards effect on a number of programs, for which French supplies an essential component.”

We agree with this premise. The committee, therefore, hopes to convince university administrators that the Division of FIS has made significant progress since its graduate programs were re-instituted in 2000. Accordingly, we argue, FIS has the potential to provide leadership in the humanities, if AT MINIMUM resources that are presently allocated to the unit are recommitted. The university made a commitment five years ago by approving the French PhD program and the Italian MA program. It is in the university's best interest now to protect those investments.

Our outside committee members will comment on what FIS units at peer institutions look like in terms of number and quality of faculty. Professor Spackman had some very helpful suggestions with regard to what an Italian wing needs to look like in order to be taken seriously by other universities as feeder program into their PhD (namely, individual specialists in fourteenth century, sixteenth century, and twentieth century literature and culture). She will elaborate on that in her independent letter. One possible strategy to achieve that state in Italian might be a conversion of one lecturer line into a tenure-track line. French literature and culture extend over nearly a thousand years, from court poetry in medieval Burgundy, to Paris bristling with modernity, to the cultures and communities of French-speaking America, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. To a person the French wing of the unit shares with the discipline of French Studies a deep commitment to the belief that French literature and culture are best understood within a strong framework of historical awareness. As it stands the French faculty have the ambitions and the talent to offer programs across nearly a millennium of literature and culture, but the very important areas of 17-19th centuries remain the biggest gap at present.

### Findings and Recommendations:

#### I. Successes

We would like to begin our report by pointing to the successes the unit has achieved over the last decade, most of it under the leadership of its present chair, John Keeler. In our assessment, John has provided absolutely first-rate leadership for FIS, implementing a new governance structure with standing committees and student and faculty representation, in turn leading to a genuine culture of participation. It is our perception that relations between the French Wing and the Italian Wing are generally harmonious. Everybody now serves FIS in some form or another, Assistant Professors speak up in faculty meetings, graduate students contribute to committee

discussions, an entire cohort of adjuncts from other departments regularly volunteers to serve on student exam committees, help with searches, and write letters of recommendation. Especially impressive is the way in which faculty rally around their students and graduate degree programs. Faculty with experience in Ivy League and other top tier institutions praised their top students as being “as good as the best students anywhere.”

At the Undergraduate level, we find the Unit’s B.A. programs in French and in Italian to be of excellent quality. Careful attention is given to the quality of undergraduate courses both in Seattle and in study abroad programs, and students (particularly those able to study abroad) seem to graduate in French and Italian with a substantial expertise in spoken and written language and culture. The self-study makes an impressive case about a substantial increase in degree-production for Italian. The quality of the French undergraduate program was recently praised by the French cultural attaché who mentioned specifically the quality of the students from UW. Undergraduates are clearly satisfied with what the program has to offer and are voting with their feet. Students from this program have gone on to careers in business, law, medicine, and many other professions; some have gone on to pursue graduate degrees in French and Italian. In addition, FIS is serving a central function in the internationalization mission of this university by teaching our students foreign languages, educating global citizens, and providing them with study abroad opportunities to experience cultural diversity. The Italian wing is preparing students from all over campus with the linguistic and cultural knowledge they need in order to make the most of their time while studying at the Rome Center.

At the Graduate level we will let the external reviewers answer the question about the general quality of the FIS degree programs, the faculty, and the reputation of the program as a whole from a national perspective. Locally, we measure the quality of the Unit’s graduate programs (MA in Italian Studies and MA and PhD in French Studies) by assessing factors such as the research productivity of the faculty, the depth and quality of the graduate applicant pool, and placement of PhDs compared to other national literature programs on campus. Our finding is that FIS has rebounded admirably since the reinstatement of its graduate programs in 2000, though it does have some way to go to reach the level of the most nationally competitive graduate programs in the Humanities at the UW.

Another successful area is that of development activities. John Keeler has done a marvelous job in putting a fundraising system in place that has already produced a number of endowments. The proceeds from this activity will soon become available to support the graduate program. Both French and Italian advisory boards seem to function very well (Giuseppe Leporace has provided excellent leadership for the Italian side).

While we recognize that considerable effort went into articulating the Unit’s goals and achievements in the self-study, we feel that it would be productive for the Unit to continue to engage vigorously in a strategic planning process. A Unit that serves so many students with so few faculty will face many challenges as it strives to build on its recent successes.

## II. Senior faculty issues

As of this writing, with Ender poised to depart soon, there are no full professors who could carry the weight in terms of attracting, training, and placing graduate students into academic positions. The only full professors currently in the unit are John Keeler, a professor of political science, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, whose FTE was transferred to Comparative Literature many years ago, and an emeritus who is teaching 40%. The question remains: who will be leading FIS once the term of the current outside chair is concluding in 2007? Professor Ender, hired in 2004, is leaving at the end of this academic year—not because she wants to, but because it was not possible to come to an agreement about a position for her spouse within the University. Spousal issues and the university's inability to address them were brought up repeatedly in the context of review. To maintain a vital doctoral program, a senior hire in French to replace Ender will be necessary. The question of weight, scholarly visibility, program quality, and effectiveness of graduate training cannot be solved at or below the current level of resources. FTE either needs to be reallocated from elsewhere or lecturer lines need to be converted into professorial tracks, but in the end French needs to have more faculty and faculty of a certain weight to sustain the doctoral program.

## III. Issues of balance between tenured/tenure track faculty and lecturers

With the new hire (in process as of winter 2006) included, as of 2006/2007 French will have 4.75 tenure-line FTE and 3 full-time lecturers, Italian will have 1.75 tenure-line FTE and 5.61 lecturers. It is our firm opinion that an attractive and competitive doctoral program cannot be sustained with these numbers. Either FTE need to be recommitted to FIS (preferably at the senior level in French where the loss will occur at the end of this year), or a lecturer line needs to be converted into a faculty position. The issue in the Italian wing is also one of balance between tenure-line faculty (1.75) and lecturers (5.61). As the self-study and our conversations made clear, the lecturers in FIS are extremely gifted and successful teachers themselves who also play crucial roles in training and supervising Teaching Assistants, coordinating excellent study abroad programs, and in bringing groups of UW students abroad, especially to the UW Rome Center. Nevertheless, lecturers do not attract graduate students: the ratio of lecturers to tenure line faculty in FIS is problematic for fostering visible excellence at the graduate level. The MLA opposes the overuse of lower-paid non-tenure-line faculty in language and literature departments. In addition, the notional teaching load for lecturers in A&S, we were told, is 9 courses (3 courses a quarter); the lecturers in FIS do not teach 9 courses. We can see an argument where units give lecturers a lighter load especially when lecturers teach content courses on the upper division level. In the case of FIS we encountered a very strong sense of entitlement among lecturers, some of whom told us that “they were hired to teach 6 courses.” Our sense is that if lecturers are not teaching the notional load, these lines may as well be converted to tenure-line tracks in order to increase the research profile of FIS faculty.

## IV. Junior faculty issues

We encountered in our conversations across FIS a general feeling of demoralization stemming from the lack of tenure-line faculty and believe that this feeling urgently needs to be addressed. The current state of the Unit was repeatedly characterized to us as being in “crisis management mode” in which resources are stretched to the limit to cover the basics.

Recent resignations of junior faculty, as we understand it, were in many cases due to the university's inability to provide adequate retention funds, with the exception of two cases in which individuals were 'counselled out' before tenure (Self-Study p. 9). The fact remains, that there has not been a successful tenure case in the recent memory of the Division (the last one was 1997). People have either been wooed away by other offers or resigned before it came to tenure. We take the revolving door at the junior level as a symptom for a larger problem related to a missing sense of intellectual community and lacking leadership role of the senior faculty.

In consultation with the Divisional Dean of the Humanities, the Chair of FIS has recently begun to give a systematic one-course reduction for Assistant Professors (following the lead of the English Department which instituted this system internally a while ago under Shawn Wong's tenure as chair of English). The rationale for this, according to the self-study, is the lack of senior leadership in FIS and, consequentially, the greater service expectation placed on junior professors in FIS (compared to other units). In other words, the Unit is dealing with the revolving door phenomenon by providing course release, where the more systemic solution would be to build a senior faculty that can provide intellectual guidance. A teaching load reduction should be understood as a symptom of, rather than a solution to, the lack of intellectual community and senior leadership.

#### V. Undergraduate Program issues

While we can make some suggestions about possible ways to improve the efficiency of the language program and the undergraduate program, ultimately the unit will need to come up with strategies to address resource issues.

We encourage the unit to have a discussion of the relationship between the first and second year language program (serving a large number of students outside the major) and the upper level undergraduate program (serving mainly majors). Currently, no such discussion exists. It may be time to rethink the undergraduate curriculum in French (a revision of the undergraduate curriculum in Italian is under way) and see if it still fits with the unit's intellectual direction. Are there areas where more efficiency could be introduced (i.e., would it make sense to attach sections for majors to highly-enrolled undergraduate courses taught in English? Could advanced undergraduates sit together with beginning graduate students in the surveys of French or Italian literature?)? Is there a bridge course that prepares language learners for work at a higher level?) It seems that the proposed revision to the undergraduate major in Italian with its introduction of new 300-level core courses is moving in that direction and we applaud that. In resource-challenged times it is paramount to give students more flexibility without compromising on intellectual content. The increase in Italian majors is a real success story about which the unit can be proud. UW Italian now has more majors than Berkeley! Part of this is program quality, part of it is its organic relation to the Rome Center. UW students from all over campus go abroad and experience a different culture upfront with all its challenges. It would be ideal if all those students walked away with an additional linguistic benefit and at least minimal preparation in Italian were required for study at the Rome Center. With more resources, Italian could play a much more central role in preparing our students for that experience.

Given limited resources, the unit could also discuss whether or not it wants to embrace the hybrid program of teaching foreign languages (hybrid meaning part classroom and part computer) as has recently been done in Germanics and in Spanish and Portuguese.

In general, we recommend that the unit review its undergraduate programs with an eye towards removing road blocks. Undergraduate Advising is handled by a professional staff who is also a part-time lecturer. 4 Hours per day are set aside for advising and the adviser seems very competent, even though overworked given the number of French and Italian majors she is dealing with. Talking to the adviser reinforced our impression that a review of the undergraduate programs is in order with an eye towards removing road blocks and revisiting issues such as the 20-credit limit for transferring study abroad credits in French. An undergraduate research option should be available to FIS students (faculty needs to think creatively in terms of what kind of projects they could use undergraduate help with). We recommend browsing the undergraduate research web site for ideas from other departments. An internship option is also desirable. Some information on ad-hoc honors should be available to students.

We spent considerable time and energy understanding the system of language coordination FIS is using. Currently, FIS splits up the coordination of French and Italian language courses into different levels. In fact, there are four different language coordinators—all lecturers—for FIS, two in French and two in Italian. If this has worked well for the unit, so be it. But if they are at all open to rethinking this arrangement, we would encourage that. We would encourage the unit to have a discussion about why different levels of the language program need to be coordinated by different people. From a perspective of articulation and consistency, 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. We also encourage the unit to find a rational and transparent system to account for this service by giving teaching load reductions (the current system seems arbitrary).

Attached to the issue of language program coordination is the issue of TA supervision. Here too, we struggle with the question of why it would be preferable to split up this job into different levels. Supervising TAs is a crucial function of graduate training that relates directly to academic placement. It must be done with great skill and vision. The supervisor sets the tone for the entire language program. There is no one profile for people in this position, some are trained in applied linguistics, others have a background in literature or linguistics and have learned the skills on the job. The important thing is that TA training is taken as a serious task by all members of the Unit and that everybody cares deeply about what is going on in the language program. Indeed, it might be advisable for tenure-line faculty to also teach in the language program, at least once in while, so that they know what is going on and that questions of articulation between levels is on everyone's radar. We encourage the division to have a discussion about the system of supervision it is using at the moment. Are TAs adequately trained to perform their jobs well? Are they given pedagogical materials to use in class? Are they being visited regularly? Are there weekly meetings among section instructors where pedagogical issues are addressed? At present, there is no formal course set aside for language training of new Italian TAs. Is the current system adequate and working?

The unit uses a number of Teaching Associates on a quarterly basis. These are individuals who are hired to teach language courses on a per course basis (no benefits paid). Some have been doing this for quite a while and seem to enjoy it, even though the pay level is very low and the psychological stress of not knowing whether or not you will be reemployed next quarter is very high. As the graduate program grows in the future and more students are attracted into the program, the need for Teaching Associates may decline. It may be worth thinking about putting the resources that are currently allocated to various Teaching Associates and creating a full-time lecturer position.

## VII. Graduate Program Issues

Currently there are 11 graduate students in French (plus one visitor from France) and 6 graduate students in Italian, but 12 more students from other programs are teaching in FIS. We did not have access to the Division's budget and do not know whether these are from recapture or through temporary or permanent allocations. The fact is that FIS is making funding available to other programs and we find that very generous.

We looked at the applicant pool for the French graduate program. Similar to the question of program quality, this is an issue where we would like the outside committee members to take a lead. To us, the pool this year seems fairly shallow considering the need for FIS TAs. At the same time, the applicant GRE scores seem to measure up competitively with other UW language programs as indicated in the self-study. Our assessment is that FIS is not yet competitive with top national graduate programs, but that they have nevertheless managed to recruit a very decent cohort of graduate students. Graduate recruitment in the humanities at UW in general is a sad story of a combination of a shocking lack of resources with no fellowships funded centrally and TA-salaries at 60% of our peers. Only few programs compete nationally, usually with the help of foundation funding or endowment income to off-set local funding gaps. We do not know if there is the possibility of a French or Italian foundation or the French or the Italian government to help fund graduate education in the US but it is certainly worth looking into. We recommend that the Division systematically explore outside funding for graduate fellowships or study abroad opportunities. We also recommend that the unit step up graduate recruitment and put the resources the Graduate School offers to better use (phone calls to graduate applicants, development of a brochure, site visits by prospective applicants, etc.).

On the other end of discussing the quality of the applicant pool is the question of time to degree, completion rate, and, most importantly, academic placement. Time to degree and completion rate seem entirely within the lines of humanities departments at large. Tenure-track placement seems to be improving, even though the kinds of institutions in which FIS is placing its French PhDs are not yet our peers or well-known small liberal arts colleges. This is where TA training comes in through the back door: TAs who receive excellent pedagogical training often have an edge over Ivy-league graduates who had fellowships during most of their graduate studies and little experience in the classroom. Once a unit has made a few of these excellent placements (in colleges like Bryn Mawr, Smith, Middlebury, etc.) they turn into fabulous recruitment tools when the UW alum is actively promoting the program. FIS still has some way to go but we believe that it has made progress over the last five years after the reinstatement of the PhD in French. Italian MA students are well-placed into other doctoral programs of the first tier. The program itself seems to be functioning well even though we heard over and over again that there



are not enough courses offered. Students are progressing in timely fashion, the rigor of the new MA exam and permission to proceed to candidacy seems to identify problems early and at the same time keeping students focused on their research project. The inclusion of the outside area also seems to be working well and taking some pressure off the program in terms of finding staffing for graduate courses. FIS has taken full advantage of the resources in other departments in very creative ways and integrated colleagues in history, comparative literature, and other units into its degree program. There is a lot of praise to be given there.

One issue did seem problematic: due to the limited number of graduate students in the program, the unit currently uses a system where graduate students, especially in French, are sometimes asked to teach 100%. This should be discouraged as graduate students so employed cannot fully concentrate on their academic obligations.

Not every graduate student ends up in academia as we all know. Some one-on-one advice is available, particularly in the context of evaluating French MA students for continuing on for the PhD. We suggest that the unit consider partnering with other departments in offering workshops on various career-related topics that include non-traditional paths. Maybe a former graduate (or ABD) who now works for Microsoft could play a mentoring role for current graduate students interested in pursuing that type of career—this just as an example of what form of recognition a department could give to the fact that many of our students end up in jobs other than academic ones.

#### VIII. Diversity Issues

We considered the Unit's approach to the issue of diversity. We applaud the fact that the Unit has committed resources to a position in Francophonie. This will, hopefully, produce greater diversity in recruiting graduate students in the future. No formal collaboration with GO-MAP exists at the time, but probably could be initiated. In order to do that the unit needs to write a diversity plan and put mechanisms into place that yield better minority applications. This could be combined with a renewed effort in strategic planning.

#### IX. Staff Issues

Staff feels well supported. We heard lots of praise of the current chair's responsiveness to staff needs. Even though all units could always need more staff support, in this case that does not seem to be the most burning issue. The issues that came up in our conversation with the staff were the situation with advising (full-time adviser needed), the lack of a graduate program brochure and more systematic attempt at graduate recruiting, the unwelcome situation with TA offices in Lewis Annex, and the lack of a public space.