

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
OF THE PROGRAM REVIEW PANEL ON  
THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS

This report is drawn from the findings of the department's self-study report, the written reports of the internal and external review teams, and the oral "exit interview" with the external review team. It represents the Program Review Panel's considered judgment of those reports and what they indicate about the current status and future prospects of the department.

FINDINGS

1. Faculty:

The five currently rostered members of the department maintain above average teaching records and all of them seem to be engaged in reasonably active research programs, with varying degrees of productivity.

Because of the small size of the department, and the department's commitment to offering full degree programs from the B.A. through the Ph.D., teaching loads are heavier than in many departments--typically, five courses per year. Teaching responsibilities appear to be equally shared among the rostered members of the faculty. Both the internal and external review teams recommend some decrease in the normal teaching schedule, if the department is to encourage quality research.

The faculty contributes with some regularity to scholarly literature in the field. But it appears that, while the amount of publications generated by the department may be regarded as respectable, the faculty does not regularly publish in the most prestigious or the most rigorously refereed journals; much of the faculty's research has appeared in lesser-rank journals or in journals of only local reputation and limited audience. No member of the department seems at present to have attained real prominence in the field for the importance of his or her research.

The particular research strengths of the faculty lie in the areas of Amerindian linguistics, African linguistics, and, to a growing degree, cognitive linguistics. It is felt that the department would benefit by attempting to play to these strengths more than it has in the past. For instance, there is reason to explore more cooperative initiatives in research on Amerindian linguistics (especially of the Plains and Intermountain regions) and to expand some promising avenues of interdepartmental research in the area of cognitive linguistics.

Reviewers have uniformly noted a general atmosphere of malaise and stagnation in the department. There appears to be an unfortunate lack of interest or vitality, on the part of both the faculty and the chairman, in identifying and developing the particular areas in which the department might maximize its current or potential strengths.

## 2. Curriculum:

The department currently offers degree programs at the B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. levels. It also administers the ESL (English as a Second Language) and TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages) programs, as well as overseeing the basic Arabic and Hebrew language courses. The internal and external review teams both expressed strong feeling that the department is spreading itself much too thin, in pursuing these various--and not always complementary--programs. It is expecting too much for a faculty of five members (or six, with the addition of a newly recruited person to begin ay 85-86) to offer quality degrees and instruction in all of these fields.

The B.A. program is the most successful and best organized of the department's degree programs. There would seem to be no reason for a major revision of the curriculum in this area. However, it would be advisable for the undergraduate offerings to be tightened somewhat, so as to conserve more faculty time and resources for strengthening the graduate programs. It will also be advisable to have fewer and larger sections in the general, lower-division courses.

The graduate degree programs, partly because of the excessive dispersal of the faculty's energy in attempting to handle too many competing responsibilities, are unfocused and in need of strengthening.

Nearly half of the department's M.A. recipients come from the TESOL program--a program that is more vocationally-oriented than it is research-oriented. Much of the M.A. program, therefore, does not draw on or complement the strengths and interests of the faculty. There is doubt about whether M.A. students other than those in TESOL have access at present to a rigorously structured graduate program: too much of their course-work is done either through "double-numbered" (400/500) courses that are primarily undergraduate in nature and scope or through independent study.

Reviewers have expressed serious concern about the quality of the Ph.D program, in terms of the training being given to and the requirements demanded of candidates. Reservations have also been

noted with regard to the fact that doctoral degrees are awarded in areas that do not always correspond closely with the special expertise of the faculty. The department has few students pursuing the Ph.D. and averages less than one such degree per year; it is not a high-demand program and does not seem likely to become one without radical change. Questions have been raised about the viability and value of the degree as it is currently being administered.

It is clear that the department has done a fine job in shepherding the ESL, TESOL, and Semitic Languages programs. The ESL program in particular is seen as a very successful undertaking, both in its service aspect and in terms of providing teaching assistantships for graduate students in the department. With regard to TESOL, it is not apparent that that program could not be equally well administered through the School of Education; reviewers have suggested that the feasibility of transferring the program be explored. As to Semitic Languages, no faculty member in Linguistics commands expertise in the area and there is no convincing justification for the department to be overseeing instruction in Arabic and Hebrew. Both the TESOL and Semitic Languages programs seem to be a drain on the faculty's time and research.

In sum, the department has taken upon itself so many tasks that it is not able to discharge all of them in the best fashion. Its graduate programs and its potential as a research unit are consequently suffering. It needs now to consider and set reasonable priorities for its future.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The faculty must strive consciously to make significant improvement in its scholarly productivity. Increased efforts should particularly be made to publish research in the more prestigious and widely read journals in the field.
2. Scrupulous attention must be paid to enhancing the quality of the Ph.D. degree. A plan to improve the curriculum should be drafted during the next academic year and submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The continuation of the Ph.D. program should be contingent upon the development of a plan that will be acceptable both to the administration and to the department.
3. The M.A. curriculum should be thoroughly revised and upgraded. Specifically, (a) there should be less reliance on "double-numbered"

(400/500) courses and on independent study, particularly for courses intended for non-TESOL students, (b) strictly graduate-level courses should be offered on a more regular basis than in the past, (c) serious consideration should be given to requiring a thesis from all non-TESOL candidates for the M.A. degree.

4. The department should attempt to divest itself of some responsibilities that do not contribute to its basic scholarly mission. Specifically, (a) the Arabic and Hebrew language courses should be transferred to the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures, (b) the possibility of transferring administration of the TESOL program to the School of Education should be explored.

5. In order to take best advantage of research strengths, the department's ties with the Institute of Cognitive Science should continue to be encouraged. Cooperation with other departments --particularly Psychology, Anthropology, and Sociology--in areas of mutual benefit should be pursued more vigorously than in the past. For example, the development of cooperative programs in the area of Amerindian linguistics, in conjunction with qualified faculty members from other departments, might be explored.

6. In order to make more effective use of personnel resources at the undergraduate level, (a) there might be fewer courses offered each semester (to balance the suggested increase in M.A.-level courses), (b) there should be only one large section offered--with appropriate assistance from graders--of Linguistics 100 (Language) and Linguistics 200 (Introduction to Linguistics), (c) an effort should be made to publicize Linguistics 100 and Linguistics 200 more attractively, as these are courses that should be expected to draw larger enrollments than they currently have.

7. The department should report annually to the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Dean of the Graduate School on its progress toward carrying out these recommendations.