



University of Colorado **Boulder**

2025 Program Review

Department of French and Italian

Academic Review and Planning

Advisory Committee Report

Approved

Signed by:
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Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs | Date

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Process Overview

The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) review of the Department of French and Italian (FRIT) was conducted in accordance with the 2025 program review guidelines. The degree program report and goal setting exercise were prepared and submitted by the unit. An external review committee (ERC), consisting of two experts from outside of the University of Colorado Boulder, engaged in a virtual visit and submitted a report based upon review of relevant documents and interviews with faculty, staff, and student unit members and university administrators. ARPAC staff, employing web conferencing tools, facilitated the external review as a remote visit over March 3 and 4, 2025. The ARPAC unit liaisons submitted a summary of findings derived from the goal setting exercise. ARPAC reviewed and considered these materials, met with the chair, and wrote this report.

Past Reviews

Along with stated progress per the 2018, 2019, and 2020 follow-ups, previous ARPAC recommendations (2016) for the department included:

(1) creating conditions conducive to promotion of associate professors (e.g., through reductions in service loads)

There were early steps in decreasing the service burden for associate professors, e.g., by making a full professor department chair in order to relieve an associate professor. In 2018, the department stated that both the chair and the full professor serving as associate chair for graduate studies planned to stay in these positions until associate professor colleagues had secured promotion. Currently, both of these positions as well as associate chair of undergraduate studies are all held by associate professors.

(2) formalizing graduate student progress reviews

This process was completed in 2017 and remains in place.

(3) exploring alternate funding sources for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students

The Doctoral Consortium for Literature and Culture provided funding for PhD students for a time, providing some students with a reprieve from teaching for their first year and final year. However, this funding was lost between the 2019 and 2020 follow-ups, which sent the PhD program back to traditional funding streams and which negatively impacted the department's ability to attract students.

(4) connecting faculty research to undergraduate classes

There has been significant progress on this point, including a number of tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty teaching engaging courses as part of the First Year Seminar program.

(5) developing a hiring plan to maintain the department's research profile

The 2018 response reports that the department was able to hire one faculty member. Further responses report on retirements, but no requests granted for TTT lines.

Recommendations to the college and university included:

(1) at least matching previous funding levels; (2) facilitating cross-campus collaborations (e.g. language requirements for Master of Business Administration (MBA) students); (3) providing new TTT hires; (4) providing support for FRIT faculty developing hybrid courses; and (5) providing better options for funding doctoral students. There was also a recommendation for Advancement to assign a designated development officer to work with the department to increase gift funds. Though there were no formal follow-ups to these recommendations, based on our analysis in this report, it seems there have not been noticeable improvements on recommendations regarding resource allocation.

Unit Analysis

The campus' standardized description of the Department of French and Italian is available on the website of the Office of Data & Analytics (D&A) at <https://www.colorado.edu/oda/institutional-research/institutional-level-data/information-department/academic-review-and-planning>. D&A updates the profile annually in the fall semester. This report cites data posted in August 2024, reflecting the state of the Department of French and Italian as of the academic year (AY) 2023-2024.

Teaching and Learning Excellence and Assessment

The Department of French and Italian offers two undergraduate degrees, a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in French and a BA in Italian, as well as undergraduate minors in each language. Both programs serve a very large number of non-majors, with less than 5% of credit hours in each taken by majors. The department also offers two graduate degrees, a Master of Arts (MA) in French and a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in French. Both the MA and the PhD have four tracks: Gender and Sexuality; the Black Atlantic; Pedagogy; and Comparative Track. There are also multiple certificates that include courses from French and Italian, including the Certificate in Art and Social Change. There are a range of pedagogical goals in the department, including valuing experiential learning, interdisciplinarity, and the development of multilingualism and intercultural competency.

The department's goal setting exercise includes plans for a redesign of both the French and Italian undergraduate majors and minors. These redesigns are focused on "revitalizing" new courses that reflect demographic and interest changes. There are stated plans for assessments without specifics, though one important metric appears to be major and minor enrollment numbers. With regards to various changes including adjustments to degree requirements, the external reviewers note that students report satisfaction with (and appreciation for) the efforts already underway.

This department plays a significant role in general undergraduate education, representing a high impact on non-majors; the external reviewers also noted that the number of minors for both languages represents a "significant amount for a lesser taught language." However, at the same time the department is able to maintain small degree programs that provide individualized attention to students. The department also utilizes a hybrid learning model for some courses, which the external reviewers also praised, as well as specific pedagogical strategies and innovations such as flipped classroom and "leveraging internet resources to offer conversation opportunities with native speakers." The department notes in terms of goals, and the external reviewers also support, the potential for collaboration with program areas beyond the humanities, such as business, law, or medicine.

Research, Scholarly, and/or Creative Work Excellence

According to faculty website profiles, FRIT tenured and tenure-track faculty produce scholarly work such as monographs and journal articles, focused on both historical and contemporary perspectives on French and Italian literature, performance, and cultural politics. The external reviewers describe this as a “research-intensive, highly productive department” noting that faculty have published books in top presses and articles in premier journals in their respective fields.

One of the department's goals is to better support faculty in the pursuit of major research projects necessary for promotion. This includes funding to support faculty research, which is a challenge considering a shrinking departmental budget. The department also notes a desire for time off from teaching and/or service (which would also require funds). Despite the external reviewers' very positive assessment of the scholarly productivity of the department, they also identified the current promotion pipeline to be a significant threat, pointing to the relationship between that threat and administrative and service burdens that may be hindering faculty bandwidth for research activities.

Also, regarding research output in the context of promotion, it is notable that no one in the department has been promoted to full professor in over a decade, and no woman has been promoted to full professor in nearly three decades. The department diagnosed a component of this issue being that associate professors were overburdened with service due to attempts to protect pre-tenured faculty from service obligations. The external reviewers note in particular that “the extraordinary managerial and mentoring capacities of the chair should be rewarded with opportunities to fully implement her research agenda and advance to full professor after 18 years at the associate level.” The department describes a new “fly in formation” plan in its updated goal setting for more junior associate professors to step up to leadership roles in order to allow more senior associates some time to focus on research, with the intention for them to take back over those leadership roles once they are promoted. This seems like a reasonable plan given current resource constraint. However, it is worth noting that this issue was an important component of the previous ARPAC report, and there were plans in place then for that set of associates (from 2016) to be promoted that included some reduction of service burdens at the time (e.g., full professors taking on chair roles for a time) that did not result in promotions.

External reviewers told us that it is possible that the lack of promotions to full professor might also suggest that the department's promotion criteria need to be updated—if, for example, a second finished book should be a strict requirement, and whether the criteria is appropriately considering the role of service. They explicitly recommend “necessary changes in the requirements to become full professor to include not only single-authored monographs, but also other forms of editorial and collaborative work, as well as extended service to the university and the profession in critical leadership positions.”

Another promising direction that the department notes and external reviewers highlight is the possibility of collaboration across departments that could lead to new research initiatives. The department notes in their goal setting exercise that this might include “having our department take the lead in creating opportunities for faculty from different disciplines to meet either around funding opportunities or shared research topics.” This seems like a worthy goal that could indeed be helpful, though given the challenge noted above regarding faculty bandwidth, the question of who would do this work is an important one.

As a broader point, the external reviewers also noted that due to the department's budget model being so focused on majors and class enrollment, there is a perception among some faculty that

their research “doesn’t matter.” It may therefore be helpful as well for the division and the college to consider ways to express to faculty the value of their research activities.

Hiring and Mentoring (Faculty, Staff, Postdoctoral Fellows)

According to the D&A profile for AY 2023-2024 (which represents fiscal year 2022-2023, counted as of November 1, 2022), faculty personnel in the Department of French and Italian consisted of 9 tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty, 6 teaching-track faculty, and 3 lecturers. According to faculty listed on the department website, there are now 7 TTT faculty members, all at the associate level, 7 teaching track faculty, and 3 lecturers. This discrepancy in part reflects that two faculty retired in June 2025.

In June 2025, one third of tenured French faculty (2 of 6 faculty) retired, compounded by other departed faculty over the past ten years that have not been replaced. The external reviewers note that from a survey of research 1 (R1) land grant universities, comparable departments typically have 17-20 faculty in French. The total number of permanent faculty in French in the department is 8 (4 TTT plus 4 teaching). Italian faculty numbers are even smaller, and the external reviewers note that pending retirements will further deplete the program and overburden the chair. It is also worth emphasizing again that every TTT faculty member in the department is at the associate level, which both underscores the promotion pipeline issue and highlights the need for pre-tenured faculty.

Given these losses, the department expresses an urgent need for a new tenure-track French faculty member. They also note that the most effective proposal would be for a hire that serves the entire division and see the value in collaborating with departments with a large number of major/minors, particularly film and environmental studies, as well as the Center for African and African American Studies. With this in mind, they plan to propose “a Francophone film scholar working on African Cinema, or a scholar of environmental humanities, or a scholar focused on language pedagogy who could assist all language departments” depending on the outcome of these attempted collaborations.

The external reviewers strongly highlight the issue of non-replacement of program-critical faculty and the overall threat of faculty and staff shortages. As they say explicitly, “the loss of committed, permanent faculty severely hampers program growth and diminishes student experience.” Both the department and external reviewers pointed to the retirement of a full teaching professor of distinction who taught popular large lecture classes in English in the Italian program, which were particularly helpful for recruiting students and contributing to the growth of student credit hours. Given this loss, the external reviewers urged the administration “to consider hiring in this role a current lecturer with all the necessary qualifications and competencies for a guaranteed return on investment.” The department specifies that a current long-term Italian lecturer should be converted into a teaching professor position.

The department describes salaries for teaching professors as “insufficient compared to the cost of living in Boulder County and the Denver metro region.” Though recognizing this as a complex issue and therefore a long-term goal, they desire to work with campus and the college to strive for pay equity. External reviewers also noted the difficulty in recruiting adjuncts to help with teaching needs because the pay is so low.

According to the Office of Data & Analytics (D&A) profile (which represents numbers as of November 1, 2022) staff personnel in the Department of French and Italian consisted of 1 university staff member (business service program manager) and 4 student hourly employees. The

department website as of October 2025 lists 2 staff members (graduate and undergraduate program coordinator and manager of finance and business operations) and 2 student employees.

The department emphasized how hardworking its staff members are and noted that their salaries are comparatively low when compared to their peers in other colleges. They are advocating with administration to reinstate a staff recognition program that included a financial incentive.

Student Success and Mentoring (Undergraduate and Graduate Students)

Per the 2023-2024 unit data profile report (fall 2022 census), the department had 33 undergraduate majors (an 18% increase over 5 years) and 128 undergraduate minors (an 8% increase over 5 years). The unit produced 6,787 student credit hours (SCH), of which 96% were taken by non-majors. According to the department's self-reported profile data as of November 2024, there were 24 undergraduate French majors and 5 Italian majors, and 4,170 French student credit hours and 2,002 Italian student credit hours. There were 12 French BA degrees awarded in 2024 and 3 Italian BA degrees. Also, according to the unit data profile report, 26% of the unit's student credit hours were taught by TTT faculty, 31% by teaching faculty, 25% by graduate students, and 18% "other."

The percentage of SCH taken by non-majors is substantial, which is consistent with service teaching. No graduating seniors responded to the survey, which is not that surprising given the very small number of degrees awarded (6) in that single academic year. However, the external reviewers did note that regarding curricular reform, students reported satisfaction with changes underway and appreciation that the department has shown them that student experience matters.

The external reviewers highlight that student credit hours in the department have remained stable despite documented national trends in declining language enrollments. They provide high praise for the department in this respect, attributing it in part to "the amount of energy and time put into establishing very strong extra- and co-curricular activities for students, suggesting that the mentoring and personal relationships that faculty engage in on a regular basis through invisible service have a big payout in student retention."

The department notes the success of their student ambassador program where a small set of undergraduate students provide informal peer-to-peer mentoring at recruiting events such as admitted student days and major and minor fairs and express a desire to expand this program. The external reviewers also note an opportunity to enhance alumni engagement in order to showcase opportunities for language majors and minors, e.g., by having alumni present their professional experience to current students or creating a LinkedIn alumni page.

Per the 2023-2024 unit data profile report (fall 2022 census), the department had 10 total graduate students: 6 MA (a decline of 22% over 5 years) and 3 PhD (a decline of 77% over 5 years). The department taught a total of 234 graduate student credit hours, with 97% of those taught by TTT faculty and 3% taught by teaching faculty. According to the department's self-reported numbers as of November 2024, there were 2 MA students and 5 PhD students. According to self-reported numbers from 2024, there were a combined 105 student credit hours taught.

The decline in the size of the graduate program is notable, and the department attributes this in part to dramatic decreases in graduate student funding. The external reviewers also note that graduate programs nationwide are being challenged to provide more livable wages, and that

programs without sufficient support tend to see declining enrollments. The previous ARPAC report also noted graduate student funding as an issue, and for a time there was an additional source of funding for PhD students that was lost between the 2019 and 2020 follow-ups.

The department also has a goal towards closer collaboration with other Arts and Humanities (AHUM) departments in order to create a larger, more diverse cohort for their graduate students. One concrete action towards this goal is the introduction of a new graduate seminar on Public and Engaged Humanities. The external reviewers also point out that this course along with “FRIT Fridays” for professionalization opportunities are strong ideas. The department also mentions courses and mentorship to address graduate student interest in language pedagogy. They note that the barrier to this is limited faculty; a graduate level course on “Methods for Teaching French as a Foreign Language” is currently being offered which is promising, though the department also suggests college-level reinstatement of small grants (\$200) for “virtual visits” by scholars working on language pedagogy.

The external reviewers also praise “successful graduate placement, emphasis on professional training outside academia, and interdisciplinary research.”

Inclusivity and Unit Culture

In February 2022, a collaborative group met and identified the following [five goals to advance diversity, equity and inclusion](#) at CU Boulder: (1) employee skills and development; (2) student achievement outcomes; (3) community building; (4) employee recruitment outcomes; and (5) preparing students to participate in a diverse democracy.

With respect to inclusive excellence, the department's goal setting exercise notes its commitment to recruiting and supporting diverse graduate students, as well as internal efforts to share best practices around inclusive teaching. The department also acknowledges its potential role in establishing dialogue with other disciplines around how the teaching of literature and language can be highlighted as a springboard for students' critical appreciation of world culture through the perspective of inclusiveness.

The external reviewers praise the "strong departmental culture," noting that it is notably collegial and collaborative, with strong student-faculty relationships that were attested to by both undergraduate and graduate students. Faculty and staff at all levels also report a positive departmental culture. The department seems to be especially effective at working together.

"Low morale" as noted by the external reviewers often is due to constraints outside the department, particularly financial: chronic underfunding, looming budget cuts, and salary compression. Fears about the viability of the department long-term are due in part to a perception of limited institutional advocacy for the relevance of the languages and humanities' role in meeting our university's mission as a comprehensive public research university. Overwork is also cited as a cause of low morale, particularly as service burden further implicates bandwidth for research and overwork. However, as described by the external reviewers, these problems do not seem to be related to the unit itself or its culture. Even beyond the context of funding, external reviewers highlight the importance of messaging that humanities research is valued, and though some of their concrete suggestions require resources (e.g., course releases for faculty with book contracts, summer research funding), other suggestions include, for example, humanities faculty spotlights in university-level communications about faculty success. External reviewers also note that university-level messaging could better highlight how essential language departments are to the

university's mission of "intercultural competence, inclusivity, and internationalization." Given the university's increasing commitment to globalization, FRIT and other language departments are well positioned to help ensure that globalization is not inappropriately mono-lingual.

Unit Planning and Governance Structures and Processes

The overall goal setting exercise from the department suggests commitment to ensuring and advocating for the relevance of their research and teaching missions. These efforts include curricular re-designs (in progress) to lean into emerging interests and demographic shifts among students, to create partnerships and collaborations with other departments (in both teaching and research), and to create messaging around student and faculty success. There are opportunities for highlighting the important role that language departments play in the university; as the external reviewers put it: "every CU graduate needs humanities tools like critical thinking, interpretive and analytic reasoning and writing, fostering inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and meaningful and satisfactory careers." Ensuring the internalization of this value seems to be important for the future of this department.

The department's goal setting exercise describes some major goals for improvement in planning and governance. The first connects to promotion guidelines. There have been major changes to this process for teaching faculty, and so the department will be creating clear guidelines for this process for the benefit of both those faculty going through reappointment/promotion and members of the Primary Unit Evaluation Committee (PUEC). Additionally, in the context of the department's lack of full professor promotions, the executive committee will be reviewing the current guidelines in order to make them clearer. External reviewers also noted to ARPAC that departmental criteria may be high and/or there may be a perception among faculty that service does not "count" for promotion to full professor, which may suggest that promotion criteria should be revisited.

The department also notes goals for assessment for both faculty and students: developing more precise metrics for assessing teaching merit during the annual merit review process (which will involve in part creation of a rubric by the executive committee) as well as implementation of learning outcome assessments in line with campus directives.

Recommendations

The members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee address the following recommendations to the Department of French and Italian and to the offices of responsible administrators:

To the Unit:

1. Continue efforts to revitalize degree programs and majors and develop a concrete plan and timeline for assessing those changes.
2. Continue implementing the department's "fly in formation" plan regarding service responsibilities and make best efforts given resource constraints to free up mid-career faculty for research tasks necessary for promotion.
3. Revisit promotion criteria to consider whether multiple types of scholarly work, as well as service activities, are appropriately valued as indicators of excellence.
4. Engage with the Dean of Arts and Humanities to explore new ways of securing consistent, stable funding for graduate students in light of budget constraints.
5. Consider expanding recruiting and professionalization activities at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.
6. Consider concrete steps for collaborations with other departments (including outside Humanities) in the context of both teaching and research (e.g., Business, International Affairs, Law, Music).

To the Dean of the Arts and Humanities:

7. Strongly consider replacing departed faculty in the department, with priority for converting a lecturer into a teaching professor position to address teaching needs, and a French tenure-track hire to affirm the department's research identity and the importance of research in FRIT at an R1 university.
8. Work with the department to stabilize funding support for graduate students, including MA students.
9. Affirm the importance of faculty research in the context of a budget model that is so focused on student numbers.
10. Continue efforts to advocate for an Arts & Humanities budget process that accounts for units' high share of student credit hours (SCH) from non-majors and develop a plan to robustly account for and reward these SCH, recognizing units' significant educational contributions. Under the current budget model, there are concerns that FRIT will not be allocated appropriate resources for the courses taught/students served.

11. Consider reviving modest efforts that would go a long way in supporting the department and improving morale such as small “virtual visit” grants for external scholars working in language pedagogy and the staff recognition program that provided financial incentives.

12. Increase transparency around the Division’s budget decisions and allocation methods, to assist departments in decision making.

13. Ensure that departments have appropriate access to assistance from Advancement staff within the college.

14. Consider a consolidated departmental/administrative structure for languages or groups of languages that would allow for consolidated administrative support while also retaining successful degree programs and minors and maintaining strategic strengths in discrete areas of research, scholarship, and pedagogical excellence.

15. Emphasize and support the important role that FRIT—and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

To the Provost:

16. Consider including language department faculty in the university’s planning for more global reach.

17. Emphasize and support the important role that FRIT—and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

Required Follow-up

The chair of the Department of French and Italian shall submit two follow-up reports—one due on the first of April 2027 and one due on the first of April 2029. The follow-up reports shall focus on the implementation of the recommendations from ARPAC detailed herein. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as the provost and other relevant central campus leadership will also respond to all outstanding matters under their purview arising from this review year's recommendations. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will submit one follow-up report due on May 1, 2028, while the provost and relevant central campus leaders will submit one follow-up report due on June 1, 2030.