

## **Departmental Academic Plan, 2009-2014**

### **Modern & Classical Languages**

**Mission, aspirations, and state of the Department.** Faculty in Modern & Classical Languages carry a full load of teaching, research, and service, and we do all three effectively. In a time of heightened international awareness, at UW and nationwide, our job has gotten bigger, broader, and more important. We offer eight languages, with minors in five of them, majors in four, and MA programs in three. These include a “big four” of strategic languages, namely Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian. We also teach courses in English on the cultures where we have expertise, thus broadening our reach. Enrollments are growing, outpacing growth on the Laramie campus as a whole: increasingly, students realize the importance of knowing another language. We are a leader in double majors and minors, drawing students campus-wide, not just from A&S (see Appendix).

At the same time, we are understaffed. Teaching overloads are a fact of life for most faculty. Courses fill up: beginning Spanish has been effectively closed to incoming freshmen for the last three years at least, and even third-year courses max out. We rely too much on lecturers. We are also an aging Department in need of fresh talent.

Fortunately, reconstruction has begun. The Department presented a Hiring Plan to the A&S Central Committee early in 2007, setting out our needs and priorities, and we have made some fine hires since by the grace of CPM. We realize that “a plan is not a set of budget requests” (CF-3, p. 2), but progress on the Action Items that follow depends in large measure on timely implementation of the hiring plan. Accomplishing these items will be hindered more by lack of time and resources than by lack of skill or will.

**The Department and University priorities.** We seek to increase contact and cooperation with colleagues in other programs through (among other things) culture courses taught in English and participation in appropriate interdisciplinary programs and campus institutes. We seek to promote internationalization, both by taking students abroad for extended periods and by “importing international perspectives into the curriculum” (CF-3, p. 7) in all our courses. We seek to improve graduate education (Planning Theme 3 below), both to help fulfill a University objective (CF-3 p. 12) and to make a case for more GA-ships, which are badly needed.

We also believe that access, one of the planning motifs of CF-3, should include consideration of access to classes—at least, to foundation courses that have heavy student demand and that students ought to take early. There is obvious room for discussion about which classes pose access issues and which do not; we welcome that discussion. It does little good to recruit students more actively, make it easier for them to come to UW, and make help available through programs like LeaRN and Student Success Services if they cannot get into classes.

**Department planning theme 1: Improve scope and quality of undergraduate education to meet students needs.**

The new needs include growing student interest and demand, especially in Spanish, where enrollment pressures have reached crisis proportions, and in Less Commonly Taught Languages, where growth has been fastest.

**MCL-1**      Make it possible for students to begin language study in their freshman year.

Our courses fill up, even with higher enrollment limits than desirable (see Appendix); this problem is particularly acute in Spanish. We also want to make it easier for students to go farther in a language by letting them start as freshmen—no mean consideration since so many of our second majors and minors are “converts” who declare after they have started studying the language, and since only two of the eight languages we teach (Spanish and French) are offered widely in Wyoming high schools. Improved placement (MCL-2) will help, but this still remains a funding issue, requiring more GAs in Spanish.

**MCL-2**      Improve placement of incoming students in language classes.

We will develop a comprehensive system of simple placement examinations (as called for in CF-3, p. 6) to replace the present unsatisfactory credit-by-examination scheme. Costs can be covered by student fees. Further placement efforts should also involve closer coordination with high schools and community colleges and wider use of our present arrangements for informal placement as determined by suitable faculty.

**MCL-3**      Develop a modest, but effective, program in Arabic instruction.

Arabic is a vital strategic language, and there is demonstrated student interest in it. We are currently beginning a partnership with the University of Sfax in Tunisia, which promises to give us a curriculum and a succession of visiting professors to teach it. We should move forward on implementing this.

**MCL-4**      Have more courses abroad led by MCL faculty.

We are an international Department, time abroad is extremely valuable in developing language proficiency, and courses overseas will enhance student learning about other cultures as well as their languages. In addition, prolonged study abroad is pretty much necessary to enable students to reach the level of proficiency required for certification of language teachers in Wyoming (Advanced Low on the Oral Proficiency Interview).

**MCL-5**      Develop minor programs in the Chinese language and in Classical Civilization.

Both these programs are justified by present enrollments and student interest. They can be supported on existing resources (per CF-3 p. 3) if we include study abroad in the former case and teaching by suitable non-MCL faculty in the latter.

**MCL-6**        Join with colleagues in other Humanities departments in making the case for a Humanities Building.

Our present quarters in Hoyt Hall are too small, and we need more wired classrooms to teach beginning language courses effectively.

**MCL-7**        Accelerate progress on assessment of student learning.

This is an important University priority, and we acknowledge that we are behind on it. (Work on this Action Item can be supported by extracting blood from existing turnips.)

**Department theme 2: Extend and enhance students' understanding of other cultures beyond the bounds of our present language programs.**

We will help to internationalize the curriculum and make fuller use of expertise in the Department, which after all extends to literature and culture as well as languages. In particular, UW should devote more attention to Rising Powers in global affairs, specifically China, Russia, India, and the Muslim world. This plan envisions contributions by the Department on all of these except India.

**MCL-8**        Extend our offerings in culture courses and our participation in interdisciplinary programs.

Several such courses are currently being taught, often with cross-listings. Subjects range from religious interactions in Spain to Chinese business culture. We should have more such courses, especially where they will help small programs earn their keep (as Classics does now) and where we can be involved more fully with allied Departments and interdisciplinary programs. Interdisciplinarity of this sort—at the course-and-student level, rather than at the more unwieldy program level—is also in keeping with the model for adding breadth presented in CF-3, p. 3.

On the same subject, we seek to be actively involved in developing the proposed Humanities Institute and the Institute of Global Affairs. As a research Department, we need increased interactions with scholars from on campus and off.

**MCL-9**        Utilize new hires in Chinese and Russian to teach culture courses on these two important parts of the world.

A new hire in Chinese and timely replacement of an anticipated retirement in Russian—both included in the hiring plan—will enable us to carry on upper-division instruction in

these strategic languages. But the main need is to add expertise and culture courses on two important areas where UW faculty assets are sadly low.

**Planning theme 3: Enhance graduate programs, and in tandem with it, opportunities for faculty research.**

**MCL-10**      Strive to get more graduate assistantships.

Apart from the value of increasing critical mass in our graduate courses, we need help in dealing with enrollment pressures in Spanish. Denying students the chance to study such an important subject to save on cheap GA labor is a false economy.

**MCL-11**      Improve graduate student recruiting.

Graduate recruiting is a University objective, and getting better graduate students by casting a wider net is all to the good.

**MCL-12**      Improve training and mentoring of GAs for teaching first-year language courses.

Improved mentoring is important for undergraduate student learning as well as for preparing our GAs for teaching careers—which many of them pursue. The work is already under way. It will accelerate with a new hire in fall 2008 (search now in progress) for an Assistant Professor of Spanish with a specialty in language pedagogy.

<b>Implementation of Action Items from Department Plan for 2008-09</b>		
Item	Description	Result
1	Reexamine language offerings and curriculum	Done, through College AI 43.
2	Reallocate to reflect enrollment trends	Investigated, via College AI 43, and found unfeasible: no slack to reallocate.
3	Reexamine graduate programs in French and German	Done, through College AI 43; programs to be retained, especially to staff first-year instruction.
4	Explore instructional technology and develop technology plan	Ongoing; comprehensive technology plan deemed unfeasible owing to rapid changes in the field.
5	Develop courses for special needs in Engineering and Business	Done, with new or revamped courses for both colleges.
6	Work with College of Education to increase number of teachers with foreign language competency	Done in part; work continues.
7	Promote study abroad	Done (but more needed)
8	Broaden Outreach teaching	Not done, due to staffing constraints
9	Implement assessment	Done in part; work continues

<b>Timetable for Implementation of Present Department Plan</b>						
Item	Description	Year				
		2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
1	Places for freshmen	Ongoing, and contingent upon resources				
2	Placement	pilot project	X			
3	Arabic		X			
4	Courses abroad	Ongoing, and contingent upon resources				
5	New minors	X				
6	Hum. Bldg.	Ongoing				
7	Accelerate assessment	X				
8	More culture courses				X	
9	Chinese and Russian			X		
10	More GA-ships	Ongoing, and contingent upon resources				
11	Improve recruiting				X	
12	Improve GA mentoring		X			

## Appendix: Some facts and figures

Since staffing levels and enrollment pressures figure prominently in this document, some specifics—presented here in the spirit of the Harper's Index—are in order.

Percentage growth in student enrollments in languages, AY 2000-01 to 2006-07  
19.4

Percentage growth in number of students on the Laramie campus, same period  
5.3

New tenure-track positions since 2000 (including searches now in progress)  
4

Faculty retirements since 2000  
3

Number of current T/TT faculty (out of 11) hired before 2005  
9

Average years since getting PhD for these faculty  
24

Teaching load for a GA in Modern & Classical Languages, per year  
3 courses, 12 hours

Teaching load for a GA elsewhere in the Humanities Division, per year  
2 courses, 6 hours

Enrollment limit for beginning language courses at UW  
25

Enrollment limit recommended by the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages  
20

Percentage of double majors in languages who have other major outside A&S (fall 2004)  
28.6

Percentage of minors in languages who have major outside A&S (fall 2004)  
60.4

Percentage of students in beginning language courses outside A&S (AY 2004-05)  
34.4