

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

November 2, 2016

To: Doug Noverr, Interim Chair, Romance and Classical Studies
Sonja Fritzsche, Chair, Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and
African Languages

From: Christopher Long, Dean

Re: Action Committee for a School of Language Studies

On April 26, 2016, I asked the Exploration and Planning Task Force to begin exploring the possibility of creating a school that would include the programs currently housed in two separate departments, the Department of Romance and Classical Studies (RCS) and the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages (LGSAAL).

After a thorough investigation of academic "Schools" or "Divisions" of Languages from around the country, including four site visits to peer universities, consultation with faculty from both departments in a Town Hall meeting and through a faculty survey, the Exploration and Planning Task Force has recommended the establishment of an Action Committee to lead further faculty-centered discussions concerning the structure and governance of the School, to create a mission statement, and to propose a school structure that would combine Department of Romance and Classical Studies (RCS) and the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages (L&L), as well as the Second Language Studies Program (SLS), and units like the Center for Language Teaching Advancement (CeLTA).



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After meeting with the Task Force on October 14th, 2016 to discuss how best to engage faculty more broadly, *I am happy to accept the general recommendation of the Exploratory and Planning Task Force to further develop a plan for a School that would undergo university review in AY2017-18 and begin operation by the fall semester 2018.*

The Exploration and Planning Task Force recommended that its members continue to work together on the Action Committee with the addition of two members from the ranks of our Fixed-Term Faculty (Designation B) or Academic Specialists.

This seems wise for three reasons: 1) through direct experience and research the Task Force has developed valued expertise about language schools across the country; 2) they have demonstrated an ability to work together in collegial and constructive ways across all the units to be included in the new School; 3) they are representative of the units involved, both at the leadership level and through Advisory-Board appointments.

Therefore, I hereby appoint the following faculty to serve in the designated roles on the Action Committee:

Action Committee Members

Co-Chairs

- Susan Gass, University Distinguished Professor, LGSAAL
- Rocio Quispe-Agnoli, Professor of Hispanic Studies

Departmental Leadership Representatives

- Sonja Fritzsche, Professor of German and Chair, L&L
- Anne Violin-Wigent, Associate Professor of French, 2015-2016 Associate Chair, RCS

Departmental Advisory Committee Representatives

- Safoi Babana-Hampton, Associate Professor of French and Francophone Studies, RCS
- Miguel Cabañas, Associate Professor of Latin American and Chicano/Latino Studies, RCS
- Tze-Lan Sang, Professor of Chinese, L&L (replacing Jason Merrill, Professor of Russian, L&L, who is on sabbatical)
- Alan Munn, Associate Professor of Linguistics, L&L

Fixed-term Faculty/Academic Specialist Representatives

- Adolfo Ausin, Assistant Professor of Spanish Linguistics, RCS
- Zarema Kumakhova, Assistant Professor of Russian, L&L

I have asked Amy Klapko to continue to serve as the administrative assistant for the committee as it transitions from planning to action.

The Action Committee is charged to investigate and recommend an administrative structure for the School that will distinguish MSU from its peers, facilitate strategic collaborations, and establish by-laws based on best practices in order to create a culture of inclusive excellence in the School.

The Task Force report includes an important list of issues the Action Committee should consider including the structure of the school, platforms of collaboration, School leadership, advising, governance, RPT questions, and facilities.

In addition to these and other considerations, the activities of the Action Committee should be oriented by the following questions:

1. How can we create an administrative and academic configuration that will give School leadership enough leverage to advance strategic improvement and programs enough autonomy to ensure intellectual integrity and academic agility?

2. How can the mission statement of the School distinguish us from our peers and position us to be an international leader?
3. What name can we agree upon that is simple enough to have broad public appeal and inclusive enough to have broad internal support?
4. What assessment measures should be developed for the school in order to ensure that its goals and objectives are attained and superior outcomes are achieved? How can individual programs be supported in developing goals, objectives, and outcomes that can be measured as part of the program assessment process within the School?
5. What opportunities for revenue generation might the School leverage to ensure it has the resources to accomplish its strategic priorities?
6. How can we facilitate and support collaborative initiatives that will differentiate us from our peers?
7. How will the School cultivate practices of inclusive excellence in graduate and undergraduate education, pedagogy and research?
8. How will the faculty in all units be included in the conversation and the process by which recommendations will ultimately be made?
9. What level of staff support will the School require in order to achieve excellence and maximize visibility?
10. What are our opportunities for collaboration with other units in the College and across the University and what structures can we create to develop and facilitate a culture of collaboration within the School?

I plan to follow the Task Force's recommendation to appoint an Interim Director of the School to begin July 1, 2017 and an advisory committee to work with the Director to facilitate the transition to and creation of the School.

Further, I plan to approve a national search for a Director of the School during the AY2017-18, pending the acceptance of strategic recommendations from the Action Committee to this end.

The deadline for the Action Committee report is May 15, 2017.

This initiative is designed to empower the faculty to imagine what a renewed investment in the study of languages might enable us to do at a University that is committed to its world-grant mission.

I look forward to working with you and the faculty on this initiative and I appreciate your time and the dedication you each have demonstrated to the College of Arts & Letters and Michigan State University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris P. Long", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Christopher P. Long
Dean, College of Arts & Letters

CC: RCS and LGSAAL Faculty