

**Exploratory and Planning Task Force
Report and Plan for an Action Committee**

Submitted by

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I. Preliminaries and Exploration

1. Preliminaries

a. Dean's charge

We have established an Exploratory and Planning Task Force to investigate and begin planning for the creation of what might be called a “School of Language, Literary, and Cultural Studies” (“School” henceforth). This “School” will 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 (L&L), as well as the Second Language Studies Program (SLS), and units like the Center for Language Teaching Advancement (CeLTA).

The Exploratory and Planning Task Force has been charged to:

1. Investigate the opportunities and challenges associated with establishing a School of Language Studies at Michigan State University;
2. Explore models at peer universities to identify best practices and determine how MSU can distinguish its approach and structure from others in order to position itself as an international leader in language studies;
3. Submit a plan to establish an Action Committee structured to address relevant issues identified during the exploration and planning phase. The Action Committee should include relevant stakeholders and opportunities for open discussion among the faculty as it develops a proposal for a “School” that would undergo university review in AY2017-18 and be put in place to begin operation in 2018.

b. Rationale for charge

The College of Arts & Letters has recognized strengths in all of these areas, but we do not currently have the infrastructure that will enable us to establish ourselves as one of the leading universities for the study of languages in the world. We have many of the components in place, but we are missing a way to showcase and support these components in ways that reflect and advance our position as a leader in language studies. In order to accomplish this, we need to establish an academic and administrative structure that will enhance collaborations across languages, to compete for more prestigious and larger external funding, to develop more innovative approaches and initiatives, and to differentiate ourselves from our peers.

c. Task Force membership

The eight-member Task Force appointed by Dean Christopher P. Long included two co-chairs, one from each department and two members who had served in leadership roles in the departments during the 2015-2016 academic year and department faculty representatives recommended by the respective advisory committee. The members include:

- Susan Gass (co-chair), University Distinguished Professor, L&L/TESOL and SLS
- Rocío Quispe-Agnoli (co-chair), Professor of Hispanic Studies, RCS
- Sonja Fritzsche (leadership role), Professor of German and Chair, L&L
- Anne Violin-Wigent (leadership role), Associate Professor of French, 2015-2016 Associate Chair, RCS
- Safoi Babana-Hampton (department advisory committee representative), Associate Professor of French and Francophone Studies, RCS
- Miguel Cabañas (department advisory committee representative), Associate Professor of Latin American and Chicano/Latino Studies, RCS
- Jason Merrill (department advisory committee representative), Professor of Russian, L&L
- Alan Munn (department advisory committee representative), Associate Professor of Linguistics, L&L
- Amy Klapko (administrative assistant), Dean's office, College of Arts and Letters

d. Current administrative configurations of units considered for the 'School'

The College of Arts and Letters at MSU houses, among others, two departments, 1 graduate program, and 1 supporting unit as follows:

- i. Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian and African Languages (LGSAAL)
- ii. Department of Romance and Classical Studies (RCS)
- iii. Program of Second Language Studies (SLS)
- iv. Center for Language Teaching Advancement (CeLTA)

LGSAAL and RCS are currently home of 58 Tenure System faculty, 7 Fixed Term faculty (Designation B), at least 5 Academic Specialists and a variable number of Fixed Term faculty on annual contracts. These three units share 7 staff members who are part of the pod structure created in 2012. CeLTA is a unit that supports teaching and pedagogical initiatives of faculty in LGSAAL, RCS, and the ELC.

LGSAAL and RCS have each a Chairperson as their chief academic and executive officer; SLS has a Director, and CeLTA has two co-directors.

Altogether, these four units offer 8 UG majors, 13 UG minors, a number of language classes in the Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs), and 12 graduate programs (MA and PhD)

2. Task Force Operations

a. Overview

In May 2016, the Task Force had its first meeting. This was followed by additional meetings between May and September. In addition, two-member teams were put together to conduct visits/interviews to directors of "Schools" in other universities, to work on specific tasks and report to the Task Force. The following activities took place between May 16 and September 30, 2016:

- i. Meetings
 - May 16, 2016 (with Dean Long)
 - June 16, 2016
 - July 15, 2016
 - July 26, 2016
 - August 2, 2016
 - August 11, 2016
 - August 24, 2016
 - August 29, 2016
 - September 1, 2016
 - September 7, 2016
 - September 13, 2016
 - September 19, 2016
 - September 27, 2016
- ii. Creation of a website/portal to keep faculty, academic specialists, and staff informed: <https://msu.edu/~cal/language/>
- iii. Visiting/Interviewing schools in five universities and reporting on these visits
Power point presentations were developed based on these reports and made available to stakeholders in the Task Force website,
- iv. Discussion of findings and comparison of data among visited schools and MSU.
- v. Planning and conducting a town hall meeting (August 30, 2016) to present our findings and request feedback from attendees about opportunities, innovations, concerns, and challenges of the proposed reorganization.
- vi. Design and implementation of an anonymous online survey sent to all faculty and academic specialists on August 30 with a closing date of September 9, 2016.
- vii. Discussion of town hall and survey data and organization of such data.
- viii. Writing this final report including recommendations for an Action Committee.

b. Visiting "Schools"

Between May and June 2016, the Task Force members identified and met with directors and other academic personnel from "Schools" or "Divisions" of Languages in five universities. The Task Force agreed on a set of questions to be used in these interviews. These questions were organized in the following categories: (1) general information about the School, (2) School's preliminaries, (3) leadership positions, (4) budget structure, (5) academic and curricular collaborations, and (6) points of distinction and/or challenges.

Site visits were made to four universities, and the Head of one School was interviewed remotely by Skype. In each case, two Task Force members conducted the interviews. These visits and interviews took place between May 31 and June 21, 2016.

Task Force members wrote reports after these visits/interviews. The main points from these reports have been summarized in power point presentations available under “Exploration of Schools” in <https://msu.edu/~cal/language/>

What follows is a brief summary of each School visited.

i. Purdue University, School of Languages and Cultures (SLC)

<https://www.cla.purdue.edu/SLC/> On June 8, 2016, Jason Merrill and Anne Violin-Wigent conducted a conversation via Skype with the Head and the Associate Head of SLC. Part of the College of Liberal Arts, SLC was created in 2011 from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures.

ii. University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, School of Languages, Cultures, & Linguistics (SLCL)

<http://www.slcl.illinois.edu/> On June 1, 2016, Safai Babana-Hampton and Sonja Fritzsche visited SLCL and interviewed the Director, the former Director, an Associate Dean, and one Department Head. Part of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, SLCL was created in 2007 to foster interdisciplinary and interdepartmental initiatives to promote world-class research agendas in its programs.

iii. University of Iowa, Division of World Languages, Literatures & Cultures (DWLLC)

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/dwllc/> was visited by Susan Gass and Rocío Quispe-Agnoli on May 31, 2016. Gass and Quispe-Agnoli were hosted by the DWLLC director and met with the Dean and two Associate Deans of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. DWLLC has been in existence since 2010..

iv. University of Kansas, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultures (SLLC)

<https://sllc.ku.edu/> was visited by Miguel Cabañas and Susan Gass on May 25, 2016. The SLLC Director; the Marketing, Outreach, Recruitment, and Event Coordinator (MORE), and the Coordinator of the Critical Languages Consortium met with Cabañas and Gass. SLLC was established in 2014 in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and started full operation in fall semester 2016.

v. University of Maryland, College Park, School of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures (SLLC)

<http://sllc.umd.edu/> On June 21, 2016 Alan Munn and Rocío Quispe-Agnoli visited SLLC and were hosted by the Director and three Associate Directors. SLLC was established in 2001 in the College of Arts and Humanities.

c. Meeting, tasks, and discussions

Between July and September 2016, the Task Force held meetings to share and discuss their findings. The minutes of these meetings are accessible in the Task Force website.

Subteams were given tasks that involved the analysis and comparison of data gathered in visits and further research of possible models in other universities. The reports of subteams on these tasks were discussed in these meetings, which allowed the identification of opportunities, concerns, and potential challenges of the “School” model at MSU.

d. Faculty information and consultation

The Task Force developed four venues to inform and update faculty and academic specialists about our findings, meetings, discussions, and other documents related to this exploratory phase. These are:

- i. The “Advancing Leadership in the Languages” website**
<https://msu.edu/~cal/language/> available to all MSU members after logon with the MSU nedID and password. In this website the following information has been made available:
 - Dean’s charge to the Task Force, objectives, and membership.
 - Minutes of all meetings of the Task Force.
 - Power point presentations that summarize information about visited Schools.
 - Governance documents of LGSAAL and RCS.
 - Additional documents
 - Power point presentation used in the August 30, 2016 Town Hall meeting.
 - Frequently Asked Questions.

- ii. A D2L community “Call for Collaborations”** was created to offer a platform to share faculty and academic specialists’ ideas and interests about teaching, curriculum, research, and community engagement with others. Its purpose is to potentially find a team of colleagues to develop a collaborative project. The creation of this community followed the “Call for Proposals” to fund up to 3-5 collaborative initiatives among two or more faculty/academic specialists. The call was sent to LGSAAL, RCS, SLS, and CeLTA on September 8, 2016. The Task Force worked closely with the office of the Associate Dean for Research and Administration to issue this call.

- iii. On August 30, 2016, the Task Force and the Dean of the College of Arts & Letters organized a **town hall meeting**** with two goals: (1) to update faculty on the exploratory work of the Task Force during the summer, and (2) to provide an opportunity for discussion, clarification, and additional input to the Task Force.

The power point presentation used during this meeting included three rounds of questions about (1) opportunities, challenges, concerns, (2) collaborations, and (3) impact on disciplines. This presentation is available in the Task Force website.

80 (out of 105) people attended this meeting and shared ideas with and asked questions to Task Force members and the Dean. At the end of this meeting, an online survey was sent to all faculty and academic specialists of LGSAAL, RCS, SLS, and CeLTA.

- iv. The follow-up online survey was developed by the Task Force members to provide additional input concerning the development of the School. It was available between August 30 and September 9, 2016. The results of the survey were analyzed and discussed by Task Force members.

3. Rationale for the establishment of a “School”

a. Background

As Dean Long stated in his charge to the Task Force, the charge to investigate the viability of a School structure is based on the fact that there is recognized strength in the area of language study, but there is not an infrastructure that can take advantage of the separate components. A unified structure will enable us to continue to impact and provide leadership to the national scene.

Language study across the U.S. often takes a back seat to the study of other disciplines; this is the case in the K-12 arena as well as at post-secondary institutions. Yet, we also know that language is central to the goal of preparing students to be strong participants on the world stage and to be culturally-sensitive as they enter the global workforce. MSU is well-positioned to create a dynamic School where interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary work is common, where the strengths already present within the future units of the School, can have room to grow and prosper. This is particularly important as we recognize that language serves as the link between individuals and “other individuals, to communities, and to national cultures” (2007 MLA Report “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World”).

For those on the Task Force as well as for those faculty members involved in the future of the School, there is a strong belief in the value of knowing multiple languages and the value of understanding through language the multiple worlds of multiple others. The ultimate goal of a future School is to foster the development of and linkages between all aspects of language beyond one’s first, including not only language, but the literatures, and cultures embodied in the many language varieties that faculty study and investigate.

It is an unfortunate reality that at MSU as well as on campuses nation-wide, language study in all of its multiple aspects faces multiple uphill battles. The 2007 MLA Report refers to this as the “current language crisis” which in turn refers to “... nation's language deficit. The United States' inability to communicate with or comprehend other parts of the world became a prominent subject for journalists, as language failures of all kinds plagued the United States' military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq and its efforts to suppress terrorism.” The reasons for the crisis are numerous and complex. One current difficulty concerns declining enrollments in nearly all languages. A second involves the status of the disciplines that have language as their core. A commonplace perception is

that there is little professionalism to the study of language learning or to the practice of language teaching. In other words, the status of the profession is in jeopardy. A third issue is the lack of perceived relevance of knowing a language other than English, given today's status of English as a virtual *lingua franca*. Following from this is the perception of the lack of value of understanding other literatures and even cultures. And, finally is the issue of expectations. Learning an additional language, particularly as an adult and in the context of one's own language and one's own culture, is a long, difficult and complex process. There is not a uniformity of opinion of what can be expected of a language learner after two, three, four years of language study or even after study abroad. What is their linguistic knowledge? what can they do in a second language? what is their knowledge of and familiarity with the cultural norms of the language studied? A better understanding of these issues can increase the relevance and appreciation for what we do and for the consequent recognition and status of those in the profession. Through a unified structure, we have a better opportunity to push boundaries and have a more appropriate expectation of potential outcomes.

As is made clear through the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), an advocacy document of the Association of American Colleges & Universities, there is a greater demand "for more college-educated workers and more engaged and informed citizens." Language is key and MSU can contribute. Probably more than other disciplines, language professionals have given considerable thought to and dedicated research efforts towards 1) the understanding of benchmarks in our discipline, 2) the development of curricula that are geared toward helping students achieve those benchmarks, and 3) an understanding of ways to measure learning outcomes. Thus, the language disciplines can serve as a model for other disciplines given the experience of articulated curricula and an understanding of ways to document and measure progress. A unified structure whose mission is to push us to address these issues as well as the myriad other questions posed by the faculty can only help put MSU on the U.S. map of institutions that contribute to the study of language.

The recognition of language study is not unique to MSU as is apparent by the attention given by the MLA Report. Additionally, in asking what higher education will look like in 2015 (10 years from the writing of his article), Yankelovich ("Ferment and Change: Higher Education in 2015." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 25 Nov. 2005: 14) stated that "Our whole culture must become less ethnocentric, less patronizing, less ignorant of others, less Manichaeian in judging other cultures, and more at home with the rest of the world. Higher education can do a lot to meet that important challenge." He identified "the need to understand other cultures and languages" as significant to the future relevance of higher education. In fact, he stated that it is one of five imperatives that must be foremost in thinking about higher education in the following ten years.

In concluding the MLA Report, ten priorities are listed. The final one is the most relevant for our concerns:

Through a language center or other structure, develop a forum for the exchange of ideas and expertise among language instructors from all departments. Such

structures prove invaluable in boosting the morale of teachers and improving the quality of professional and intellectual life.

This is precisely what can happen through a School structure.

b. Rationale for a School

As the Task Force debated its final recommendation, it identified many specific reasons to support the establishment of a School, many of which directly address the issues discussed above. The most frequently mentioned are:

- Combining these units enables us to increase existing synergies and create new ones within and across languages,
- Allows innovative teaching possibilities (team teaching, joint teaching projects, linked courses),
- Allows for creative degree options (e.g., translation/interpretation)
- Creates a stronger forum for collaborations of all sorts (teaching, research, community engagement),
- Increases visibility for languages and creates a strong voice for languages on campus,
- Attracts grant funding (e.g., current Mellon grant),
- Enables a Director to have greater success with *inter alia*
 - Fund raising
 - Community engagement
 - External partnerships
 - Encouraging and increasing collaborations
 - Team-teaching
 - Teaming for grants
- Allows for the configuration of disciplinary programs (vertical structures) and other platforms like Centers and Thematic Clusters (horizontal structures),
- Fosters interdisciplinary and crossdisciplinary activities among faculty members from diverse programs.

c. Current strengths

Within the College of Arts & Letters, there is existing strength that can provide the underpinnings of success. First and foremost is the quality of the faculty. There are many who have national and international reputations for their research and consequent contributions to and shaping of their respective fields. As an example, a quick perusal of the most recent MUSES shows that faculty from the two Departments have received or been involved in approximately half of all grants listed; similarly, more than half of the books listed in MUSES have authors/editors from the two Departments. Many faculty in these units have won local, national, and international leadership and research awards. Putting these individuals in one School combines these existing strengths (and others) with the ultimate result of a single unit, better able to promote the outstanding faculty in both units.

Below we list some of the specific strengths that will provide a platform from which a School can be launched.

- Strong unified support of LCTLs. Most of the institutions we visited have LCTLs spread through Departments (and some not even in the School). One of the campuses visited has just established a LCTL Coordinator, modeled on MSU's model for LCTL support.
- Support unit (CeLTA) with varied programming. Many universities have a language lab, but few have a unit with as broad a reach as that of CeLTA (supporting teaching/learning at MSU and providing support to the community).
- Research labs. Linguistics and SLS have research labs (e.g., Eye-tracking, Sociolinguistics, Neurolinguistics, Child Language)
- Existing strong disciplines, recognized on the national and international scene
- Actively involved in advancing knowledge in
 - Literary, Cultural and Media Studies of the specific “language” programs
 - Nature, use, and acquisition/pedagogy of language
- Strong Study Abroad Programs and emphasis on international education and research.
- Support for interdisciplinary initiatives
- TITLE VI Centers (African, Asian Studies, CASID with Women and International Development, CIBER, CLEAR).
- Existing resources (Human and material)
- Existing support structure (pod, building dedicated to the study of language)—have a running start.

The School itself will combine two academic units with strengths in different areas. Combining them enables to incorporate linguistics and second language acquisition with the study of specific languages and their literatures and cultures. As the MLA Reported noted “deep cultural knowledge and linguistic competence are equally necessary if one wishes to understand people and their communities.” This is the assumption with which we recommend that an Action Committee be formed to consider the parameters of a future School.

II. Plan for an Action Committee

1. Overview

We recommend that an Action Committee be formed and charged with (1) proposing a School structure (both the vertical and horizontal configuration); (2) defining the responsibilities of the units, and (3) creating job descriptions for new positions. The Action Committee will also produce a Mission Statement and recommend a name for the School.

2. Specific Recommendations:

a. The Task Force recommends the formation of an Action Committee to lead further faculty-centered discussions concerning the structure and governance of the School.

The Action Committee will organize and lead subcommittees with the goal of involving faculty consultation and participation. The subcommittees will address administrative and procedural issues relevant to the proposed School. The ultimate goal is to create a School that will be dynamic, responsive, and well-managed. Members of the Action Committee will lead subcommittees and invite interested tenure-stream faculty, fixed-term, and academic specialists in LGSAAL, RCS, and CeLTA to participate in an 'open meetings' format (similar to the procedure adopted by the University of Kansas).

The charge to the Action Committee should include at least consideration of the following:

- School structure: administrative and academic configuration of programs.
 - Language Studies; Linguistics; Literary and Cultural Studies Programs
 - The role of CeLTA
 - Platform to foster collaborative initiatives (see next)
- Platform to foster collaborative initiatives:
 - Criteria for the establishment of a platform to call for, organize, foster, and help to implement collaborative initiatives and strategies.
 - Close collaboration with other units to avoid duplication of efforts.
- School leadership
 - Director
 - Associate Director(s)
 - Program heads
- Advising
- New positions:
 - Media and Events coordinator and Community Engagement Liaison
 - Digital Humanities liaison
 - Grant Support
- School governance, the following to be considered:
 - Bylaws
 - Standing committees
 - Ad hoc committees
 - School representation on College and University committees

- IAH teaching distribution
 - Annual merit review and RPT procedures
 - Facilities
- b. In addition to preparing a set of recommendations on the above issues, the Action Committee will add the following recommendations.
- Budget structure (revenue, salaries, hiring, position requests, existing endowments).
 - Mission statement and School name(s).
- c. We recommend that the Dean appoint an Interim Director to start July 1, 2017. This timeline creates the time and space needed to attend to concerns expressed in the faculty online survey and build into the process a transition period that meets faculty expectations for transparency and informed input.
- d. An Advisory Committee will be formed to assist the Interim Director. This Advisory Committee may be composed of former Action Committee members or new members representing the units involved in the School. The Advisory Committee (in consultation with the Dean's office) will conduct during the transition year (2017-2018) the following searches:
- i. Permanent Director position
 - ii. Media and Event coordinator.
 - iii. Other searches as needed.

3. Membership of the Action Committee:

- a. We recommend that the Action Committee be composed of the current eight members of the Task Force (to provide continuity) and two additional members that are Fixed-Term faculty (designation B) or Academic Specialists in the continuing system to assure the representation of this constituency. Should current members of the Task Force not serve on the Action Committee, the Chairs will fill the vacancy.
- b. In terms of the selection of members to serve on this committee, we recommend the following steps:
- **By October 10:** Current Task Force members should communicate to their chairperson their willingness and availability to continue serving on the Action Committee. Since serving on the Action Committee will imply a significant investment of time, chairpersons and potential Action Committee members should consider release from services duties or other arrangements as needed.
 - **By October 17:** Chairpersons should notify the Dean of the replacements (if any) for any Task Force members who step down,
 - **By October 17:** Chairpersons should notify the Dean of the Fixed-Term faculty (Designation B) or Academic Specialist in a continuing appointment that will represent each Department.
 - **By November 1st:** The Dean's office will constitute the Action Committee and appoint Chair(s).

4. **Timeline and other recommendations:**

- a. As soon as possible after the constitution of the committee: The Dean's office will establish a time for the first meeting at which the Dean will give a charge to the Action Committee.
- b. The Action Committee will submit its final draft of recommendations to the Dean's office no later than **March 31, 2017**.
- c. Once the Dean's office has approved the draft, it will be brought to faculty discussion in an open meeting that should take place no later than **April 28, 2017**.
- d. A final proposal will be submitted to the Dean no later than **May 15, 2017**.
- e. The Action Committee will set a calendar of meeting and activities that will take place between the establishment of the committee and the end of its tenure. This calendar should also indicate time to seek approval by MSU academic governance.
- f. 2017-2018 will be a year of transition and implementation of recommendations. During this year, LGSAAL, RCS, SLS, and CeLTA will continue working as units with their respective Chairpersons and Directors.
- g. We anticipate that the School will start full operation in Fall 2018.