

# **MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

April 18, 2017

To: Action Committee, School of Language Sciences & Literary and Cultural Studies

From: Christopher Long, Dean, College of Arts & Letters

Re: Response to Preliminary Action Committee Report Proposing the Creation of a School of Language Sciences & Literary and Cultural Studies

As part of my November 1, 2016 charge to the Action Committee, I requested a preliminary report on your specific findings and recommendations concerning the creation of what you have determined to call the School of Language Sciences & Literary and Cultural Studies. I was grateful to receive that report on March 31, 2017, and appreciate the enormous amount of creativity, thought, and work that members of the Action Committee and the faculty in the Department of Romance and Classical Studies (RCS) and the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages (LGSAAAL) put into this initiative.



Continuing our commitment to cultivate an open dialogue about the creation and development of the School, I offer here my initial reactions to the report as you continue to revise it in conversation with the faculty and move toward our agreed upon deadline of May 1, 2017.

## **College of Arts & Letters**

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To begin, let me congratulate you for developing a structure that balances well the need to give School leadership enough leverage to advance strategic improvement and programs sufficient autonomy to ensure intellectual integrity and academic agility. This is no easy task, and it has been elegantly achieved first by delineating carefully between Program Heads, Program Directors, and Program Coordinators, and then by integrating these roles into a coherent administrative structure that includes two Associate Directors and the Director of the School who is the chief academic officer of the School.

Further, your articulation of how the School at Michigan State University is unique in the way it emphasizes collaboration and integrates the language sciences into a school that is deeply committed to language teaching and interdisciplinary research in literary and cultural studies offers us a vision that can advance our position as an international leader in these areas of scholarship and pedagogy.

In order to advance this vision, it will be vital to operationalize and cultivate practices of collaboration across the School. As we've discussed, the establishment of a structure is only the beginning of the work to be done. It is

an important beginning, and one that you have managed in impressive ways that foster trust among stakeholders. Further nurturing this trust will be the key to accomplishing the next phase of the process, so my comments below focus on how we can cultivate a deep and integrated culture of collaboration within the School and between the School and other units, including the College.

You have identified collaboration as a differentiating factor for the School, so careful attention and intentional planning are required if we are going to create the conditions under which collaboration will take root and grow.

**There are dimensions of the report that suggest that these conditions are already beginning to develop:**

### **Interdisciplinary Research Network**

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Your emerging success with the Collaborative research grants can be leveraged to begin to build trust and deepen the relationships that will grow into the Interdisciplinary Research Networks that you have positioned at the heart of the School. *While this Network will answer up through the Associate Director for Academic Affairs, how will programs be empowered and incentivized to participate? What mix of material and intellectual incentives might be created to encourage participation and make collaboration rewarding on multiple levels? How will these Networks extend beyond the School to connect faculty research in the School to faculty research in and beyond the College?*

### **CeLTA**

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With the Center for Language Teaching Advancement (CeLTA), the School has a powerful mechanism to enhance language pedagogy across all its programs. *How can this signature Center in the School, College, and University become a catalyst of collaboration between cultural studies and language sciences that advances language teaching excellence in and beyond the classroom? What are the specific strategies that need to be undertaken to promote collaboration around teaching across the languages?*

### **Assessment**

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The assessment section is robust and well-crafted, although I do not think OCCI revenue generation should be part of the self-assessment of programs given the way opportunities for OCCI varies depending on programs. Of course, program leaders can set OCCI revenue as a priority in order to generate resources for strategic initiatives. More attention, however, should be given to how assessment processes and metrics can be leveraged to facilitate cross program collaboration. Collaborative initiatives should be at

the core of program and faculty assessment. *How can incentives for collaboration be more effectively built into our assessment plans?*

**There are dimensions of the report, however, that function in ways that will make it difficult to cultivate a coherence across programs in the School.**

### **The Role of the Director**

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As the chief academic officer of the School, the Director of the School needs to have in-line responsibility for the Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure process. Here the analogy should be that the School Director is to the Program Heads as the Dean is to the chairs. With regard to RPT, in consultation with and under the supervision of the School Director, Program Heads and the Associate Director for Administration should facilitate and manage the establishing of committees, the soliciting of external letters, and the gathering of materials. The Program Head and Associate Director will write a tenure/reappointment letter that will go to the School Director, who will also write a letter that will proceed to the Dean's Office. In the third year of the RPT process, in consultation with the Program Head and Associate Director, the School Director will write a recommendation to the Dean regarding reappointment. If reappointment is granted, the School Director in consultation with the Program Head or Associate Director should write an evaluation letter to the faculty member outlining expectations for tenure. Annual review letters may be written by Program Heads and the Associate Director in consultation with the School Director to ensure that we are creating a culture of care in a context of expectations for excellence with a clear message from all administrative levels of the School.

This process will ensure that the voices of the Program Head/Associate Director and the School Director are coherently integrated into the RPT process. These are the most important responsibilities of the Director and the Heads/Associate Director as they are the means by which to advance academic quality of programs and reinforce School-level priorities, including the importance of collaboration across programs and between the school and other units. *Bylaws 12, 12.1, 12.4 relating to annual review, and 13.9 and 13.11 need to be revised to reflect this line of administrative responsibility.*

### **Administrative Support**

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The School envisions itself as largely independent of the College in terms of administrative staff support. However, the College is undergoing a major restructuring of its staff in order to better align with and support College imperatives and priorities and to better serve the units. Over the past year, the College has worked to create a culture of collaboration and professional development among our undergraduate advisors by bringing them under the supervision of the Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Student Affairs & Study Abroad. The reporting line for advisors should remain directly to the Assistant

Dean at the College level, but we should have an explicit dotted-line to the Associate Director for Academic Affairs. Working closely with Program Heads, Directors, and Coordinators, the Associate Director will be included by the Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Studies in the performance evaluation of all advisors.

Within this context, *are there specific strategies with regard to undergraduate and graduate advising that can be enhanced in collaboration with the College?*

Further, *with regard to the MORE position, how can adjustments to the College's Marketing and Communications strengths be leveraged to enhance this important need of the School? Similarly, how can the newly reorganized College level Office of Education and Research Technology, support teaching and research in the School? Are there areas of staff support that are primarily handled in the College such as tech support that could be effectively augmented in the School?*

Finally, the College is re-envisioning and enhancing our Research Office with pre- and post-award staff capable of advancing our lofty aspirations in exponentially increasing our research productivity. The School's emphasis on language sciences and on collaborative research will position it to be a catalyst of growth in research. *How can the College's re-imagined and enhanced research support structure improve the success of the School in substantively increasing its research output? Might the reallocation of some internal funding mechanisms currently operating in the College be used productively to provide seed funding for promising external funding initiatives?*

In closing, I want to reiterate how impressed I am with this report and with the work you and the faculty associated with the new School have done. This is an excellent beginning, and as Aristotle reminds us, "well begun is half done," so thank you.

As we move now toward the deadline for the Action Committee report is May 15, 2017, I would ask that you take these comments, share them publicly on the website, and invite your faculty colleagues to respond to the report and my response as you work to integrate their feedback into a final report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris P. Long", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christopher P. Long  
Dean, College of Arts & Letters

CC: RCS and LGSAAL Faculty