

November 16, 2018

**PROFESSOR ERIC BAKOVIC, Chair**  
**Department of Linguistics**

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review for the Department of Linguistics

Dear Professor Bakovic,

The Undergraduate Council discussed the Department of Linguistics 2018 Undergraduate Program Review. The Council supports the findings and recommendations of the review subcommittee and appreciates the thoughtful and proactive response from the Department.

The Council will conduct its follow-up review of the Department in Spring Quarter 2019. At that time, our goal is to learn about the Department's progress in implementing the recommendations of the program review subcommittee and the Undergraduate Council. The Council extends its thanks to the Department for their engagement in this process and we look forward to the continued discussion.

Sincerely,

John Eggers, Chair  
Undergraduate Council

Attachment

(1) Undergraduate Program Review Report and Response from Linguistics

cc: A. Burr  
M. Corr  
J. Moore  
C. Padden  
R. Rodriguez  
M. Sidney

## **Report of the Undergraduate Review Committee for the Department of Linguistics**

### **Committee Members:**

Seana Coulson (Cognitive Science, UC San Diego)

Sharon Inkelas (Linguistics, UC Berkeley)

Justin Opatkiewicz (Nanoengineering, UC San Diego), Chair

### **A.) Current Operation of Program**

On May 2 and 3, 2018, the Committee met to review the undergraduate program in the Department of Linguistics, the Linguistics Language Program (LLP), and the Heritage Language Program (HLP). We met in person with the Department Chair (Sharon Rose), by videochat with the faculty Director of the LLP (Grant Goodall), and in person with six other faculty (Gabriela Caballero, Eric Bakovic, Farrell Ackerman, Andy Kehler, Leon Bergen, Eva Wittenberg). We also met with an Academic Coordinator for the LLP (Alicia Munoz Sanchez), several graduate students who have served as TAs in undergraduate courses, three undergraduate Linguistics majors, the MSO and undergraduate advising staff for Linguistics majors and the LLP, and the Dean of Muir College. In addition to the information provided by these individuals, the Committee also reviewed the Linguistics Department self-study report, prepared by Chair Sharon Rose in March 2018, and a variety of data supplied mainly by the office of the Dean of Undergraduate Education (John Moore).

Linguistics is a small department with a current enrollment of approximately 150 majors - a jump of 18% since the previous year. Over the past eight years, the department has maintained a steady-state of approximately 13 faculty members. The expected workload for regular faculty is 4 courses per year (typically 2 - 3 undergraduate, and the remainder graduate courses), but due to university service responsibilities, many faculty cannot teach so many courses. In light of this, many courses are taught by temporary lecturers. The department offers majors in General Linguistics, Cognition and Language, Language and Society, and Language Studies. The department also houses the Linguistics Language Program (LLP) and Heritage Language Program (HLP) instructional units. In the last academic year (2016-2017), undergraduate linguistics courses had annual enrollments (majors and non-majors) of 2,883 students. The LLP courses provided an additional 2,215 total enrollments while the HLP courses provided another 359. With the large numbers of enrollments in the LLP and HLP courses, more administrative and teaching support is necessary.

As noted above, the majority of students enrolled in Linguistics courses are non-majors. LIGN 7 and 8 both satisfy the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) requirement and typically have large enrollments of non-majors. The LLP is the largest language instruction unit on campus, and students in Revelle and Eleanor Roosevelt Colleges utilize the program to satisfy their foreign language requirements. The LLP offers courses in Spanish, American Sign Language (ASL),

French, German, Arabic, Portuguese, and Italian. The HLP offers instruction to students who have some knowledge of a second language from childhood or from speaking it (to some extent) at home. This program currently offers instruction in Hindi, Filipino, Korean, Persian, and Vietnamese. Armenian and Cantonese courses have also been approved and may be offered in the future if there is demand.

## **B.) Strengths and Weaknesses of the Curriculum**

Overall, we are very impressed with the quality of the faculty and student advising. The faculty are very engaged and student satisfaction is very high. Since the Linguistics undergraduate program, LLP, and HLP have different purposes and challenges, they will be discussed separately.

### **Linguistics Program:**

With regards to the evaluation criteria, the undergraduate program appears to be in good health. Even with its relatively small size and many faculty having university service requirements, the department is still able to offer a strong and comprehensive curriculum. Beyond the standard core courses of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, there is a wide variety of courses available to support the majors in concentrations of cognition and language, speech and language sciences, language and society, and language studies. From the undergraduate majors interviewed and the CAPE student responses, students are very satisfied with the quality of their education. During the review period, approximately 90% of students recommended the courses. In a Fall 2017 undergraduate survey of Linguistics majors administered by the Council of Deans of Advising (CDA), at least 92% of respondents were satisfied with the curriculum faculty, and advisors.

The committee was also impressed with the opportunities made available for students with regards to undergraduate research. The variety of courses emphasizing analytical thinking, problem solving, and literature review all serve as ample preparation for these research positions. This has led to a fairly high proportion of Linguistics majors (20-25%) getting involved in research: an average of approximately 30 per year. Nonetheless, there are still more students who would like to get involved. Despite announcements in classes and on the department website, some students still seem unaware of how/where to find research positions. Perhaps as summer research stipends become available (as referenced by the Dean of Undergraduate Education), more students will find the prerogative to search for these positions, or more opportunities will become available.

With regards to the committee's concerns, although the program covers a wide variety of topics in Linguistics, the coverage may be too shallow. Topics are spread too thin in LIGN 101 to fully prepare students for subsequent courses, often requiring professors in those later courses to re-introduce materials that students should already know. Likewise, with different faculty teaching

the course at different times of the year, topics get covered to varying extents. It would be beneficial to either reduce the number of topics covered or to split the course into a two-course series to guarantee satisfactory coverage. At the minimum, establishing a standard curriculum for this course, regardless of who teaches it, would help ensure that all students are equally well-prepared for follow-on courses. Standardization of LIGN 101 curriculum would also make it easier for faculty to plan more advanced courses.

Regarding advanced topics, there is concern from students, TAs, and faculty alike that there is a lack of depth in the course offerings. Students get introduced to their core topics of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics in LIGN 110, 111, 120, 121, and 130, respectively, but there is no second quarter follow-up for any of these topics. This leads to students not receiving a satisfactory depth of knowledge that they crave. A recommendation to address this issue is provided at the end of this report.

As noted previously, the service requirements of many faculty has led to a high degree of turnover in teaching assignments, and many courses are taught by temporary lecturers. Courses in syntax present a particular problem for the department, due to the transition of Professor John Moore to Dean of Undergraduate Education. Temporary lecturers currently cover this topic, along with various other courses, leading to a concern in consistency in curriculum. Constantly rotating lecturer assignments could lead to entirely different learning experiences for the students from year-to-year.

One way of ensuring consistency, especially with regards to syntax, would be to guarantee that the same lecturers cover the same courses. Alternatively, the new LPSOE could oversee the course curriculum of LIGN 121 to guarantee consistency regardless of who teaches it. With the use of several temporary lecturers, it would also be beneficial for the LPSOE to work with the undergrad adviser to coordinate learning outcomes and integrate them into the curriculum. Eventually, the department will need to find a permanent replacement, in the form of a new hire, to cover syntax.

**LLP:**

With regards to the Linguistics Language Program, we are very impressed with the strong emphasis on language proficiency. The department provides a unique experience to learn these languages in small classes that have left the students very satisfied, both with quality and depth of material. The only weakness is the competition with other departments hosting their own language programs. This can be confusing for students and make it difficult to have comprehensive oversight and consistency in teaching methods and assessments. However, the committee acknowledges that this is a historical problem and there is not much the department can do about it.

**HLP:**

The Heritage Language Program is a very unique experience for students enrolled in those courses. Given the difficulty of tailoring courses for students with varying levels of (initial) proficiency, it was striking that the program is so well-organized. An assessment test is utilized to ensure that only students at a similar level of fluency are enrolled. The program provides students with good oral language skills with a challenging and engaging suite of written materials to enhance their literacy in the language program. The HLP also offers students who have studied abroad in an immersion context the opportunity to return and solidify their language skills and cultural understanding without having to enroll in an advanced grammar or literature/language course. The only issue that arises is the inability to offer enough advanced levels for some languages, even when the demand from students is there. When funding becomes available, it would be advised to direct some of it towards introducing more levels of instruction for several of the available languages.

***C. An analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the department in the context of campus and University policies***

We were very pleased with the quality of the student advisor and the administrative staff. Students appreciate the individualized attention they receive. Likewise, the advising of the department is well coordinated with the advising provided by the six colleges. Having courses that satisfy the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) requirement is a major strength for the department. These courses have the potential to be a huge source of enrollments for the department when requesting future FTEs and administrative funding.

While we are happy with the level of advising offered to the students, it is clear that undergraduate affairs is stretched to the limit with regards to staffing and funding. It would be desirable in our view for the department to use some of the spare funds available to hire undergraduate workers to take on some of the lower level administrative and IT duties. Separately, with a push to increase enrollments, more support will be needed for the graduate student TAs and lecturers. Also, more TA training should be implemented to better prepare incoming grad students about what to expect from undergraduates in our large public university. This can come in the form of more formal training or having 1st year grad students sit in on sections taught by more senior TAs to observe and learn.

#### ***D. Recommendations for alleviating any shortcomings suggested by the description and analysis***

The recommendations of the committee address two main issues: enrollment numbers related to FTE allocations, and improvements to the curriculum.

Although the department is at a “sweet spot,” as one administrator commented with regards to student-to-faculty ratio, there is a desire to increase enrollments in order to add more faculty. To increase enrollment, we suggest:

- Add seats in LIGN 7 and/or 8 (DEI courses) so as to drive total enrollment up. This would make it possible to continue offering smaller-enrollment courses while still meeting the formula thresholds needed to achieve desired FTE targets.
- Encourage 7th College (and future colleges) to have a language requirement to improve numbers in the Linguistics Language Program (LLP).
- Improved outreach to engineering to make students aware of Linguistics as an alternative major, especially those who do not thrive in their engineering courses. Potentially, the new teaching professor could take up this endeavor.
- Similarly, additional outreach to community colleges that feed into UCSD could be performed.
- Develop a Computational Linguistics major (or minor, to start off with). This could serve as a potential win-win for the campus and department. Such a major would alleviate impaction of the CS major, and potentially the Data Science major, in the future. As a result, enrollment in the department would likely increase significantly, encouraging the allocation of additional faculty and staff. This would likely require some level of curricular buy-in from CSE/Data Science.

Currently, the curriculum seems optimized for easy access. Aside from LIGN 101, courses can be taken in any order, and there is only one course in each area, as opposed to sequences that go into more depth. For that depth, undergraduates must take graduate courses, but few are allowed in. We heard from both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as some faculty, that more depth would be desirable; this is especially true for students who wish to apply to graduate programs in linguistics. If desired, greater depth can be achieved by taking the following recommendations into account:

- LIGN 101 may be too shallow such that students never get a deep enough understanding of the introductory material. Consequently, instructors in subsequent course offerings have to present introductory material that is familiar to some, but brand new to others. Two options can be considered:

- Consider focusing the curriculum of 101 to just a few core topics in linguistics that are needed for students to hit the ground running in the subsequent core courses. This can also promote consistency across various sections/quarters.
- Make LIGN 101 a two-course sequence so each topic can be introduced with more depth. The sequence could be offered Fall/Winter, Winter/Spring, and possibly Summer Session I/II.
- It would be good to review the syllabi of all the courses for consistency across the quarters and years, as they are taught by different faculty. This would make it easier to offer an occasional advanced course in one of the core areas regardless of who the instructor was for the initial course.
- To allow for the teaching of more advanced courses in core areas, various core courses can be offered on alternating years. For example, morphology may not be offered every year, but when it is, students could be given the option to take a two-course sequence (or more), so that they could get the depth they seem to crave.
- Syntax instruction was found to be lacking. Current needs dictate that it be taught by temporary lecturers, and the possibility of turnover in this position could lead to a reduction in the quality of the course. Until a more permanent faculty member can be assigned to teach syntax, it would be good for someone to oversee the curriculum to guarantee consistency, as in the previous bullet point.
- The new LPSOE should work with the undergrad adviser to coordinate learning outcomes and to better integrate them into the curriculum.
- There should be more advertisement of LIGN 199 research opportunities. Students are interested but have acknowledged that it is difficult to find out where/how to do research. Faculty should consider advertising on the REAL portal: <http://real.ucsd.edu>

Finally, we have a few additional miscellaneous recommendations:

- Teaching assistants have requested improved TA training, at least for those teaching general linguistics courses (as opposed to the language courses). This would be beneficial for both the TAs and the undergraduates they teach.
- For some administrative relief, it is suggested to use a small amount of the staffing budget to hire student workers. These individuals could help with language program scheduling, management of materials, IT, student outreach, etc.
- Given the extraordinary administrative service contributed by the LIGN faculty, an argument could be made for a temporary infusion of funding to hire more temporary lecturers.

The committee enjoyed our discussions with the Linguistics Department, including its world class faculty, highly committed staff, a coterie of brilliant graduate students, and a fabulous group of engaged undergraduates. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on its undergraduate programs.