

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS  
HEAD OBJECTIVES

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Our State and university are facing the most difficult financial crisis I have experienced in my 20 years at UofA. Based on the information available to us, the situation will not improve any time soon. It might even become worse. Thus leading any unit on campus into this not so bright future requires experience, devotion, vision and hard work. Since the issue of headship became a serious matter, I found myself entertaining the following questions: what is our departmental vision for the future, and how can we address these challenges and grow and develop despite what lays ahead?

We in the academy are asked to provide an increasing level of justification for our existence. I am serving on SBS Graduate Council where issues such as Responsibility Centered Management (RCM) and Student Credit Hours (SCH) are discussed and examined as important factors measuring *efficiency*, a clear indication that such issues will be crucial in deciding how much support each unit receives. The changes we have observed in the last few years, and those that are likely to follow, will, beyond any doubt, cause us to reevaluate how we view our programs and future goals. Many of these changes have, and probably will even more, effect our freedom to conduct our academic work the way we find appropriate and optimal. It is the job of the new head to help the department maintain and improve its standards, and increase its resource venues.

We in the Department of Linguistics are in need of new blood for our Ph.D. programs with respect to semantics, computational linguistics, neurolinguistics and biolinguistics, we need much greater support for our Native American MA program and our fairly new MS program in Human Subject Technology, support for faculty and student research, and certainly support for our staff. How can we achieve these goals, given the new climate we find ourselves in? How can we maintain and improve our standards at a time that units become more and more responsible for their budgetary survival? The answer, in my opinion, is twofold: rigorous collaborative grant training/writing, and innovative venues to increase donor contributions. While visibility is increased by success in the former, the latter is required for us to flourish.

Linguistics is a discipline that is unknown to the majority of people, even those in academia. People who could be potential donors do not understand what we do, why we do it, and how it benefits the community at large. An important part of the job of the head of the Department of Linguistics is to pave the path to provide necessary explanations and answers to the questions we are usually asked in order to increase our visibility on campus and beyond.

Based on these considerations, I offer the following somewhat specific proposals.

## OUTREACH

- Establishing a newsletter, published twice a year, each time featuring a professor and a student (may be an alumnus) who do interesting work that has an effect on some aspect of the life in the community. We could start with work on Native American Linguistics and computational linguistics. We have the strongest Native American Linguistics Program nationwide, which needs to be presented to public more aggressively. Another example to consider is computational linguistics. It is significant that the Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar chose our colleague Sandiway Fong to collaborate with them on their \$1 million grant from the Qatar National Research Foundation that is funding basic advances in human-computer interaction, while they could have easily partnered with their own LTI. We need to publicize our success and our potentials widely to create more visibility.
- Industry advisory board for HLT: Private money comes in when people from the community feel engaged in what we do. One successful strategy for professional programs like HLT is to establish greater relationships with the industries that might hire our students. This committee would advise our HLT and Comp Ling Ph.D. Curricula, provide leads on private funding, provide a source of internships, provide a source of speakers for professional talks. Possible members might include alumni who work in industry as well as people we know who work in such companies as Apple, Google, Microsoft, Readsmart, Rosetta Stone, etc.
- Approaching casinos, and may be also private foundations like Ford Foundation, to seek an Endow Professorship in American Indian Linguistics. This would bring in somewhere between 3-5 million dollars. Ofelia Zepeda is a clear candidate for such an endowment. Perhaps we could also create an advisory board from the local native American communities to parallel that of the HLT.
- Visiting high schools. We can establish a system for our graduate and advanced undergraduate students, with faculty guidance and supervision, to introduce high school students and their teachers to linguistics in a fun, innovative and interesting way. By doing this, we could gain public awareness of our field, and increase the enrollment of better prepared undergraduates. We have about 160 undergraduate students majoring in linguistics and about 60 students who have declared their minor in linguistics. This is a great increase in the number of our undergraduate students in recent years, but we can do better, both in terms of number as well as the quality of students. If I were head, I would organize and lead a team of my colleagues and students to speak at schools.
- Having an annual event to introduce the public to what we do in linguistics, by having music, dance and other entertainment, and by using fun lyrics. We have a talented department, and we can seek help from UofA Poetry Center and the Music Department as well. We could combine this with our Spring Showcase.
- Our website requires updating and revision. For example we need to make more prominent our podcasts and our student achievements (perhaps, for example, by putting

a rotating news widget on the front page, and having highlighted student and faculty work, more prominently displayed.

- Campaign Arizona will return in 2012. In order to be more effective as a department, we need to show that we have already started our outreach program prior to that campaign.

## **COLLABORATIONS AND GRANT PROPOSALS**

In my opinion, it is crucial for us to have close collaborative relationships with departments and units that are relevant to us, and to create a healthy atmosphere for collaborative grant writing/training.

- Grant collaborations with Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences and MBB concerning Aphasia and Alzheimer, specifically with respect to Navajo and Hopi patients. Also pairing with other research centers such as Navajo Healing Project at Case Western University to conduct research. Collaborative NIH grants for creating instruments for the purpose of diagnosing patients. The Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences would be an appropriate collaborator in this area. Mary Willie would be interested in such a project.
- Seeking grant money for language teaching methodologies that are useful for local tribes. This would strengthen our NAMA program.
- AILDI, in collaboration with Optical Science Department, has established a new project that will be beneficial to both units. We could work with AILDI to create new projects based on that model.
- Finding ways to work and collaborate with MBB, Philosophy, Psychology, Anthropology, AIS, ECE and SISTA. Perhaps through joint grants (both training grants and research grants), as well as joint lecture series etc. It is also important for us to strengthen our leadership roles and connections in SLAT and Cognitive Science by finding ways to reward faculty who participate in these programs.
- Using Andrew Carnie's Gaelic Phonology group project as a model to create more collaborations internal to the department as well as across other disciplines.

## **NEW POSITIONS**

I am aware of the fact that it is very hard to think of new hires in this climate. However, we could still try to convince our Dean to seriously consider our needs. Here are some thoughts.

- Approaching the Department of Computer Science to create a shared line with us for *computational semantics*. We desperately need such a line. Our HLT program has been successful in terms of internships that turned into real jobs in almost all cases: Mary

Dungan, Josh Harrison, Brent Ramerth, Dainon Woudstra, Anthi Zafeiri. This type of success cannot continue to be achieved by a program that is run by one faculty member only. We need to increase the enrollment of this program, and this requires an additional faculty member, specially if he/she can bring in significant grant money. Furthermore, semantics is an area that was highly recommended by our last ARP. Combining the two areas by sharing a line with another unit will fill two of our most significant gaps in the program.

- I would like to see a new line for a *neurolinguist*. There is demand for this type of work, and it would make it possible for us to offer undergraduate courses in this area as well. Furthermore, since Andrew Carnie has a third time administrative job now, if I become head, the syntax program would be short on covering the courses that are needed to be taught. We might be able to combine syntax with neurolinguistics, and ask the Dean to consider a new hire based on the combination of those two areas.
- We have been extremely lucky to have been able to hire Stacy Oberly to join our Native American team. Nevertheless looking ahead to the future we must continue to grow our *Native American* faculty, perhaps with further joint hires with AIS or hires that support other internal needs (such as syntax/semantics/phonology etc.)

## **UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM**

- In conjunction with attracting more and better students, we need to try to facilitate learning for our undergraduates. Since we do not have the luxury of having graders in our undergraduate courses anymore, who would help students with their class work, we need to establish a Tutoring Center for all linguistics undergraduate courses. For the last couple of years, there has been tutoring classes called “Think Tank” for our INDV classes that are taught by Amy Fountain. We can provide this service in a more structured fashion by having a tutoring center for all undergraduate students in linguistics classes, staffed by graduate volunteers. Maybe we could encourage well-qualified and enthusiastic undergraduates to participate, using 'preceptorships'.
- We also need to make sure that our major and minor students have access to our popular classes such as LING 201. May be we could specify one or two of 201 sections to linguistics majors and minors to make sure they can take this course when they need it.
- A good percentage of our undergraduate students do not wish to go to graduate school. If I were head, I would work with our undergraduate advisor, Diane Ohala, to find ways to prepare them for life outside the school. One way to do this is to look for internships outside the campus. This requires developing undergraduate courses in areas such as computational linguistics and neurolinguistics.
- We need to find new ways to increase UG enrolment by targeting students that would not traditionally be interested in linguistics. Possible suggestions: more online classes, classes on remote campuses taught by graduate students or faculty, including important tribal and other community colleges. Also perhaps forming joint programs in

“linguistics and language X” with language departments. NES comes to mind since several of us (Andy Wedel, Adam Ussiskin, and myself) work on languages that are taught in that department.

## **GRADUATE PROGRAM**

- The most crucial issue regarding our graduate program is stable funding sources, so that we do not have to wait until the last minute each year to let our students know whether or not they will be funded. We also need to establish a reliable source of recruitment money to attract the best students in the field.
- We need new computers for our graduate students. The existing ones are pretty old.
- Our graduate students have been extremely successful in organizing the Arizona Linguistic Circle (ALC) during the last four years. We need to find ways to support them grow this important conference.
- We need to work closely with the Department of Anthropology to support our ANLI program and students.
- Students have expressed a lot of interest to hear more about the work of the individual faculty members. May be we should ask our faculty to participate more in our weekly colloquia by presenting and discussing their current projects.
- Our Graduate Handbook has been revised many times to address students’ needs. We need to continue doing this. There are some confusions about course offerings, specially with respect to required courses. We need to address this issue as soon as possible.
- I think it would be a good idea for our Curriculum Committee to consider making it mandatory for our first year students to write one grant proposal. One target would be NSF Graduate Research Fellowship grant. This will benefit them enormously in their future professional lives.

## **COURSE OFFEREINGS AND LANGUAGE TESTING**

- In connection with the idea of mandatory grant proposals for our first year students, I would like to see a grant writing course offered once a year not only for linguists, but also for the whole college, to (a) inform students about available grants and their requirements, (b) train them to write grant proposals for different agencies such as NSF and NIH, (c) instruct them the important issues they need to know about our Human Subjects requirements. This type of a course would facilitate collaborative work as well.
- I think it would be a good idea to increase our online course offerings through the outreach college, both by faculty and graduate students.

- Our department is paid for individual language testings. We have currently a long list of students who would like to take that test. In addition to faculty, who have been doing the testing thus far, we could involve graduate students to take part by paying them a percentage of what we receive for each test.

### **STAFF ISSUES**

- We are fortunate to have great staff members. However, they are all extremely overworked. We need to find ways to protect them in various ways: to make sure (a) their positions are safe, (b) they receive help, and (c) they have appropriate raise.
- Our department is split between Douglass and Communication. This fact puts some extra pressure on our staff. We need to seriously pursue the goal to all be in one building.

### **DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AS A HAPPY FAMILY**

- I believe that an important part of the success and happiness of a department is for all its members, faculty-students-staff, to feel *included*. I would like to see, for example, our NAMA students feel more *at home* in the department, and that goes for the rest of the department as well. One way to achieve this goal is to have casual gatherings for graduate students, faculty and staff. I would host at least one of these events per year if I were head of the department. I would also facilitate having an annual party specific to undergraduate students, and would invite faculty to interact with them leisurely in a relaxed atmosphere.
- Another way is to arrange hiking plans for those interested to spend half a day or so hiking together, having breakfast or lunch together, and exchanging ideas and plans. Being a hiker myself, I could easily lead couple of these events.
- We usually are so involved in the details of our research projects that do not have time to think about the bigger picture: why is linguistics relevant in the world? Why do we spend our time and energy studying and conducting research in this field? What are we trying to achieve? The gatherings mentioned above could serve to engage us in informal discussions about these and similar issues. They will also bring us together as a group of people with similar interests and goals.
- Unity would certainly improve if we all could be physically in the same building. May be a future goal to pursue?

I close this letter by saying a few words about my supervising style. Openness, respect for ideas and close working relationship form important aspects of my management style. I believe that a good department head is one who listens patiently, acts promptly, represents the department firmly and honorably, supports faculty, students and staff rigorously, and looks everywhere for ideas and opportunities to improve the visibility and teaching/research conditions in her unit.

