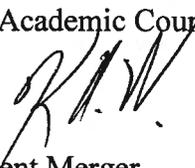


MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

September 28, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Executive Committee of Academic Council
FROM: Kim A. Wilcox, Provost 
RE: Consultation on Department Merger

I received a request for the merger of the Department of French Classics and Italian, and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, and now seek the advice of Academic Governance on the requested merger. The attached materials, provided by the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, outline the rationale for the request.

Your immediate attention to and consultation on this matter are greatly appreciated.



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MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

September 23, 2010

To: Kim A. Wilcox, Provost

From: Karin A. Wurst, Dean *Karin Wurst*

RE: Request for Merger

**Request for Merger of the Department of French Classics and Italian with the
Department of Spanish and Portuguese**

Rationale:

Historical Background: Until 2003, the Department of Romance and Classical Languages was one of two language departments at Michigan State University. In February of that year, the Board of Trustees approved a plan to restructure RCL into two new departments: the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the Department of French, Classics and Italian. Dean Wendy Wilkins said at that time that "it [the creation of a new Spanish and Portuguese Department] will foster awareness of the presence and importance of Spanish and Portuguese both within and beyond the MSU community while providing a foundation for further investment in all the languages and literatures we teach." The change was intended to help the Spanish program address a large and growing student demand for language skills. It was also thought that the new Department of Spanish and Portuguese would leverage the university's strengths in study abroad, Latin American and Caribbean studies, and research and outreach programs that address the problems of Hispanic communities in the Midwest. The new Department of French, Classics and Italian would offer study in the languages, literatures and cultures of France, Italy and ancient Greece and Rome. Funding for the two departments came from the then current budgetary resources of the Department of Romance and Classical Languages. Funding for one new chairperson and administrative support staff was to come from the College of Arts and Letters. Much of what was intended to be gained from the break-up of RCL has not been realized, however, due in part to the budget crisis of the past two years and subsequent changes within the two new departments themselves.

Problems with Current Model: Unfortunately, in many respects, the 2003 restructuring of RCL has now become a liability that has the potential to impede new initiatives in Arts and Letters intended to address budget concerns and improve language programs. For example:

- There are administrative redundancies. The two small departments though in the same building and integrated in terms of space require two chairs with their respective staffs.



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- The separation of Romance and Classical Languages has had the effect of separating programs with a number of natural affinities. This in turn has impeded collaboration between the language programs, which has been compounded by the physical separation from the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian and African Languages—the home department for the Second Language Studies Faculty and the Less Commonly Taught Languages Program.

Advantages of the Merger

- In two years, all the language departments, as well as the English Language Center, will move into the new Morrill Hall replacement building to be built on the B-wing of Wells Hall... According to the new CAL pod arrangement currently being implemented, the departments will share staff and equipment and will be very close in proximity to one another. The merger of SPP and FCI will create opportunities for effective collaboration by breaking down administrative barriers and enabling joint hires such as an RCL language director.
- Once the departments are merged, it will become much easier to break down the barriers between the two remaining language departments and create a new culture of innovation, creativity, and collaboration. A newly merged RCL, with Bylaws that encourage and support the growth of the individual language programs in the department, will serve as a strong foundation for building collaborative connections between RCL and L&L, which will lead to a stronger position and voice for languages within the College, and a greater concentration of resources that will enable an expansion of research collaborations and better long-term planning.
- A closer relationship among the two remaining departments and a simplified department structure will also significantly increase the effective integration of the activities of MSU's Title VI Language Resource Center - CLEAR, the Center for Language Teaching Advancement - CeLTA, and the Second Language Studies Program into CAL language programs. Collaboration and the sharing of resources is essential to their success and it is hoped that new strengths will emerge through the training of TAs and instructors, the development of innovative materials, and the integration of technology into language instruction. The Community Language School within CeLTA is well placed to connect language programs with the surrounding communities and create new opportunities for engagement.
- Significant budget savings will be realized by eliminating a chair position and consolidating support staff in a pod that includes both remaining language departments and support units.

Curricular Implications

First and second-year language instruction in French and Spanish will be improved by hiring an experienced and highly skilled language director to provide the leadership and supervisory skills needed to administer large language programs. By means of an external search, it is hoped that an experienced and creative director will be found who can build

on existing skills in coordination with second language teaching and create new synergies within the newly merged RCL department. This initiative, which will benefit multiple language programs, would be virtually impossible to complete in two different departments. The proposed hire will result in:

- Improved training for instructors and TAs.
- Increased effective use of technology.
- Stronger proficiency-based majors and minors for the students.

Issues to be worked through:

- Composing bylaws that will give sufficient autonomy to individual language programs, allowing them to flourish and at the same time create a strong department culture, which will provide resources and administrative support for department activities and will benefit both faculty and students.
- Creating and integrating a new language director position into the merged department, which will significantly increase the quality of language instruction.
- Making certain that all language programs in the departments are brought into the new structure and that no program is marginalized.
- Obtaining significant “buy-in” from the faculty in all departmental programs.

Summary - The move of RCL across campus to Old Horticulture in the mid-nineties created a separation of the language departments at MSU that has had many unfortunate consequences, not the least of which was the location of the Language Learning Center in Old Horticulture, quite far from the numerous language programs that remained in Wells Hall. The move to the new building and its up-to-date facilities will create a collaborative and creative environment that will enable us to build one of the most effective language programs in the country. The resources and talent are in place, what is needed now is a structure that will enable them to flourish.

Assurances:

- **No student will be hurt or hindered by the process**

The merger of FCI and SPP is an administrative reuniting of two departments that have a long history of existence as a single unit—Romance and Classical Languages (RCL). No courses, majors or minors will be affected. Moratoria will remain in place for the immediate future and all programs will function as before but under the direction of one chairperson and with one set of governance committees. The Bylaws currently being drafted will provide for the considerable autonomy of programs within the new department and savings will be realized at the outset through administrative consolidation. The merger will not affect the current undergraduate majors in French and Spanish, minors in Italian and Portuguese, and graduate programs leading to the doctorate in both French and Spanish. Opportunities for students to take

language courses for the fulfillment of language requirements or their own self-improvement will remain.

- **No faculty will be disadvantaged by the merger—i.e., hiring, evaluation, reappointment, tenure and promotion.**

All searches will be conducted in accordance with the current Bylaws for FCI and SPP until they are superseded by new Bylaws currently under development.

Faculty yearly evaluations will be completed according to the new RCL Bylaws currently under development by the joint Bylaws committee. Until those Bylaws are approved by the faculty of the department, all evaluations will be conducted in accordance with the Bylaws now in place for each department.

Until the approval of new Bylaws, faculty members going forward for reappointment, tenure and promotion will go through the process according to the procedures established in the current Bylaws of the department in which they are now appointed. After the new Bylaws have been approved, faculty members going forward for RPT will do so according to the new Bylaws.

Consultation

- **Consultation with faculty:**

On March 29, 2010, Dr. Karin Wurst, Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, met with French tenure-system faculty members to inform them of the impending decision to join the two departments and to solicit feedback.

On March 31, 2010, Dean Wurst met with Spanish faculty members to inform them of the impending decision to join the departments and to solicit feedback.

Dean Karin Wurst recommended that a transition team be formed with equal representation from both departments to assure that there is effective input in preparation for the changes that need to occur in a merger. In order to prepare for the discussions in the Fall, Dean Wurst suggested one interim chair for both departments and asked Dr. Susan Gass to lead both departments through the transition. She also appointed a transition leadership team consisting of Professors Gass, David Prestel, an experienced language department chair, Michael Koppisch of French, and Nancy Marino of Spanish

Professors Gass and Prestel met with the RCL Bylaws sub-committee on June 18, 2010, and with the FCI/SPP Transition team on May 24, 2010. The Transition Team met again on July 27, 2010, August 5 and August 18.

The Transition Committee met with the RCL Bylaws sub-committee on June 18, July 12, August 5, August 12 and August 18, 2010. The RCL Bylaws Committee consists of the transition team plus Professors Joseph Francese and Ehsan Ahmed of FCI and Professors Marilia Ribeiro and Maria Mudrovic of SPP.

Professor Gass met with faculty members from both FCI and SPP at the beginning of FS10.

Consultation with Students:

The FCI/SPP Transition team held meetings for undergraduate students from both departments on September 7 and 8, 2010 and met with graduate students from Spanish on August 25 and French on August 26, 2010.