William J. Karpus  
Dean of the Graduate School  
Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

March 1, 2021

Dear Dean Karpus and GFEC,

Language Sciences is happy to take this opportunity to present our thoughts on the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee's recommendations. To begin, we view the recommendations themselves in a very positive manner and consider them to provide confirmation for plans already being considered. We provide our thoughts on each of the recommendations and how we are addressing them.

**Recommendation 1**: Explore memorandum of understanding (MOU) opportunities with other campus units to solidify funding sources for the PhD students.

By combining support from the Department of English and the Graduate School, Language Sciences has created a funding plan that will support 15 graduate students in the PhD in Linguistics program. The key piece to this plan is the development of an MOU with the Department of English in the Fall 2019 semester which provides 3/5s of the funding source. Language Sciences provides 1/5 and the final 1/5 is from the Graduate School.

Language Sciences has decided that the right size for the PhD in Linguistics graduate program is 15 students. This number was arrived at based on concerns on building a vibrant graduate program, the demand for PhDs in Linguistics, a viable yearly cohort size, and what funding can be secured. Within this plan, our time to degree plan is five years which means that the yearly incoming cohort size is three. Put all together, this funding plan requires a total of 15 pieces of funding. Combining the 9 TAships provided by English and the 3 TAships that Language Sciences has itself leaves 3 pieces of funding in order to secure this plan.

The Graduate School provided three first year fellowships for the 20-21 academic year and has awarded this same level of support for the 21-22 academic year. As far as we understand the plans of the Graduate School, the 21-22 funding award reflects the new base line of funding for units. Given this, Language Sciences has a steady funding plan that will support the plans we have for our graduate program for the foreseeable future.

The particulars of the funding plan are that the Graduate School support is used for a first year fellowship and then the remaining years two through five will be a mix of TAships in Ling 101/301 (the large introductory course in Linguistics) and Eng 100 (English composition). The funding level for each year is 50%. Consequently, Language Sciences has achieved the goal of providing five years of 50% funding for the PhD in Linguistics program.

Some additional notes on the funding situation in Language Sciences. There is continuing soft funding available for students who do not complete their PhD in five years. There are additional opportunities for PAships with Language Sciences faculty based on research projects.

**Recommendation 2**: Develop a plan to offer a course on Semantics on a regular basis.

As an immediate stop-gap to this recommendation, Language Sciences has permanently adjusted Dr. Rebecca Shields’ appointment to allow for her to teach Semantics. Dr. Shields has taught Semantics (Ling 340) in the past three times (Spring 2010, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015) and will be able to do so again.
in the Spring 2022 semester. Semantics as a class is traditionally taught in the spring semester and we are able to return to this schedule. While this plan will address this recommendation, it does not fully address it for the long term. We will expand on this point in Recommendation 4.

**Recommendation 3:** Include a natural languages processing skillset in the curriculum.

As an immediate stop-gap to this recommendation, the topics class Ling 373: Data Science and Statistics for Linguistics taught by Professor Eric Raimy covers some introduction to Natural Language Processing topics and skills. This course has been in the process of being developed over the last few years and will be converted over to a regularly offered course (likely through English) after a course proposal is submitted and approved next year. As with Recommendation 2, this plan addresses the recommendation in the short term, but not the long term. This point will be addressed in the last recommendation.

**Recommendation 4:** Develop a plan to sustain the high quality of the program as senior core faculty retire.

Language Sciences is in the process of developing a comprehensive hiring proposal to be submitted to the College of Letters & Sciences. The hiring proposal takes into account the recommendations of the review as well as considerations about current areas of strength in the program, upcoming retirements, and cutting-edge areas in language science. The main goals of the hiring proposal are the following:

1. hire exciting high-quality junior faculty who will strengthen Language Sciences and carry its current excellence into the future
2. offer Semantics courses regularly through the hiring of at least one faculty member who researches this area (see Recommendation 2 above)
3. add computational skills to the regular offerings of courses by hiring at least one faculty member who researches in this area (see Recommendation 3 above)
4. strengthen areas of syntax since this is a core area of courses offered by LangSci
5. strengthen the general research areas in North & Central American Languages and Language Variation & Change; our existing strength in this topic makes LangSci unique both locally and nationally

Please let us know if GFEC has any questions about our responses. LangSci is happy to discuss them further.

Sincerely

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