

ACADEMIC NAME CHANGE PROPOSAL FORM

1. Requesting Program: The Department of Modern Languages

2. Proposed Name Change: The Department of World Languages and Cultures

3. Rationale

In recent years, academic language departments, scholarly organizations, and government agencies across the United States and Canada have embraced the name "World Languages," replacing "Foreign Languages" and "Modern Languages." These older designations have fallen out of favor for a variety of reasons. "Foreign" has been abandoned because of the negative "us and them" connotation, and also because many languages offered in these programs, such as Spanish, are widely spoken in the United States. "Modern" has been abandoned due to its limitations as to which languages can be offered, excluding ancient Greek and Latin, for example, and also because the national Modern Language Association (MLA) also includes English.

The name "World Languages and Cultures" not only better represents current trends in the field, it also more accurately describes the programs offered by the Department of Modern Languages at Saint Mary's College. We offer courses in French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish (and Mandarin through the January Term). We have majors and minors in Spanish and French, where required courses span language and linguistics, culture and civilization, and literary studies. We also offer minors in Italian Studies, German Studies, and East Asian Studies, where again, required courses encompass the study of language and culture.

National Data

We researched variations of the name and after much deliberation, voted on "World Languages and Cultures" as the most appropriate for our learning outcomes and curricula offered. The following lists represent names that refer to academic language programs by institutions and organizations.

A) "WORLD LANGUAGES AND CULTURES."

American University, Washington DC
Arkansas State University
Bergen Community College, Paramus NJ
Bethany College, Bethany WV
Boise State University
Bridgewater College, Bridgewater VA
Central Oregon Community College, Bend OR
Chapman University, Orange, CA
City Colleges of Chicago
Concordia College, Moorhead, MN
Dartmouth College Rassias Center

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Eastern Connecticut State University
Education Connection, Litchfield CT
Elon University, Elon NC
Fayetteville State University
Friends Academy, Locust Valley NY
Gallaudet University, Washington DC
Georgian Court University, Lakewood NJ
Hamline University, Saint Paul, MN
Howard University, Washington DC
Humboldt State University, Arcata CA
Indiana University, Bloomington IN
Indiana University East, Richmond IN
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
Iowa State University
Juniata College, Huntingdon, PA
Langara College, Vancouver BC
Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles CA
Lockport Township High School District, Lockport IL
Loudoun County Public Schools, Ashburn, VA
Mercyhurst University, Erie PA
Miami University, Oxford, OH
Minnesota State University, Mankato MN
Monroe Community College, Rochester NY
Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago
Oklahoma City Community College
Oregon State University
Pennsylvania Department of Education
Public Broadcasting System (PBS) Learning Media
Reinhardt University, Waleska, GA
Salem State University, Salem, MA
Shenandoah University, Winchester VA
SMU Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, Dallas TX
Southern New Hampshire University
SUNY at Fredonia
The American School in London
The College of New Jersey, Ewing NJ
The College of Saint Rose, Albany NY
Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops BC
Trinity Western University, Langley BC
University of the District of Columbia, Washington DC
University of Minnesota
University of Nevada at Las Vegas
UMASS, Lowell, MA
University of Scranton, PA
University of South Florida
Whitworth University, Spokane, WA
Winston-Salem State University, Winston-Salem NC

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Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC

Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH

B) "WORLD LANGUAGES"

Michigan Department of Education

Minnesota Department of Education

C) "WORLD LANGUAGES, CULTURES, and COMMUNICATIONS"

Richland College, Dallas TX

D) "WORLD LANGUAGES, LITERATURES & CULTURES"

Elmhurst College, Elmhurst IL

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville AR

University of North Texas, Denton TX

University of Wisconsin - Superior

E) "WORLD LANGUAGES AND CULTURAL STUDIES"

Merrimack College, North Andover, MA

F) "WORLD LANGUAGES, LITERATURES, AND LINGUISTICS"

West Virginia University

Article reflecting the trend of renaming academic language programs

From *Inside HigherEd*, accessed 02/25/15

Not So Foreign Languages

October 5, 2011

By Scott Jaschik

West Virginia University announced this semester that it no longer has a department of foreign languages, and that's not because budget cuts eliminated any programs of study. Rather, the university renamed the program; it's now the department of world languages, literatures and linguistics.

Across the country, Grossmont College, a two-year institution in Southern California, changed its foreign languages department to a world languages department this fall as well. These colleges follow others that have made that switch over the last five or so years. In Massachusetts, the Five College Foreign Language Resource Center was renamed the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages.

There are still plenty of departments named "foreign languages" (not to mention many foreign language requirements). But the trend -- which appears to be growing -- is leading to changes in the language used in programs. At Brookhaven College, for instance, the website of the world languages division puts the word "foreign" in quotes when discussing languages other than English. The Modern Language Association used to issue reports on "foreign language enrollments," but more recently has gone with studies of "enrollments of languages other than English." (The MLA does, however, still have its Association of Departments of Foreign Languages.)

The trend is least evident at elite institutions, which are more likely than most of higher education to have separate departments for individual languages or for groups of languages (Asian languages, Slavic languages). As a result, these institutions don't have to place an overall label on groups of languages that may not have a lot in common beyond not being English.

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One reason cited by many of the programs that are switching names is that their most popular language -- Spanish -- is widely spoken in the United States. "Spanish is not a foreign language anymore," said Ángel T. Tuninetti, associate professor of Spanish and chair of world languages at West Virginia.

Many educators also do not like the way "foreign" suggests a division of the world into the United States and everyone else.

"There was a feeling that the word 'foreign' could imply different in a negative sense, and that the word 'international' for many reasons has a clearly positive connotation," said Laurie L. Corbin, associate professor of French and chair of the (renamed a few years ago) department of international language and culture studies at Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne.

Academics also noted that languages divisions increasingly include languages that are not remotely foreign. These languages include American Sign Language and English (as taught to those for whom it is not their first language). And other departments include what once could have been a separate comparative literature or linguistics department.

"Part of what you are seeing with the shrinking budgets and shrinking emphasis on the liberal arts is that in a lot of large departments that used to be separate, fields are going into more generalized departments," said Grant Sisk, associate instructional dean at Brookhaven.

And even among faculty members who are teaching languages other than English, there has been a move to stress that they are not just teaching vocabulary, but also culture. With the new names, "there is a recognition that in any language class, you are always teaching culture as well," said Corbin.

Picking an exact name isn't always easy, even once a decision has been made to move away from "foreign." The options may depend on what exactly is grouped in a department. At West Virginia, the department includes Latin as well as classical literature in translation, so those factors ruled out the name "modern languages," which some departments have used. Faculty members felt that linguistics needed to be mentioned. And some discussion of leaving out "world" and going with just "languages, literatures and linguistics" was rejected out of a desire not to create confusion with the English department.

Tuninetti said that the reaction to the new name has been entirely positive, and that the discussions did yield an eventual consensus about what the division should be called.

Similar shifts are taking place in discussions over what to call English instruction outside of the United States and other countries where English is the first language. John Segota, associate executive director of TESOL International Association (formerly Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), said that in that field, the acronym EFL (for English as a foreign language) is seen increasingly as imprecise (outside the United States) when people all over the world use English in some ways.

The newly favored acronyms, he said, are EAL (English as an additional language) and EIL (English as an international language).

4. Consultation Process

- a. Initial approval from the Dean: Approval was secured from the former Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, Dr. Stephen Woolpert, on February 13, 2015, and from the current Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, Dr. Sheila Hassell Hughes on October 7, 2015.
- b. Consultation with other departments: Per the guidelines, we are sending this email to gather input from other programs and offices across campus. Programs are listed by academic school, and administrative units. More than thirty programs and/or offices are being consulted.

School of Liberal Arts

Anthropology

Art & Art History

Communication

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Classical Languages

English

Ethnic Studies

History

Integral

Justice, Community and Leadership

Kinesiology

Global and Regional Studies

Performing Arts

Philosophy

Politics

Sociology

Theology & Religious Studies

Women's and Gender Studies

School of Economics and Business Administration

Accounting

Business Administration

Economics

School of Science

Biology

Chemistry

3+2 Engineering

Physics

Mathematics

Environmental and Earth Sciences and Studies

Psychology

Kalmanovitz School of Education

Multiple Subject Teacher Education Program

Single Subject Teacher Education Program

Counseling

Doctorate in Educational Leadership

Consultation with staff of other administrative units:

Admissions

College Communications

Library

Student Involvement & Leadership

Student Life

Office of Mission

Mission & Ministry

5. Feedback report

A) Overview. We sent the email notification twice to the above list of departments and offices across campus. We received feedback from approximately two dozen chairs and/or administrators. In general, the feedback was very supportive of the name change. The positive support could be couched in two ways: the decision to change the name and the particular name chosen.

B) Positive feedback samples:

"I think the idea is really wonderful and timely. It fits right in with the internationalization of the curriculum, it gives the department a sense of something new and fresh, and I really like the idea of including culture."

"Congratulations on behalf of our department"

"Oh, I like the proposal! I especially like that you included the article that discusses the trend across the country. For me, one of the relevant quotes from the article is around Spanish: *"One reason cited by many of the programs that are switching names is that their most popular language -- Spanish -- is widely spoken in the United States. "Spanish is not a foreign language anymore," said Ángel T. Tuninetti, associate professor of Spanish and chair of world languages at West Virginia.*"

"I reviewed the proposal for your departmental name change and am very enthusiastic to endorse it. Your research highlights the contemporary world of the importance of context in language acquisition. Thanks for the opportunity to respond." (VP Mission)

"I love this proposed change—I think it's excellent."

"Clearly a better name than "modern." "World Languages and Cultures" is much more inclusive and understanding of the interdependent, global world in which we live."

"SEBA does not have any issues. Thanks for checking with us." (SEBA Dean)

"I also checked with my librarians in case there was anything I wasn't thinking of. No one sees any conflicts or problems with the name change and, in fact, feel it is more accurately descriptive." (Library Dean)

"I think it's a great proposal reflecting the nature of the program." (VP Enrollment)

"Best of luck!"

"I support the name change."

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"I approve this change in name change. It does seem to more accurately reflect the major. Thanks for consulting!"

"Excellent and about time."

"It makes sense, reads well, and completely justified!"

"This seems fine to me since we will still list the majors by the individual languages. It does seem to be a better fit with national trends.

C) Questions raised in feedback: There were two respondents who expressed questions, as follows:

1) "The attachment suggests the inclusion of Greek and Latin but they are not listed among the languages we currently teach in this latest letter. What is the plan for the classical languages?"

2) "I understand the rationale for the change. A couple of questions and thoughts: Since part of the rationale is to eliminate the distinction "modern", would the classical languages become part of the department?"

While I understand dropping the use of foreign and the limiting nature of "modern," using the word "world" seems to expansive, given 4 of the 6 regularly taught languages are European and two are Asian. Not so inclusive. However, I don't have any better suggestions.

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Dr. Kathy Porter
UEPC Chair

November 11, 2015

Dear Kathy:

I am pleased to offer my support for the proposal to change the name of the Department of Modern Languages to the Department of World Languages and Cultures. I have reviewed the proposal and find it well conceived and compelling. Further, having consulted on a very similar name change for the language department at my former institution, I am confident that the proposed change reflects the state of the field and current institutional practice in US higher education today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheila Hughes", written over a horizontal line.

Sheila Hassell Hughes, Dean

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