

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

REQUEST TO MERGE DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA AND TO NAME THE NEW DEPARTMENT AS THE DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa to merge the Department of Modern Languages and the Department of English Language and Literature and to name the new department as the Department of Languages and Literature.

Executive Summary: The merged department will absorb the existing programs in the two departments. The proposed name provides a description of the programs and offerings located in the merged department. This request has been reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. This request addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority of “educational excellence and impact” and the goal to be “increasingly efficient and productive.”

Background:

- ◇ Need for the proposed change. The purpose of combining the two departments is to create important strategic advantages for faculty and students and to generate administrative savings. The proposed merger will also facilitate the achievement of the goals in the university’s strategic plan, which includes improving efficiency and promoting interdisciplinary work. The proposed merger will result in cost savings with the need for only one department head. Other efficiencies will also occur because some of the functions that are currently occurring in both departments, such as department newsletters, curriculum design, course scheduling, and paperwork distribution, will be consolidated.

The proposed merger will also promote interdisciplinary work and collaboration on teaching and research initiatives. Issues related to interdisciplinary work, including merit pay and evaluations for promotion and tenure, will be easier to address under the proposed change. The faculty in the two departments will find it conducive to collaborate; the new organizational structure will allow faculty to take advantage of the natural overlaps in curriculum and research areas more effectively.

- ◇ Functional organization of the proposed new department. The proposed department will be administered by one department head. The current head of the Department of English Language and Literature will be the head of the proposed new department.

The two departments have undergone a year-long transition period and have successfully identified how the various departmental functions, such as student advising, course scheduling, and communications/public relations, will be handled. The proposed merger will not affect educational responsibilities with respect to the operation of the academic programs.

- ◇ Effect on existing programs. The proposed merger will not affect existing programs. No programs or courses will be eliminated, changed, or proposed as the result of the merger of the two departments.

- ◇ Effect on students and faculty. The proposed merger is not expected to affect students. Students will not see a change to their programs of study and their progress toward degree completion will not be affected. Faculty members' teaching and research duties will not be affected; they are likely to enjoy new possibilities resulting from easier collaboration with faculty from the opposite department.
- ◇ Proposed new name. The proposed name reflects the model of a combined department which exists at some peer institutions, such as Indiana State University. Some departments also include "Cultures" in their titles (University of Iowa); however, at UNI, the course offerings are reflected in the name of the department.
- ◇ New resources required. The proposed merger will not result in the need for additional resources other than the cost for new letterhead, signage, public relations materials, and website alterations. These are expected to be one-time implementation costs.
- ◇ Date of implementation. The proposed name change will become effective upon approval by the Board of Regents and will be implemented on July 1, 2011.