

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Senate Committee on University Priorities
Memorandum

TO: Senate

FROM: John Waterhouse
Chair, SCUP and
Vice President, Academic

RE: Department of French

DATE: February 13, 2007

The Senate Committee on University Priorities (SCUP) has reviewed the External Review Report on the Department of French, together with responses from the Department and Faculty, and input from the Associate Vice President, Academic.

Motion :

That Senate approve the recommendations from the Senate Committee on University Priorities concerning advice to the Department of French and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences on priority items resulting from the External Review.

The report of the External Review Committee* for the Department of French was submitted in April 2006 following the review team's site visit, which took place March 15-17, 2006. The response from the Department and the response from the Dean were received in October 2006.

The Review team found that 'the Department functions well as an academic unit and both the research and teaching environments are healthy'. A number of recommendations were made and there is general agreement on these recommendations from the Faculty.

SCUP recommends to Senate that the Department of French and the Dean of Arts & Social Sciences be advised to pursue the following as priority items.

1. Strategic Planning

- Develop a strategy that positions the Department uniquely in Western Canada with regard to preparing instructors of French

2. Undergraduate Curriculum and Teaching

- Consider the enhancement of the curriculum through:
 - a. the further development of Content-based language teaching
 - b. the increased use of Information and Communications Technology
 - c. the continuation of seeking possibilities for fostering the francophone environment beyond the classroom
 - d. the introduction of a compulsory study-abroad semester in French
 - e. the continued participation in the Field School program
- Increased interdisciplinarity of the undergraduate program by linking the curricula to other disciplines where possible, enhancing the cultural studies component and exploring new options for joint programs.
- The listing of graduate seminars in the undergraduate offerings and the exploration of opportunities to include research in the undergraduate experience.

3. Graduate Programmes

- Consider the reintroduction of weekly forums to discuss research issues
- Consider the creation of a new professional M.A. concentration in language and culture
- Pursue the creation of joint graduate courses with other cognate areas, such as History, English and Linguistics

4. Research

- Continue to strengthen the research culture of the Department through;
 - a. Supporting new research initiatives
 - b. Seeking out research collaborations within SFU and at other Universities
 - c. Continuing to strengthen a collective research group within the Department.

5. Succession Planning

- Pursue succession planning and the appointment of a Chair for the Department

6. Space

- Review the Departmental space requirements as space inventory becomes available and ensure faculty are kept abreast of progress being made in this regard.

* Dr. Yves Roberge, Chair, (University of Toronto)
Dr. Donald Bruce (University of Alberta)
Dr. Diane Huot, (Universite Laval)

CC John Pierce, Dean of Arts & Social Sciences
Phyllis Wrenn, Chair, Department of French

**EXTERNAL REVIEW
DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

April 2006

Report prepared by: Dr. Donald Bruce
Dr. Diane Huot
Dr. Yves Roberge (Chair)

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1. MANDATE AND MEMBERSHIP

The mandate of the committee was to assess the Department and comment on its strength and weaknesses, and to make recommendations addressing the concerns of the Committee. The committee members were: Donald Bruce (Modern Languages and Cultural Studies, University of Alberta), Maureen Covell (Political Science, SFU, Internal Reviewer), Diane Huot (Langues, linguistique et traduction, Université Laval), and Yves Roberge (French, University of Toronto, Committee Chair).

The following documents were provided to us prior to the site visit: Terms of Reference for the review, a Department of French Self-Study Document, Graduate Student data, Research Funding Data, the 2004 and 2003 French B.A. graduates (BC University Student Outcomes), the President's Agenda (2005-2009), the SFU Three Year Academic Plan (2004-2007), the Faculty of Arts Three Year Plan (2004-2007), the Senior Administrative Structure, the Vice President (Academic) Reporting Structure, a document providing facts about the University, and a map of the campus. During the visit, we were provided with the following additional documents: a report from the SFU Library, the SFU strategic Research Plan (2005-2010), and the postings for the five new positions to be filled by September 2006.

The external review was conducted over a three-day period (March 15-17, 2006) during which we had individual meetings with: Phyllis Wrenn (Chair, Department of French); John Pierce (Dean, Arts and Social Sciences); Réjean Canac-Marquis (Graduate Chair, Department of French); Mario Pinto (Vice President, Research), Professors Rosena Davison, Stephen Steele, Louise Frappier, Linda Bruneau, Christian Guibault, Grazia Merler; John Driver (Dean, Graduate Studies); Randall Martin (Director, International Cooperation and Mobility). In addition, we met other individuals in groups representing: the Administrative Support Staff, the Italian section, OFFA/BAFF, the Linguistics, Literature and Language disciplines, the Library, the Limited Term Lecturers and Instructors, The Field School in Tours, the Graduate and undergraduate students, and the TSSU. We toured the Department, the OFFA/BAFF, as well as other relevant locations on campus.

The committee was impressed by the planning that was made in preparation for the Review both by the office of the Vice President (Academic). Also, the warm welcome and availability of all members of the French Department was outstanding. We would like to express our gratitude to Phyllis Wrenn, Chair of the Department, and the members of the academic and administrative staff for their positive and welcoming participation in the review process.

2. OVERVIEW

The SFU Department of French, which was created following the dissolution of the DLLL in 1988 can be described as an academic department with a service component.

The three principal academic areas covered by the Department are literature, linguistics and French as a second language (FSL). This is a fairly standard configuration for a Department of French outside Québec, however the committee feels that the SFU Department offers an original approach to this mix and would like to make specific recommendations to strengthen this specificity.

Despite its relatively small size, the Department functions well as an academic unit and both the research and teaching environments are healthy. We were impressed by the positive atmosphere we experienced in the Department: this impression was confirmed by comments made by various people and groups external to the Department with whom we spoke. The administrative support staff and graduate and undergraduate students also mentioned the fact that there is good collaboration in the Department and that people get along well. It was occasionally pointed out that some tension had surfaced recently but many attributed it to the stress brought about by the need to fill 5 full time positions. To conduct five searches in one year represents a formidable task in any unit of any size, yet it represents a unique opportunity for change.

Indeed, although most academic units in any institution at any given point can be said to be in a state of transition, the committee feels that this is particularly true at this point in the history of the SFU French Department. In September 2006, there will be 4 new tenure track professors and 1 new lecturer. This will inevitably lead to important forms of renewal and the challenge of the Department will be to rise to the occasion and take full advantage of this opportunity. Our report contains specific recommendations to promote this.

In this respect, we fully endorse the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' Senior Administrators' decisions: 1) to have maintained the French Department as an independent unit following the dissolution of the old DLLL; 2) to show confidence in the Department through the attribution of these new positions. We note that these decisions have allowed and will continue to allow SFU to maintain the profile of French studies as an academic discipline at the same time as providing an important community element through its relations with OFFA/BAFF and other community based entities. Indeed, the success surrounding the launch of OFFA/BAFF is partly attributable to the existence of an independent Department of French. Without this Department, it is not obvious that SFU would have been able to welcome this important new project.

In a similar fashion, we are encouraged by recent initiatives of collaboration with the Faculty of Education, in particular with some co-advising of graduate students. We encourage the new professors and lecturers to seek ever more opportunities of this type. In fact, outside collaborations should be part of the general strategies used by smaller units to raise their profiles. However, successful collaborations are only possible between strong independent units and the Department of French must undertake specific and proactive efforts to ensure that these collaborations are in fact successful and positively received by the faculty members.

Finally, retention of faculty members has emerged recently as an issue but there does not appear at this point to be a systemic retention issue in the Department. This is supported by the fact that excellent new members have recently been hired and that some of the members of the department have been there since early on in their career.

In light of the current shortage of teachers of French as a second language in Canada, the existence and role of a French Department seems essential. Moreover, a Department of French in Western Canada, such as the one at SFU, can position itself advantageously and even develop a specific and highly significant role in addressing that shortage in British Columbia as well as in other Western provinces. This is where the SFU French Department must clearly delineate a strategy which it can pursue in BC and Western Canada, particularly in relation to competing institutions in terms of preparing a new generation of French instructors. This would require targeted consultation with provincial education authorities, BC school boards, the BC College of Teachers, and Faculties of Education. The department's profile in the community and the specificity of its own role could be clearly articulated in this way.

The committee's recommendations appear as numbered paragraphs and are summarized at the end of the report (section 9).

3. TEACHING

3.1. UNDERGRADUATE

The Department offers a strong undergraduate program in which students receive training in all of the disciplines offered in the department (linguistics, literature and FSL). At the same time, there is general satisfaction on the part of the instructors with the quality and dynamism of undergraduate students.

Language

Basically, the language part of the program appeared to be excellent in many respects: the organization and the content of the program, the dynamism and the involvement of the lecturers and the TAs, as well as the level of competence in French attained by the students that we met and their satisfaction towards the program.

Language courses are given by both lecturers and TAs. In practice, lecturers supervise TAs which implies that lecturers are responsible for course content planning, teaching material and testing material preparation and in some cases, classroom observations. This interaction and collaboration between lecturers and TAs contributes to the quality of the program in providing continuity between language courses and a good supervision of the TAs. This approach however implies significant amounts of work on the part of the lecturers.

Due to the departure of two senior lecturers, language teaching is presently given by one lecturer and 8 TAs. This situation results in the lecturer spending most of her time in managing the program and less time developing new courses and pedagogical materials. This situation is temporary and a lecturer should be hired for next fall.

It should be noted that language teachers have already initiated a change: they have started integrating ICTs into their language teaching by using Can8 or WebCT, whether this be in preparing Internet language teaching activities or a course webpage. TAs' interest regarding ICTs is also obvious through the conferences that they have recently attended. This ICTs side could be developed even further through administrative and financial support, since the potential and interest are already in place.

Also, the use of Can8 has led to a full capacity use of the lab such that the need for a second lab will soon be necessary. The lab, of course, plays a very specific support role and is not intended to 'replace' instructors and direct interpersonal contact between language learners and language instructors.

Composition of the language part of the program appeared to be appropriate, however the organisation of the courses in the existing degree framework leads to the situation where students do not attend language courses in their fourth year of the BA. This situation should be re-examined in order to give opportunities to students to take advanced level language courses in 4th year. There is also a need for a writing course in the 4th year and for a specific preparatory course leading to the PDP.

Moreover, given the fact that the French program also includes linguistics and literature courses as well as language courses, the option of CBI (content-based instruction) should be examined. Such an option could help 4th year students develop both their language skills and their knowledge of linguistics and/or literature. It would also contribute to the raising of students' writing proficiency by the end of the program.

In order to multiply the opportunities of exposure to French language for the students and to maintain their actual level of knowledge, students should be continually invited to participate in French socio-cultural and other activities. This could be organised beyond the classroom activities with the collaboration of the OFFA/BAFF.

Also, in order to increase exposure to French, there should be a concerted attempt to develop a mandatory "study abroad" semester. Though there are problems related to this type of project, its value is inestimable and the presence of this component in the program could further underline the specificity of the SFU French program.

We recommend therefore:

1. That the department explore ways of using Content-based language teaching along with the literature and linguistics courses.

2. That the department pursue the initiatives already undertaken with respect to the use of ICTs, such as those with Can-8 and WebCT, and explore new possibilities of integrating ICTs to language teaching.
3. In order to increase exposure to French in Vancouver, explore ways to foster a francophone environment beyond the classroom experience. This could be done in collaboration with OFFA/BAFF.
4. In order to increase exposure to French outside Vancouver, explore the possibility of a compulsory study abroad semester in French. The organisation of the study abroad program could be done with SFU International. A study abroad Advisor should be involved in that process.

Linguistics

We found that the faculty members involved in the Linguistics section of the Department had a very sound and realistic view of their role in the undergraduate program. The main objective of the French linguistics program is to further knowledge of the French language through the application of the methodological and theoretical tools of linguistics. We note however that the higher level courses offered in the department ensure that students who graduate with a degree in French and with a concentration in French linguistics have received the training they need to pursue graduate studies in linguistics.

It is important to note that two of the new hires will be in linguistics (sociolinguistics and French as Second Language). These are excellent choices for this Department. They represent two important areas of the study of language that will serve to complement existing strengths in the core areas of phonetics/phonology and syntax. They will also contribute to the strengthening of the Department as a whole inasmuch as they can link up directly to the language program either through sociocultural aspects (sociolinguistics) or through pedagogy (FSL). However the effect of this is that the French linguistics complement will be made up of 3 assistant professors and one associate professor. This can create various practical problems (promotion, leaves, leadership, unity of the team). This is of course compounded by the upcoming retirement of a senior linguist who is active in the administration of the department.

Literature

There are currently two 'veteran' literature professors, one new Assistant professor, and one professor who is leaving for another university. Two new professors will be hired. The course structure is relatively traditional, built as it is along chronological and generic lines. The departure of senior colleagues has caused some difficulty in terms of course offerings, workload, and supervision, but opened the door for renewal at the same time. Overall, the program is very competently delivered with the resources available.

Two key areas which could be fruitfully pursued in literary studies and which would make the SFU literary studies program more competitive in relation to other programs across Canada are as follows:

5. the development of more links with the colleagues in linguistics. French studies in general has a strong and well developed tradition of philological, structural linguistic, and semiotic analysis of literary texts/cultural products. By collaborating with colleagues in linguistics, it may well be possible to strengthen this (formal) dimension of the literary studies program in terms of the tools of textual analysis. In other words, more overt 'bridging/linking' to other disciplines could be encouraged.

6. the development of a more overt cultural studies component of the literary studies program would be beneficial. This would allow for greater conceptualization of texts and other cultural products in analytical frameworks other than chronological or generic, embed literature in a wider array of cultural practices, and strengthen the theoretical component of the program.

The enhanced development of both of these elements within the literary studies program would not only better prepare students for further study (eg. an MA in French), but also prepare the students to handle more advanced tools of critical analysis. What seems to be needed in the existing program is a more consciously overt realization and implementation of theoretical and methodological strategies in relation to the pedagogical goals of the program. Coupled with enhanced linguistic proficiency at the senior level, this could well provide graduating students with superior skill levels in their discipline.

The arrival of new colleagues in all areas of the department will undoubtedly enhance the above mentioned possibilities for development. However, in order that the process be promoted, the committee feels that the department should develop a comprehensive strategy to attain these goals and maximize human and intellectual resources. This requires a critical examination of existing structures, not necessarily with an eye to replacing them but rather to renewal and enhancement.

To enhance undergraduate students' understanding of the research process, perhaps some new pedagogical activities could be envisaged: either credited activities in the form of an 'undergrad discovery seminar' or a course component integrated into existing courses; or uncredited activity in the form of a research group, research forum, or colloquium. Though this must be organized differently from what is undertaken at graduate level, the addition of this component could strengthen the profile of the undergraduate program in literary studies.

7. Given the fact that the joint major which is currently offered attracts strong students, we recommend that the department explore new options for joint programs. Humanities, English, and Linguistics represent natural possibilities. The Department's self-study document points out that the language of instruction can be an obstacle to the

development of joint programs since all their undergraduate courses are offered in French; see comment under recommendation 13 below for graduate studies.

8. In order to increase the options available to interested advanced undergraduate students to further their training in either French literature or linguistics, especially for those who intend to do graduate work in those areas, we recommend that some of the graduate seminars offered by the department be cross-listed in the undergraduate offerings (with undergraduate designators). Appropriate prerequisites should be determined by the Faculty member responsible for the graduate seminar.

9. One of the current initiatives in Universities across Canada is the inclusion of research in the undergraduate student experience. We encourage the academic staff of the department to find ways to achieve this. The most natural way to implement this recommendation is to link undergraduate activities to existing funded research projects through: 1) independent studies in which one or two advanced undergraduate students participate to the research activities of the Professor; or 2) advanced fourth-year research seminars lead by a Professor in the context of his or her research project; or 3) the inclusion of 'discovery style seminars or components' in the undergraduate pedagogical strategy.

Italian

We are very pleased to see that the Italian component of the department has been strengthened by new external funding. There seems to be a high degree of satisfaction in this area. The small Italian section seems happy with the level of support it has received from the department.

Field school

The field school organized by the Department in Tours seems to function very well and enjoys a high level of participation and satisfaction from interested students. In the present circumstances, it appears that problems may arise in finding coordinators to go to Tours.

10. We recommend that the Department consult with SFU International to develop strategies to ensure continuity in the Department's participation in the Field School program. Possibilities include a new location in France that would be of potential interest to more than one Faculty member and finding ways to facilitate the participation of junior members, keeping in mind that they will soon represent the majority of the Department's complement.

3.2. GRADUATE

The Department offers an M.A. degree with specialization in either French literature or French linguistics. While it may be possible to envisage that, in the long term, a Ph.D. program might be feasible, the committee feels that this is not a viable option in the short to medium term. In fact, though such a program could evolve independently, it may also arise through collaboration with another institution (such as UBC). Current levels of resources would need to be strengthened and strategically realigned before this could be possible.

There is general satisfaction with the graduate program. The university administration expressed satisfaction with the recent increase in enrolment figures and with the internal operation of the program. For their part, the students were impressed with the quality of the Faculty members involved in the graduate program and they appreciated the fact that the undergraduate language program, especially the first year courses, provided them with valuable teaching experience and financial support. With respect to funding, the formula adopted by the University favours Doctoral students. Increases in enrolment figures would not significantly improve the Department's share of this funding. For the moment, it appears that more significant improvements would come from external sources of funding; graduate fellowship and scholarships as well as research assistantships in funded research projects. Indeed, the Professors agreed that the health of their graduate component is directly linked to the level of research activity in the Department. The relationship is crucial.

No major changes are needed at this level. However, the committee believes that a few areas should receive some attention in the near future.

11. Time to completion is a significant issue for graduate students, but is not specific to this Department as many units experience similar problems. In order to improve time to completion and to stimulate the research environment in which graduate students carry out their program, we recommend that the department establish a weekly M.A. forum in which the students present and discuss their research with their colleagues and Professors. The forum should be opened to all M.A. student but be compulsory in the second year for all M.A. students registered in the thesis or project streams. This is not equivalent to FREN 803-5.

With the new wave of Professors expected to arrive in September 2006, it should be possible to define more precisely the specificity of the SFU graduate program (compared to others in Canada), to give it more structure, and to create new options within the program. Enthusiasm, personal energy, and a pro-active attitude are key factors in engaging graduate student participation in the research culture of the department.

12. We recommend that the Department explore the prospect of creating a new concentration in language and culture within the M.A. program, possibly in consultation with OFFA/BAFF. This would be a professional development MA for established

professionals (in school boards, civil service, etc). Inasmuch as the typical student in this program would not require internal funding this could be a potential source of revenues for the University and a way to increase the Department's share within the current graduate funding formula. New courses do not necessarily need to be created; existing offerings could be rebundled and some of the courses in this M.A. program could be taken in English outside the Department (Art History, Political Science, etc.).

13. In order to improve choices in course selection for graduate students, we recommend that the Department create a limited number of joint graduate courses with other cognate units (History, English, Linguistics, and others). The issue of the language of instruction can be resolved by offering the course in English with an extra hour in French reserved for graduate students in French. Term work for French graduate student should be done in French. The linguistic aim of a degree in French is proficiency, not intellectual exclusion based on language. Adherence to this principle will authorize a wider participation with colleagues working in English beyond the bounds of the department.

4. RESEARCH

With the recent or impending departures and the arrival of a significant number of new faculty members, it is difficult to establish clearly the research identity of the Department at this moment. However, the research output described in the Department's self-study document is excellent and while there is always room for improvement, the level of external research funding is adequate for a unit of this size within the Humanities.

Inevitably, there will be a renewal of interest and a new understanding of the research component of the Department. As noted earlier, this will have a direct positive impact on the graduate program. In addition, it may not be obvious yet how the Department fits into the SFU Strategic Research Plan. But with the arrival of new faculty members and the redefinition of the department research objectives they will be able to develop strengths internally in research in order to align themselves with this Plan.

To provide a framework for this renewal, we recommend:

14. That the Department take steps to foster the development of a strong research culture by encouraging in every way it can the members who show initiative in that respect.

15. That the Department consider a variety of strategic new research collaborations (Faculty of Education, Harbour Center downtown campus, UBC, among others) in order to reinforce its reputation as a research oriented Department. This would obviously create new prospects for funding.

16. That the Department consider the establishment of a collective research project/group which could mobilize a large number of colleagues and students, and assist in developing a research culture, perhaps secure a collaborative SSHRC grant, and raise the profile of

the department. Examples of this are the numerous Groupes de recherches which abound in Quebec universities, U of T projects such as the Graffigny Project, the Helvetius Project, or (the much more ambitious) Zola Project. The Margot Project at the University of Waterloo is yet another example.

5. DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATION

The administrative structure of the Department does not appear to be overly heavy (a positive quality) and it is efficient and appropriate for the size of the Department.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the Department relates to the impending retirements of most senior members of the Department and the administrative vacuum that this will create. Because a great majority of the members will be not only junior but also new to the Department and SFU, there will be a very real and serious need for some experienced leadership and mentorship in the Department. The changes that will occur in the Department within the next few years represent a unique opportunity for SFU to significantly raise the profile of its already excellent French Department. As an institution, SFU must ensure that optimal results will obtain and that sufficient leadership exists in order to lead this renewal in a productive direction and in a collegial atmosphere.

17. We recommend that a senior Faculty member with administrative experience be hired as soon as possible to assume the leadership of the Department during its peak period of renewal.

As for the administrative support staff, we were impressed by their commitment to the Department as a whole and to the students more specifically and by their high level of competence. They in turn expressed a generally high level of satisfaction with their work environment. However, the recent implementation of the Peoplesoft system means that they perceive an ongoing transfer (i.e. downloading) of responsibilities to the departmental level. This appears to be a non-negligible source of stress. Yet, it would also appear that small corrections on the part of senior administration would be sufficient to alleviate this.

18. We recommend that funding be provided to the Department for the hiring of a part-time budget assistant, to be shared with other units.

6. RESOURCES AND PHYSICAL SPACE

In addition to the recommendation for the hiring of a senior Faculty member and a part-time budget assistant, the issue of physical space and place is considered by many in the Department to be serious and complex. A move away from the Department's current location seems inevitable and it is not part of this committee's mandate to argue against such a move. However, it seemed quite clear to us that some discontent with this move

exists in the Department and that the central administration of the Faculty perceives this as a lack of cooperation. A state of uncertainty is partly responsible for this state of affairs. For instance, while a new location seemed to have been decided upon during our site visit, towards the end of our stay, we were led to believe that other locations might be possible. In order to remedy this we recommend:

19. That a new location for the Department be determined and finalized as quickly as possible.

20. That the administration of the Department ensure that as much information as possible regarding the move and the new location be passed on to the members on a regular basis.

21. That the Department take steps to ensure that the relocation be used as an opportunity for positive change, especially in the context of the impending renewal in its complement.

22. That the new physical space include the following key minimal requirements: departmental seminar rooms, dedicated research labs for Professors (particularly in linguistics), dedicated space for the writing center, increased space for the language lab, a departmental common room.

Finally, proximity to OFFA/BAFF was deemed necessary by some members of the Department. While it would certainly be desirable and productive to maintain such proximity, this committee does not feel that it should be a decisive factor in the determination of the Department's new location.

Both library resources and the relationship between the Department and library staff appear to be very positive. There are no difficulties in this area.

As a final point, the Department should work in collaboration with the central administration of the Faculty and the TA union to enhance the pedagogical support that TAs receive. In particular, this could be done through pedagogical workshops at the beginning of the academic year and enhanced ongoing mentoring and supervision throughout the year.

7. COLLABORATIONS AND OUTREACH

We have already touched upon issues of existing and possible collaborations in Section 4. The Department appears to be very actively involved in the francophone community outside SFU. This is part of the specificity of the Department and we encourage the continuation of these initiatives.

The currently strong relationship with OFFA/BAFF is extremely important and must be maintained and enhanced. This is a perfect example of a strategic collaboration and link

with the community that is mutually beneficial to all parties involved (Department, Institution, OFFA/BAFF, and francophone community).

8. CONCLUSION

To conclude this report we can ask how the SFU French department compares to other French departments in Canada. First, we must recognize that there are a great many variables: some French units are free standing, some are combined into units of various kinds (eg. UBC: essentially a Romance Languages department; U of Alberta: a modern languages and cultural studies department with 16 languages; Toronto: a free standing but much downsized department spread over numerous colleges). This huge diversity across the country makes direct comparisons somewhat hazardous. Second, we must also recognize that this department is in the midst of a substantial renaissance and that it is very much a 'work in progress' the results of which will depend largely on the quality of its faculty members, sessional instructors, support staff, and graduate students—not to mention its leadership and the level of support provided by senior administration. All these factors play a role in this department, which is in the midst of multiple changes.

At present this is a solid upper middle level department. However, it has excellent potential for moving ahead significantly with new resources, energy, strategic planning, and leadership. It is at a point where generational change can create challenges and equally large opportunities. We see nothing which can objectively hinder this highly positive development and believe that at the time of the next review the department will have redefined itself and posited the elements necessary to rank it amongst the very best French departments in the country.

9. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. that Content-based language teaching be developed.
2. that the use of ICTs be enhanced.
3. that ways to foster a francophone environment in Vancouver beyond the classroom experience be explored.
4. that the possibility of a compulsory study abroad semester in French be explored.
5. that more overt 'bridging/linking' to other disciplines be encouraged in order to strengthen the literary studies section.
6. that the cultural studies component of the literary studies program be enhanced.
7. that the Department explore new options for joint programs.

8. that some of the graduate seminars offered by the department be cross-listed in the undergraduate offerings.
9. that the academic staff explore ways to include research in the undergraduate student experience.
10. that the Department consult with SFU international to develop strategies to ensure continuity in the Department's participation in the Field School program.
11. that the Department establish a weekly M.A. forum and perhaps an appropriate undergraduate equivalent through 'discovery' components.
12. that the Department explore the prospect of creating a new concentration in language and culture within the M.A. program.
13. that the Department create a limited number of joint graduate courses with other cognate units.
14. that the Department take steps to foster the development of a strong research culture.
15. that the Department consider a variety of strategic new research collaborations.
16. that the Department consider the establishment of a collective research project/group involving a substantial number of colleagues and students.
17. that a senior Faculty member with administrative experience be hired as soon as possible to take the direction of the Department during its peak period of renewal.
18. that funding be provided to Department for the hiring of a part-time budget assistant, to be shared with other units.
19. that a new location for the Department be determined and finalized as quickly as possible.
20. that the administration of the Department ensure that as much information as possible regarding the move and the new location be passed on to the members on a regular basis.
21. that the Department take steps to ensure that the relocation be used as an opportunity for positive change, especially in the context of the impending renewal in its complement.
22. that the new physical space include the following key minimal requirements: departmental seminar rooms, dedicated research labs for Professors, dedicated space for the writing center, increased space for the language lab, a departmental common room.

Department of French

External Review 2006

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEWERS (approved at a departmental meeting, September 21, 2006)

PREAMBLE

The External Review of the Department of French was conducted in March, 2006, when the department was engaged in a significant faculty recruiting campaign, to fill five continuing faculty positions (in a 13-member department). That recruiting drive has now concluded successfully, our new colleagues are now on campus and have participated in the preparation of the department's response to the External Reviewers' report.

We are gratified and pleased that overall the Report of the External Reviewers is very positive. The Reviewers have conducted a thorough assessment of the department and provided detailed recommendations addressing the various components of our programs, our academic and scholarly activities, as well as the level of administrative support and resources provided to the department.

Their recommendations are entirely in sympathy with the department's priorities : maintaining our reputation for excellence in the teaching of French, promoting student bilingualism in a largely non-francophone environment, for innovation in instructional methods, for multi-disciplinary program content integrating both literature and linguistics as full and equal partners ; and, not least, maintaining and promoting our status as an academic unit committed to the pursuit of knowledge both in our students and in our personal and collective research agendas.

We must nevertheless keep in mind that we are still a relatively small department, and once again a young one, and the involvement of junior, untenured faculty in the process of renewal of the department's programs and activities must not be at the cost of their individual careers : establishing themselves as teachers and as scholars, with an independent research program should be their, and the department's, priority.

We shall address the specific recommendations of the External Reviewers in two parts.

Part I (prepared by the Department Chair with input from faculty at large) includes :

Undergraduate Curriculum and Teaching, and
Administrative Support

Part II (prepared by the Graduate Program Chair with input from graduate, research faculty) includes :

Graduate Curriculum and Teaching, and
Research

PART I

UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM AND TEACHING (Recommendations 1 – 10)

Recommendations 1 – 10 address classroom methodologies and curriculum development, including interdisciplinary collaboration, and ancillary activities.

Language teaching (Recommendations 1 and 2)

(1) Content-based language teaching. The Reviewers suggest first that the department “explore ways of using Content-based language teaching along with the literature and linguistics courses”. While it is true that the sequence of introductory and intermediate language courses have as their priority the teaching and acquisition of essential language structures, we note that certain other language courses do already satisfy the Reviewers’ recommendation : FREN 215 – Intermediate French : Oral Practice, as well as FREN 300 – Advanced French : Oral Practice, are designed to develop listening comprehension and oral expression via the study and discussion of material related to local, national and world francophonies ; FREN 301 – Advanced French Composition, a Writing-Intensive course, develops written communication skills via the study and analysis of texts chosen for their logical structure, content, and style. Additionally, a variety of French Cohort Program (FCP) courses taught in French are content-based: FREN 212; FREN 221; FREN 225; HIST 102; POL 100; POL 221; POL 329; POL 359; POL 459; POL 497; CNS 160; CAN 210; HUM 321. These courses may be taken by non-FCP students, with permission, as space permits. The current level of instructional resources does not permit the addition of new courses to the Language Program, but certain existing courses could be modified, where appropriate, to qualify as content-based courses. For example, FREN 307 – French Vocabulary is most suitable to be adapted in this way, with the addition of some literary, linguistic or cultural content, to become “content-based”.

It is proposed that this topic be referred to the department’s undergraduate curriculum committee for discussion.

(2) The use of ICTs. Since the last external review (1999), the use of WebCT has been extended to all 1st, 2nd and 3rd year language courses. On the other hand, although Can8, as well as other software, has been gradually integrated to several language courses, its use has been limited by the paucity of resources : the French Department has access to only one multi-media language laboratory (our own RCB 7404), which has only 25 places. The Can8 license permits only 25 users at any one time. Consequently, only one class can use the facility and the software at any given time. Hours of non-class access to the laboratory are constrained by the limited amount of funding available for staffing of the facility (there is no staff position, merely funding of two part-time student monitors) as well as by the lack of available time-slots. With an average of 30-odd sections of the multi-section language courses in a regular semester, this situation is clearly inadequate : even with a limited access to the laboratory for each language course (with multiple sections), the facility is now running to its full capacity and does not meet the needs of all language courses and their numerous sections.

The development of ICT material is at present constrained not by a lack of expertise, but by competing demands on the time of the team of Lecturers responsible for the language program, one of whom is currently on full-time secondment to an administrative position with OFFA/BAFF. Lecturers may take one non-teaching semester in nine (in other words, one every three years), to be devoted to projects such as the development of ICTs.

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In short, while we recognize that this recommendation is of paramount importance, the development of this teaching support facility requires that additional resources be provided, both physical space and instructional support.

Italian

Although it is not reflected in its title, the Department of French is also responsible for Italian courses and teaching staff. We note that the External Reviewers have made no recommendations regarding this aspect of our programming and activities, but we wish to draw the attention of the administration to what we have accomplished with the necessary financial support having been made available (thanks to external funding). One-semester sessional appointments having been replaced with a faculty position, the number of sections of the basic language courses has been increased, providing work also for Teaching Assistants (in 2005-2006 one TA, this year two TAs) ; all sections operate at capacity enrollments.

In addition to the initial 5 years' external funding, the Vice-President Academic and the Faculty Dean have committed themselves to providing further internal funds in order to establish an Endowed Chair in Italian Studies, in accordance with the original agreement with the Cassamarca Foundation. This will give the Department of French and the newly established Certificate Program in Italian Studies a wider humanistic option.

In addition to the core language program, the department also provides Italian language training at the Surrey campus, for the SIAT Field School in graphic design, and at the Burnaby campus for the Prato Field School in English/Humanities. As the number of course offerings, and enrollments, expands (from three sections of one course in 2004 to eight sections in three courses in 2006), the integration of ICT in the language pedagogy is frustrated by our inability to provide the necessary laboratory time, the timetable of our single multi-media language laboratory being fully occupied by the French language program. The provision of additional laboratory space is essential.

Beyond the SFU language classroom (Recommendations 3 and 4)

We know only too well the importance of using one's French outside the classroom, and are mindful of the challenges involved in promoting bilingualism in a region far removed from even a predominantly French-speaking environment.

(3) We have in the past sponsored extra-curricular activities such as an annual *weekend d'immersion à Squamish* open to all students in French, a class day-trip to Granville Island *en français* ; such undertakings will continue, and on the model of the day-trip *en français* a series of field trips would be appropriate and could be integrated into the curriculum, especially for courses offered during the Intersession (May-June), thanks to their intensive timetable. The department collaborates with OFFA/BAFF in organising events for the annual *Semaine de la francophonie* ; activities are normally scheduled to include students during different French classes. We also encourage student participation in French cultural events organized by OFFA/BAFF and FSU (French Student Union) or activities staged outside the university. Visits to local cinemas, theatres and the Vancouver International Writers Festival already occur from time to time and will continue. Invited speakers are scheduled as far as possible to coincide with an appropriate course, thus guaranteeing a public for the speaker, as well as providing this type of exposure for the students.

(4) The suggestion of a compulsory study-abroad semester is in keeping with SFU's goal of enabling every student to benefit from an international experience as part of his/her degree requirements. Cost is a significant obstacle, as well as other commitments and obligations (SFU students have jobs, they have young children). We are certainly sympathetic to the motivation for this recommendation ; a sustained period of immersion in a francophone environment is a significant benefit to the development of linguistic

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competence and cultural awareness. Students are encouraged to take advantage of *Myexplore* (formerly the Summer Language Bursary Program) that allows them to study French in Québec or elsewhere in Canada and receive language credit. Having noticed that many students have not heard of this program, we intend to promote it in our 1st, 2nd and 3rd year courses and encourage students to apply ; it would be useful to invite students who have participated in this program to attend information sessions and talk about their experience, as is done in promotion of the Field School.

Students also have the option of spending a semester or a year abroad on an Exchange program (exchange agreements are in place with several French universities, as well as Quebec post-secondary institutions), in addition to having access to the alternative Field School format. A semester abroad integrated into the Major/Minor program is certainly an avenue to explore. Since it is already a component (3rd year of studies) in the French Cohort Program, the department could work on this project in collaboration with OFFA/BAFF.

It is essential that more funding be found if such options are to be available to all students.

For some students, participation in a Co-op program, and working for one semester each year in a francophone environment, is an option. Examples of available opportunities include Assistant d'anglais in a school in France, or, with the Federal Government of Canada (HRDC), Designated Bilingual Employment Officer.

Enhancing the academic curriculum (Recommendations 5, 6 and 7)

As the External Reviewers have noted, one of the strengths of the department is its combination of expertise, in equal parts, in both literature and linguistics.

The literary studies program offers students learning in many areas of textual analysis including formalist approaches to literature associated with certain branches of linguistics such as semiotics and narratology (where students make interesting connections with their linguistics studies). The program also gives students an opportunity to learn about literature from equally important social, historical and political perspectives.

Existing courses, FREN 410 – French Stylistics, in which linguistic approaches to French stylistics are applied to the analysis of literary texts, and FREN 476 – Interdisciplinary Approaches in French Literature, and FREN 491 – Readings in French Linguistics and/or Literary Criticism, provide a bridge between literature and linguistics.

FREN 330 – Francophone World explores literary forms in their cultural context. It would be possible to co-teach such a course, or FREN 476, for example with a linguist studying the language variety used by the author, and its socio-cultural context, complementary to the literary analysis of the text in question. This possibility will be explored in future discussions of the undergraduate curriculum committee.

(6) Cultural studies are already present in literature offerings (FREN 475 – The Contemporary Novel incorporates history, philosophy and sociology into the study of the literary texts, FREN 330 incorporates history, political science, even economics, into the course) and will surely increase in the future, with new faculty in both literature and linguistics who will bring more cinema and popular francophone culture to the classroom.

(7) We will continue to make students aware of existing joint majors with English and Humanities and the popular French/History/Political Science major program, that attracts significant numbers of students.

The Reviewers' suggestions of new options for joint programs are somewhat puzzling, because we already have joint majors with Humanities and with English, two of their suggestions. Discussions to formalize ties with Linguistics have been underway for some time, as noted in our own Self-Study Report.

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Possibilities exist in our curriculum for offering special purpose courses (such as French for Business), but there is often, realistically, a limited clientele in such cases, making regular offerings of such courses a luxury.

Enhancing the academic experience of talented advanced undergraduates (Recommendations 8 and 9)

(8) The FREN 480 seminar, which has always been part of the curriculum, was designed to be an extension of a concurrent fourth-year course in literature or linguistics, and is available for the purpose the Reviewers suggest, **cross-listing with a graduate seminar to bring interested and worthy undergraduates into graduate seminars**. In fact, it was used this past semester (Summer 2006) for precisely that. This practice will be continued.

(9) **The inclusion of research in the undergraduate student experience.** This is a good suggestion, and would be a good way to recruit candidates for the Masters program. More students could be actively encouraged to take the Honours BA option, which of course includes a research-based honours essay. Some 4th year courses, available to all upper-level students, also do require completion of a research-based term paper. Faculty does try to recruit talented undergraduates as Research Assistants ; such opportunities are exploited in faculty members' personal research, as well as in "Espaces Culturels francophones en Colombie-Britannique", a collaborative research project originated at SFU and involving faculty in the department and colleagues at other institutions.

The Field School (Recommendation 10)

(10) **Continuity in the department's participation in the Field School program.** The Department will continue to work with SFU International to strengthen the existing field school and negotiate an arrangement with Tours or transfer to a new site. The Department Chair spent a week in France this summer with Judith Phillips, Acting Director of SFU International, doing precisely that, exploring possibilities for new links ; discussions are continuing with Université Catholique de Lille and with Université de Basse-Normandie, Caen. The agreement with Tours will be renewed. We are considering the possibility of alternating the annual Field School between Tours and a second, yet-to-be-identified site. All faculty, including recently-appointed junior faculty, are encouraged to participate ; actually participating requires, however, that they be free from other commitments and responsibilities to do so.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT (Recommendations 17 – 22)

(17) **The next Department Chair.** The current Chair's term ends April 2007 and a replacement is needed for May 2007. Discussions with the university Administration (the Faculty Dean and the Vice-President, Academic) and within the department, are underway ; the department's preference is to be communicated to the Dean by mid-October. The External Reviewers' recommendation, that a senior Faculty member with administrative experience be hired as soon as possible to take the direction of the department, is prompted by the obvious consequence of the series of retirements and faculty renewal that the department is undergoing (the series of retirements is not yet complete).

(18) **Funding for part-time budget assistant.** The Dean's office has hired a revolving Departmental Assistant, partly in response to concerns resulting from the implementation of the new information and financial management systems. Yet to be ensured is that smaller departments will receive the help that they need. It must be recognized that although they may be dealing with smaller numbers, they are nevertheless dealing with the same range of tasks, and are expected to do so with fewer resources than the large departments. In the Department of French, one of the smallest departments in the Faculty, the Departmental Assistant is also the Student Advisor for the undergraduate program.

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(19, 20, 21 and 22) **Physical space.** The department has already been told that it will be moved to the West Mall Complex (19). Information has consistently been passed on to members of the department when it was available (20). In June the department struck an *ad hoc* space committee that provided a response to the Associate Dean's original proposal for allocation of space in WMX ; this resulted in a modified proposal from the Associate Dean, which addressed some deficiencies in the original proposal. Significant deficiencies (e.g. laboratory space), however, remained. The department's response to the revised proposal, including a meeting between the Acting Chair and the Associate Dean (July 2006), remains unanswered at this time.

(22) As noted in answer to Recommendations 1 and 2, above, a **second multi-media language laboratory** is a priority ; it is required to provide scheduled laboratory time to the Italian program, as well as adequate access time for the large number of French classes desiring access, and to permit an adequate amount of time and spaces for drop-in use by students working on language assignments outside the scheduled class time. Dedicated space for the **Writing Centre** is also essential if this important support function to the promoting of excellence in written communication in all intermediate and advanced French courses (which contributes to the campus-wide initiative to improve student writing skills) is to be maintained. The steady erosion of dedicated and pedagogically convenient instructional space in recent years must be reversed if we are to continue to provide the quality second-language training for which we have acquired a justly-deserved reputation.

Adequate dedicated **research space**, for faculty members and graduate students / research assistants, is also a necessity, in view of the Administration's commitment to academic excellence in research. The department's submission to the Office of the Dean contains precise specifications for this component of its physical space requirements.

The department is also responsible for the documentation contained in the **Centre d'Études Francophones Québec-Pacifique** ; this space must be preserved.

And finally, **departmental seminar rooms**, and a **departmental common room**, on a par with facilities that other departments in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences enjoy, are crucial to maintaining the high level of departmental functionality that has always been one of our assets.

(21) If the above concerns are addressed, then indeed the relocation would be seen and used as an opportunity for positive change, rather than simply a convenient solution to the need for re-alignment of existing space, accomplished at the expense of a small department.

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PART II

The department welcomes the positive assessment of the graduate program and faculty research output and we are in agreement with the Reviewers' acknowledgment of the tremendous impact that research faculty renewal will have for the future. As literally half of the research faculty was appointed in 2006, new orientations and specializations in research will develop and impact on the graduate program, which will undoubtedly profit from it. As well, new opportunities for research and program collaborations within and outside the department should emerge and further support a direction already described in the Department's Self-Study report prepared for the External Review. However, as pointed out at the outset of this response document, developing these opportunities of collaboration should be done mindful of the priorities of new junior non-tenured faculty members, namely the development of their own independent research programs.

GRADUATE PROGRAM (recommendations 11-13)

The report speaks of general satisfaction with the graduate program in its structure, its administration, in the quality of its faculty teaching/supervision and its financial support to students. Some recommendations are made about the development of the curriculum (12-13) and toward increasing student participation in the research activities (11).

11. Students' participation and weekly forums. The department will consider different formats to the existing ones for the presentation of student and faculty research. Currently, graduate students regularly present their research work within graduate seminars and are encouraged to participate in (student) workshops and conferences. Regular faculty and student presentations were actually in place in 2005, but have been put to rest during the massive faculty renewal. These activities, along with guest speakers invited in conjunction with specific courses, will resume and could be extended to a larger public, in particular with the collaboration of the OFFA/BAFF. The suggestion of making presentations a requirement in the development of a thesis proposal could be considered as a further venue for the presentation of student research work.

Weekly meetings as suggested in the report, are nevertheless an ambitious undertaking given the limited number of students (which we hope our efforts will continue to increase) and faculty members.

12. Creation of a new professional concentration in language and culture. This proposal has good merit. For one, a new research faculty member specializing in language and culture and hired to a position financed by the OFFA/BAFF has started his appointment in September 06. Other new members of the research faculty could also contribute to this concentration, namely in cinema and theater. As soon as new faculty members settle in, discussion on such an initiative will be entrusted to a French graduate curriculum committee whose mandate will be to facilitate the integration of new faculty expertise in the existing program and assess the need to develop new graduate courses and possibly, new programs, accordingly.

Of note: The French Department used to have a successful professional diploma (Master's in the Teaching of French) in the 80's, but it was suppressed by the University. Renewed collaboration with the Faculty of Education (see recommendation 15 below) will perhaps allow launching a new professional diploma geared toward teaching professionals.

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13. Creation of joint graduate courses to improve course selection. Course selection has been restricted by research faculty renewal in the last year or so, but the arrival of 5 new colleagues in 2006 should correct the situation in the very near future. The issue of the language of pedagogy is an important one to the Department: While reviewers suggest that "The linguistic aim of a degree is proficiency, not intellectual exclusion based on language", the Department considers that oral and written language proficiency in an isolated French minority context requires using French as much as possible, i.e. French as a medium as well as a subject matter. That being said, graduate students are permitted to follow 1 or 2 courses outside the department (depending on the program option) and under special circumstances, are allowed to write and/or defend their Masters' thesis in English. The development of courses taught in English, with term work written in French, is not excluded, but these would ideally be reserved for special joint (professional) programs instead of the core French program.

As the core French graduate program settles in with its new faculty composition, formal collaboration with other units, such as Education and Linguistics, but also History, Political Science etc., will be envisaged. (Of note: individual faculty collaboration with Linguistics, English, Education and Women Studies through co-supervision and/or graduate seminars participation/invitation is already occurring). In that regard, the model developed for a French-language cohort BA in Public Administration and Community Services, with the support of OFFA/BAFF, could inspire joint graduate program developments. Indeed, French speaking faculty members being hired in e.g., Education, History, and Political Science could be involved in future joint graduate program curriculum development in French.

RESEARCH (recommendations 14-16)

The report speaks of the impact of the massive faculty renewal on the development of research in the department. The research profile and identity of the department will be redefined and new expertise will develop. To provide a framework for this renewal, the report encourages departmental support for a strong research culture (14), increased research collaboration (15) and the establishment of a collective research group within the department (16).

14. Support for a strong research culture. A strong research culture already exists in the department, as evidenced by the active research program of the faculty, its "excellent research output" and "adequate level of external research funding". The addition of new active colleagues should only stimulate further this positive research environment. The Department intends to strongly support new research initiatives and encourage new faculty members in applying for external research funding early in their tenure track. The addition of new faculty members is also an opportunity to actively recruit graduate students from within the undergraduate program. The web site of the department will also be updated to reflect the newly added expertise, and a new graduate program pamphlet will be prepared and distributed across Canadian and foreign universities to publicize our updated research specialties and graduate program options.

15. Consider a variety of strategic new research collaborations. Research collaborations with other SFU units have already increased significantly in the last couple of years: Co-direction of students (4) within the faculty of Education, the Departments of English and Women Studies, presentation by our faculty members at colloquia and/or guest speaker in graduate seminars (Dept of linguistics). Our department will support more research collaboration, perhaps leading to joint research projects and joint programs. The prospect of formal collaborations with UBC is something that could also be revisited in the future, having been explored a few times in the past. However, for new faculty members, the expansion of research collaboration outside the department should not, in the short and mid term, be

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prioritized over the development of their own research programs. Research collaboration should be a means of increasing research strength, not establishing it.

16. Establishing a collective research project/group within the department. Such a collective research project already exists : *Espaces culturels francophones en Colombie Britannique*, is funded by the SSHRC, involved 6 faculty members in the last 3 years and is the main project hosted by the *Centre d'études Francophones Québec-Pacifique*. The main investigator, Dr Guy Poirier, has since left the department but remains as adjunct professor. The Renewal of our faculty is a golden opportunity for the continuation and development of the project.

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
MEMORANDUM

To: Bill Krane
Associate VP Research

From: John T. Pierce
Dean, FASS

Subject: French External Review

Date: October 16, 2006

The external review makes three key points: the teaching and research programs are "healthy"; given the number of new hires the department is "in the midst of a substantial renaissance and that it is very much a 'work in progress'"; and perhaps most importantly, with judicious strategic planning the department has the potential to become among the "very best" in the country. Overall, this is a highly positive assessment of a unit that is very student centred, and that, at the same time, is focused upon improving the quality and diversity of the research and learning environments. There is also clear evidence of excellent outreach to the francophone community and collaboration with OFFA/BAFF.

The external review offers 22 separate recommendations. The department's response to these recommendations is both informed and measured. It is not my intention to comment on all recommendations because the vast majority can be accommodated internally and fall more in the domain of suggestions as opposed to imperatives for improvements.

There are, however, five issues which I consider to be imperatives and when acted upon will require support/direction from my office.

- 1) Given the increased reliance upon ICTs in undergraduate French instruction, the expansion in student enrollment in Italian and the preparation for the Italian field school, planning must commence for additional lab space. We will also examine the need for additional instructional resources.
- 2) We will attempt to plan for the needed additional space in the new facilities that the department will inherit in WMC in Spring of 2007, along with other space requirements for both faculty and students.

- 3) The issue of succession planning looms large in the French department. The reviewers recommended the recruitment of an external chair. The VP Academic and I have met twice with the department to discuss the merits of this. The department voted in favour of proceeding internally and I am awaiting word on nominations. If none appear I will approach the VP Academic for permission to search externally.
- 4) The external review made suggestions regarding new programming opportunities at the undergraduate level with OFFA/BAFF and at the graduate level for teachers of French with the Faculty of Education. I encourage these initiatives and will work toward their development.
- 5) Related to the previous point is the need to be strategic in positioning the department in Western Canada. The external review comments as follows: "This is where the SFU French Department must clearly delineate a strategy which it can pursue in BC and Western Canada, particularly in relation to competing institutions in terms of preparing a new generation of French instructors."

JTP/rt

Cc: P. Wrenn, Chair, Dept. of French