

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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**Interoffice Communication**

**Date:** July 14, 2005

**To:** Claudia Baldwin  
President, Faculty Senate

**From:** Benjamin J. Allen  
Vice President for Academic Affairs  
and Provost

**Re:** Proposal for a Department Name Change

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has presented the attached proposal to change the name of the Department of Foreign languages and Literatures to “World Languages and Cultures.” As has been our practice for previous name change requests, I ask that the Faculty Senate Executive Board review this proposal and provide comments to me.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

cc: Michael Whiteford, Dean  
Dawn Bratsch-Prince, Chair of FL&L

## Interoffice Communication

**DATE:** March 17, 2005

**TO:** Mike Whiteford, Dean, Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Zora Zimmerman, Assoc. Dean, Liberal Arts and Sciences

**FROM:** Dawn Bratsch-Prince, Chair,  
Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, 300 Pearson

**RE:** Proposed Department Name Change

After more than a year of discussion and careful consideration, the faculty of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures has voted to change the name of the department to "Department of World Languages and Cultures." With this memo, we are requesting that the college consider and support this change.

The Department of Modern Languages at Iowa State was first formed in 1899 as the site of foreign language instruction for the university. In 1969, the department name was changed to Department of Foreign Languages as classical languages were added. Several years later, the name was expanded to Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures to acknowledge an expansion of the curriculum.

For the past decade, the department has struggled with the problematic term "foreign" used to describe the teaching of languages other than English. As the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages recognizes in its Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century, the term foreign "is becoming increasingly problematic within the U.S. context. Many of the languages taught within our schools are not 'foreign' to many of our students (e.g., Italian, Chinese, or Spanish) nor are they 'foreign' to the United States (e.g., Native American languages, American Sign Language, Spanish, or French)" (27). This is further supported by the extensive data on language diversity presented in the Modern Language Association Interactive Language Map ([www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org)) which is based on the 2000 U.S. Census.

Given the virtual scope of our discipline, and keeping in line with the accepted professional nomenclature, we have chosen the term "world" languages to identify more broadly and more positively our scholarly endeavors. The national trend in naming foreign language departments is undergoing a rapid transformation: at many large research universities (e.g., University of Massachusetts - Amherst, University of Tennessee - Nashville) small individual language departments are being combined into larger, more viable departments, in part for administrative savings, but also to allow the combined units to expand their scope to include

literature in translation, cultural studies, linguistics, translation, area studies, etc. While at present only a few institutions of higher education have taken on the name "world languages" (e.g., University of Buffalo, Indiana University/Purdue University - Indianapolis, Humboldt State University, Juniata College), many state-wide school districts and regional language associations have made the switch, for instance, we now have an Iowa World Language Association. We understand that English is a world language, too; however, our primary focus is on the intersection of languages and cultures other than English, including their intersections with the English-speaking world in increasingly globalized societies. Our Iowa State colleagues in Linguistics and TESL (Department of English) support this name change and the increased collaboration it will foster between our programs.

Within the context of Iowa State University, the FLL department faculty believe that the proposed name change reflects the critical transformation evident in our efforts as scholars and teachers. For the past several years, the department has worked to realign its mission with that of Iowa State University of Science and Technology. This realignment has prompted a scholarly and curricular shift from more traditional literary studies to the richer field of the study of culture, which includes scholarly examination of a wide range of humanistic texts and other artifacts. This broadening of emphasis has, in part, developed out of increasing numbers of students, many in professional degree programs, who pursue second majors in languages. At the national level, our profession has witnessed an awakening to the importance of area studies, international studies and the study of world cultures for undergraduate students. The department is now in the process of infusing international, area, and culture studies in courses targeted to students in professions. The U.S. Dept. of Education UISFL grant we have received recognizes the progress we have made in this direction.

In summary, the recontextualization of the department's mission increases our relevance and centrality to the mission of Iowa State in the twenty-first century by emphasizing our global focus in two broad areas: world languages (e.g., proficiency based learning, linguistics, language for specific purposes, translation and interpretation) and world cultures (e.g., media, literature, non-literary texts, film, civilization). The "Department of World Languages and Cultures" is ready to assume a leadership role in internationalization on this campus.

cc: Doug Epperson, Assoc. Dean, Liberal Arts and Sciences  
David Oliver, Assoc. Dean, Liberal Arts and Sciences

## Interoffice Communication

**DATE:** September 6, 2005

**TO:** Claudia Baldwin, President, Faculty Senate

**FROM:** Dawn Bratsch-Prince, Chair,  
Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, 300 Pearson

**RE:** Proposed Department Name Change for Foreign Languages and Literatures

The faculty of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures requests that the Faculty Senate consider and support a change of our department name to "**Department of World Languages and Cultures.**" With this memo, we provide a rationale for the proposed change as well as a summary of the approval process we have followed to date.

### **Rationale:**

The Department of Modern Languages at Iowa State was first formed in 1899 as the site of foreign language instruction for the university. In 1969, the department name was changed to Department of Foreign Languages in order to acknowledge the addition of classical languages. Several years later, the name was expanded to Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures as a means of explicitly recognizing the study of literature as one of the primary areas of our scholarly endeavor. This name has remained unchanged for over thirty years.

For the past decade, the department has struggled with the problematic term "**foreign**" used to describe the teaching of languages other than English. As our flagship organization, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, recognizes in its *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*, the term foreign "is becoming increasingly problematic within the U.S. context. Many of the languages taught within our schools are not 'foreign' to many of our students (e.g., Italian, Chinese, or Spanish) nor are they 'foreign' to the United States (e.g., Native American languages, American Sign Language, Spanish, or French)" (27). This position is further supported by the extensive data on language diversity presented in the Modern Language Association Interactive Language Map ([www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org)) which is based on the 2000 U.S. Census.

Given the scope of our discipline, and keeping in line with the accepted professional nomenclature, we have chosen the term "**world**" languages to identify more broadly and more positively our scholarly endeavors. The national trend in naming foreign language departments is undergoing a rapid transformation: at many large research universities (e.g., University of Massachusetts - Amherst, University of Tennessee - Nashville) small individual

language departments are being combined into larger, more viable departments, in part for administrative savings, but also to allow the combined units to expand their scope to include literature in translation, cultural studies, linguistics, translation, area studies, and the like. While at present only a few institutions of higher education have taken on the name "world languages," many state-wide school districts and regional language associations have made the switch, for instance, we now have an Iowa World Language Association. We understand that English is a world language, too; however, as an academic unit our primary focus is on the intersection of languages and cultures other than English, including their intersections with the English-speaking world in increasingly globalized societies.

Within the context of Iowa State University, the faculty in Foreign Languages and Literatures believes that the proposed name change reflects the critical transformation evident in our efforts as scholars and teachers. For the past several years, the department has worked to realign its mission with that of Iowa State University of Science and Technology. This realignment has prompted a scholarly and curricular shift from more narrowly focused literary studies to the broader field of the study of culture, which includes scholarly examination of a wide range of humanistic texts and other artifacts. On a national level, our profession has also witnessed an awakening to the importance of area studies, international studies, and the study of world cultures for undergraduate students. At Iowa State this broadening of emphasis has, in part, come about in response to the increasing numbers of students, many in professional degree programs, who pursue a second major in languages and cultures. These students seek learning opportunities not entirely met by a more traditional language and literature curriculum. While this change in student need is not unique to Iowa State, this university is in a unique position to lead curricular change nationally, by combining world language and culture study with an emphasis on science and technology. The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures has begun the process of infusing international, area, and culture studies in courses targeted to students in other disciplines such as Engineering and Business. We seek outward acknowledgement of this scholarly and curricular transformation through the requested name change to "World Languages and Cultures."

In summary, the recontextualization of the department's mission increases our relevance and centrality to the mission of Iowa State in the twenty-first century by emphasizing our global focus in two broad areas: world languages (e.g., proficiency based learning, linguistics, language for specific purposes, translation and interpretation) and world cultures (e.g., media, literature, non-literary texts, film, civilization). The "Department of World Languages and Cultures" is ready to assume a leadership role in the internationalization of undergraduate education on this campus.

**Process:**

After much discussion, the faculty in Foreign Languages and Literatures voted unanimously on May 4, 2004 to approve a department name change. This faculty decision was communicated to dean Michael Whiteford in writing in July 2004 at which time we also requested college-level discussion of the chosen name "World Languages and Cultural Studies."

Discussion of our proposed name change coincided with the dissemination in December 2004 of the "New Horizons" initiative developed by the college of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The "New Horizons" initiative proposed the formation of a "Center for American Inter-Cultural Studies." The potential conflict between the Center and our new name was evident; there was also some

informal resistance to our use of the term “cultural studies” by other units in the college. The full faculty in Foreign Languages and Literatures discussed this issue at our March 2005 business meeting at which time we voted (14-5) to move forward with our second naming option, “World Languages and Cultures.” We agreed to move forward with the name that won majority support, “World Languages and Cultures,” because *there continued to be unanimous agreement that the our department needed a new name to represent better our new vision.*

The college’s decanal staff unanimously approved “World Languages and Cultures.” I subsequently contacted humanities and social science department chairs by email and/or phone on in March 2005 in order to solicit feedback from their faculty on our proposed name change. I received responses from Shu-Min Huang (Anthropology), Charlie Kostelnick (English), Carol Chapelle (Prof. in Charge of Applied Linguistics), Tony Smith (Philosophy), Whitney Sanford (Prof. in Charge of Religious Studies), and Andrejs Plakans (History) that our name change brought about no objection among the faculty in their units. In April 2005, the LAS Chairs Cabinet discussed and voted unanimously to support the proposed name change to “World Languages and Cultures.” With the endorsement of the faculty and administration in Liberal Arts and Sciences, we now bring this name change request to the Faculty Senate for its support.