

Steering Committee on New Structures for Languages in Higher Education

Annual Report, 2012–13

Submitted by Jane Hacking and Catherine Porter, cochairs

24 September 2013

The SCNSL was established pursuant to a recommendation from the Executive Council's planning group on the MLA's language agenda. The SCNSL replaced an informal working group that was composed mostly of council members and that organized a preconvention workshop at the 2012 convention in Seattle. Its period of operation is 1 July 2012–30 June 2014. The committee is a joint committee of the MLA and the ADFL; it is cochaired by Jane Hacking (Univ. of Utah), representing the ADFL, and Catherine Porter (State Univ. of New York [SUNY], Coll. at Cortland). The MLA's representatives on the committee are Debra Ann Castillo (Cornell Univ.) and Patrick Bray (Ohio State Univ., Columbus). Dawn Bratsch-Prince (Iowa State Univ.) and Timothy Scheie (Eastman School of Music, Univ. of Rochester) represent the ADFL. To provide continuity, the committee also includes two members of the precursor working group—Karin Ryding (Georgetown Univ.) and Lynne Tatlock (Washington Univ. in St. Louis). Since being established the committee has met three times in New York at MLA headquarters and once at the MLA convention in Boston (Jan. 2013), and it has conducted business via conference call and e-mail.

The SCNSL was charged with establishing an outreach program that has come to be known as the Language Consultancy. Following the successful preconvention workshop held in Seattle in 2012, the SCNSL organized and facilitated a half-day preconvention workshop for seventeen participants at the 2013 MLA convention in Boston under the general heading of "New Structures in a Changing World," with a specific focus on curriculum and governance. A copy of the report summarizing and evaluating the discussion from the 2012 workshop session is attached.

In preparation for launching a consultancy program open to all ADFL departments, members of the SCNSL have conducted six pilot consultancy visits:

January 2012. Dept. of Modern Languages, DePaul Univ.; Patrick Bray.

May 2012. Modern language depts., SUNY; Rosemary Feal and Catherine Porter.

September 2012. Dept. of Romance Languages, Harvard Univ.; Nelly Furman.

April 2013. Dept. of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics, Univ. of
Oklahoma; Dawn Bratsch-Prince.

May 2013. Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Nazareth Coll.; Nelly Furman.

August 2013. Dept. of Modern Languages and Literatures, Loyola University, Chicago;
Dawn Bratsch-Prince.

These activities and the SCNSL meetings have facilitated the development of a structure and set of resources for consultants. The Language Consultancy has been formalized as a service offered to ADFL-member departments and is advertised on the ADFL Web site. The SCNSL is in the process of finalizing criteria for selecting consultants, preparing information sheets for consultants and departments, and drawing up evaluation procedures for site visits. Oversight of the Language Consultancy will transition to the ADFL Executive Committee over the next months.

**Language Consultancy Workshop
 MLA 2012 Convention
 Evaluation Responses Summary**

19 Responses Total (of 34 participants)

Question #1: What led you to attend the preconvention workshop?

- 11 respondents noted current or anticipated curricular revision
- 05 respondents noted timeliness or importance of the topic
- 02 respondents noted interaction with colleagues
- 01 respondent noted succeeding in an environment increasing hostile to the humanities
- 01 respondent noted voting rights

Question #2: How would you rate the workshop overall?

- 13 "excellent"
- 06 "good"

Question #3: What did you find valuable about the workshop?

- 15 respondents noted interaction/discussion with colleagues across institutions
- 06 respondents noted bringing ideas/strategies back to campus
- 06 respondents noted the task-based format or that the format allowed many issues to be addressed
- 01 respondents noted potential outcomes of workshop – listservs, best practices Web site, etc.
- 01 respondent noted morale

Question #4: What could have made the workshop more successful?

- 13 respondents noted more time
- 02 respondents noted more keeping groups more closely on task and/or clearer definitions of group topics
- 02 respondents noted organize follow up subgroups by institution type or by participants' amount of experience
- 01 respondent noted more subgroups addressing curricular, governance, and hiring
- 01 respondent noted more preplanned presentations showcasing successful programs
- 01 respondent noted circulating materials to participants before workshop
- 01 respondent noted discussing 2007 report and comparing it to the realities of colleges and universities
- 01 respondent noted the opportunity to interact with colleagues outside of own subgroup

Question #5: Please tell us about topics or issues you'd like to see addressed at future workshops

- 05 respondents noted curricular reform – including curricular reform for 21st century teaching
- 04 respondents noted study abroad programs
- 01 respondent noted that a follow up "debriefing" workshop would be helpful

Other responses to question #5:

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| critical theory as a tool for transcultural competence | independent innovations | strategies for persuading reticent colleagues and pushing the dept. as a whole towards the common good |
| dealing with insular fossilization departmental decision making faculty development | internationalization of curriculum language program recruitment linking outcomes | strategies for advocacy teaching quality the conflicting needs of majors vs. general education students the response to the 2007 report |
| governance | non-proficiency-based models for language assessment | |
| heritage learners' specific needs | online courses -- opportunity or threat? | top-down vs. bottom-up change |
| hiring sessions | promoting literature in language courses | workshops tailored to various institution or program types |
| improving proficiency of students | recruiting more majors | challenges particular to large study abroad programs |

Question #6: How could the MLA be more useful to you as you address issues of departmental change? For example, would you be interested in participating in an on-line discussion group? Attending a summer seminar? Hosting a site visit by an MLA team?

09 respondents said they would like all three: online discussion list; attending a Summer Seminar; hosting a site visit

03 respondents said they would like to host a site visit

02 respondents said they would like to participate in both: online discussion list, and hosting a site visit

02 respondents said they would like to participate in both: online discussion list, and attending a Summer Seminar

01 respondent said they would like more attention devoted to publishing opportunities for junior faculty members

01 respondent said s/he would like the MLA convention to be combined with ADFL seminars

01 respondent said s/he would like online archives containing group discussions and info about department structures

01 respondent said s/he would like to see work towards steering graduate programs to train language generalists

Note: Except for question #2, questions were open ended and participants could list as many topics/answers as they chose; for this reason, the number of answers does not equal the number of respondents.