Montana University System
INTENT TO PLAN FORM

Program/Center/Institute Title: B.A. in Linguistics

Campus, School/Department: University of Montana - Missoula

Contact Name/Info: Mizuki Miyashita

To increase communication, collaboration, and problem solving opportunities throughout the MUS in the program/center/institute development process, please complete this form not more than 18 months in advance of the anticipated date of submission of the proposed program/center/institute to the Board of Regents for approval. The completed form should not be more than 2-3 pages. For more information regarding the Intent to Plan process, please visit http://mus.edu/che/arsa/academicproposals.asp.

1) Provide a description of the program/center/institute.

The Linguistics Program aims to establish a major in linguistics. The proposed program of study would include (i) training in core areas of linguistic analysis (phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax); (ii) advanced study in areas such as sociolinguistics, language development, historical linguistics indigenous languages, language endangerment, and computational linguistics; and (iii) coursework in one or more languages other than English. In addition to providing students with a comprehensive understanding of linguistics, the major is designed to develop transferable skills such as critical thinking, data collection, data processing, and data analysis. The proposed program would complement our existing degree offerings (minor; MA) and would create the first major in linguistics in the State of Montana.

2) Describe the need for the program/center/institute. Specifically, how the program/center/institute meets current student and workforce demands. (Please cite sources).

The Linguistics Program at University of Montana is the only program in Montana offering degrees in linguistics. Currently, an MA and undergraduate minor are offered. The proposed addition of a linguistics major will close the curricular gap between degrees, allowing students to pursue their interest in linguistics in a consistent and focused way. Currently, students wishing to major in linguistics must either attend an out-of-state school or settle for a different major (e.g., Anthropology or English) in order to earn an Option in Linguistics. In addition to being less satisfied, these students are often less prepared for advanced study or the workforce.

As the Times Higher Education notes:

The skills acquired during a linguistics degree can be adapted for most industries. Direct career paths that can be followed are: lexicographer, speech and language therapist, languages teacher, copy editor, proofreader or a role in communications. Other career paths may include, but are not limited to, the civil service, marketing, journalism, law and IT. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/subjects/what-can-you-do-linguistics-degree

The Linguistics minor has experienced increased interest as enrollments decreased since peaking AY 2010-2011, the first year it was awarded. Five students declared it then; it increased the next year to 12. After its second year, seven students had earned it. Seven also earned it AY 17-18 and in AY 16-17, when many fewer students attended. We believe that, as enrollments trend upward, students declaring Linguistics as a major will increase accordingly. In brief, we consider the momentum as of now small but significant and propose it should be developed now.
3) Describe how the program/center/institute fits with the institutional mission, strategic plan, and existing institutional program array.

Our proposed Major in Linguistics is well-aligned with the UM Mission, the 2010 Strategic Plan, and the new Strategic Vision. In addition, the proposed program will enhance collaboration across existing programs at UM.

Promoting linguistic diversity is an essential component of UM’s core mission to provide “unique educational experiences through the integration of the liberal arts, graduate study, and professional training with international and interdisciplinary emphases” (p4). In a world where linguistic discrimination often masks ethnic discrimination, our proposed Linguistics major will not only educate students about linguistic diversity but also equip them with the skills needed to confront these local and global challenges.

The proposed program emphasizes the core values of the 2020 Strategic Plan - leadership, engagement, sustainability, and diversity - through focus on (i) documenting linguistic diversity at local and global levels, (ii) conducting original fieldwork in which students actively engage with speakers of understudied languages and (iii) exploring strategies for language sustainability to address the current vulnerability of 90% of the world’s languages. Students emerge from our program with the skills and tools to be engaged leaders of local and global communities and institutions.

The proposed program aligns directly with UM Strategic Vision, Strategic Opportunity 3, by providing multiple opportunities to Partner with Place. The major includes coursework focusing on Montana and other Indigenous languages of North America (e.g., a seminar on Blackfoot Linguistics tailored to undergraduates); a course on Native North American Linguistics and a course on Language Ecology. In addition, faculty research on languages spoken in Montana is integrated into multiple other courses.

As noted above, the Linguistics Program at University of Montana is the only program in Montana offering degrees in linguistics. The proposed Major will fill the gap between our currently offered Minor and MA degrees, satisfying the needs of current students who wish to major in linguistics, and that of future students who currently must choose between remaining in-State and majoring in linguistics. Moreover, the intrinsically interdisciplinary nature of the field of linguistics provides natural avenues for collaboration with multiple programs across campus including Communicative Sciences and Disorders, Native American Studies, Environmental Science, Psychology, Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures, Anthropology, English, Communication Studies, Sociology, Education, Information Technology, and Computer Science.

4) Describe how the program/center/institute overlaps, compliments, or duplicates existing efforts in the MUS.

Currently, two linguistics degrees are offered in the State of Montana: a minor and an MA. Both are offered by the Linguistics Program at UM. The proposed major will complement these degree offerings and will create the only major in linguistics in the State of Montana.

Signature/Date

College/School Dean: [Signature]

Chief Academic Officer: [Signature]

Date: 7-31-2018
Chief Executive Officer: [Signature]

Flagship Provost*: [Signature]

Flagship President*: [Signature]

*Not applicable to the Community Colleges.

Date of Final Review:

When submitting the proposal to the BOR, include this signed form with the Level II request.