

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE & LIBERAL ARTS

Office of the Dean

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Fadi P. Deek, Provost & Senior Executive Vice President

FROM: Dr. Kevin D. Belfield, Dean of the College of Science & Liberal Arts

SUBJECT: Proposal to Modify the Name of the Department of Humanities

DATE: April 27, 2021

The social sciences are recognized as one of the key strategic growth areas in the College of Science and Liberal Arts (CSLA) in its 2025 strategic plan. Prior to 2005, the Department of Humanities was formally known as the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences. Over the past 18 months, departments and personnel within CSLA have been exploring a number of possibilities to better recognize the social sciences and to facilitate its growth and collaborative potential, including development of new degree programs, student and faculty recruitment, and expand collaborative research. At this time, the Department of Humanities, with my strong support, would like to modify its name to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The Department of Humanities is currently home to the BA and BS Communication and Media, BA Theatre Arts and Technology, BS Science, Technology, and Society (STS), and, recently, the BS Cyberpsychology program, the latter two are clearly programs in the social sciences. A proposal for a MS Cyberpsychology program is nearing completion and a PhD program in Cyberpsychology is being planned. As mentioned, the social sciences are a key growth area for the college.

Better recognition, through formal acknowledgment in the department name, will greatly assist both student and faculty recruiting. The current department name has led to some confusion in recruiting students to the STS and Cyberpsychology programs along with faculty as it's not obvious to either group of stakeholders where these programs reside. Reverting to the former departmental name will make great strides to not only reduce this ambiguity but, importantly, set the stage for growth in enrollment, enhance the recruiting of well-qualified faculty, and expand research opportunities as funding agencies emphasize collaborations between the physical, life, computational sciences and engineering and the social and behavioral sciences.

The two most recent endowed scholarships in the college are both in the social sciences, i.e., one on STS and the other in Cyberpsychology, indicative of the growing support in this area. I might also add that the required GER senior seminars all possess the HSS (Humanities and Social Sciences) prefix. Attached are four appendices containing the departmental proposal and process, list of names of the departmental P&T committee, list of departmental eligible voters, and list of attendees at April 21, 2021 department meeting. The change in name and support of the social sciences in CSLA will position us well for the future while better aligning us with our peers and aspirational institutions.

APPENDIX 1

Proposal to Change the Name of the Department of Humanities

Maurie Cohen, Chair, Department of Humanities

April 23, 2021

Background

The Department of Humanities has been considering for several years – and in various formats – different propositions to change its name so as to more comprehensively encompass its full range of activities. For over 18 months, departments within CSLA have been exploring how to better recognize the social sciences to foster both growth and collaboration with programs and faculty within the college, including creation of a new School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and reverting back to the former name of the Department of Humanities (i.e., the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences). The current configuration of departmental degree programs and personnel, as well as associated university-wide transformations, prompt this proposal at this time. More specifically, the intent is to give formal recognition of the social sciences (manifested in the BS Cyberpsychology and BS Science, Technology, and Society programs), to acknowledge evolutionary changes that have accumulated over the past several years, and to set the stage for future success in both curricular innovation (including development of MS and PhD programs in Cyberpsychology) and research productivity.

The details of this proposal are presented in three sections focused on rationale, process, and next steps.

Rationale

The Department of Humanities has existed under its current nomenclature for approximately the past fifteen years. Prior to this time, the unit was known as the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, so the current proposal represents a reversion to the situation that existed prior to 2005. Earlier curtailment of “social sciences” was the result of a series of events arising from faculty retirements, personnel reassignments, and budgetary retrenchment. These circumstances were managed by encouraging NJIT undergraduate students with interests in the social sciences to enroll in courses at Rutgers University-Newark (RU-N) while continuing to maintain a nominal presence in several social scientific disciplines that was not duly demonstrated in the truncated name.

Over the past decade, the Department has successfully rebuilt (and in some respects newly built) its capacities in several social scientific fields, most notably sociology, psychology, and policy studies and is currently expanding its footprint in political science and anthropology. Restoring the more comprehensive name will help to achieve the following objectives:

- Enable the Department to recruit high-caliber faculty and to communicate to stakeholders a more accurate identity.
- Align NJIT’s system of departmental organization more closely with peer institutions that have unified academic units that span both the humanities and the social sciences.

Notable examples are Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences), Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences), Clarkson University (Department of Humanities and Social Sciences), and Northeastern University (College of Humanities and Social Sciences).

- Establish more firmly NJIT's status as a R1 Carnegie classification university.
- Situate NJIT more favorably in the company of other engineering-intensive institutions such as the Georgia Institute of Technology, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Purdue University that have robust programs in the humanities *and* social sciences.
- Advance goals consistent with NJIT's and CSLA's 2025 strategic plan, including a commitment to innovative pedagogy and transdisciplinary scholarship and growth of the social sciences.

Process

In early April, the Department requested guidance from the Provost's office regarding the administrative steps required to initiate a name change. On April 9, the following instructions were provided:

1) The proposed change should be shared with the members of the affected department. The proposal need simply include the reasoning behind the new name and how/if it impacts and members of the department (faculty, staff, students).

If approved at the departmental level;

2) Dean submits a formal request to the Provost. If the Provost supports the request he will next:

a) share with the Dean's Council,

b) request Faculty Senate leadership to add to their agenda for discussion with their membership

If there is concurrence among these groups;

3) An announcement is made at the Board of Trustees' Academic Affairs & Research Committee informing them of the change.

To initiate these procedures, the Chair organized an anonymous online poll on April 12–13 of the Department's Promotion & Tenure Committee to solicit members' views with respect to the following proposition (see Appendix 1).

The Department of Humanities should change its name as soon as can be practically achieved to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The outcome of the poll of the P&T Committee's 10 current members was 8 voting yes and 2 voting no, reflecting an 80% favorability response.

Following this affirming outcome, the Chair distributed an announcement in the following days to the entire Department (a total of 46 individuals who serve in a variety of capacities; see Appendix 2) inviting them to attend a previously scheduled departmental meeting on April 21. This communication also provided notification that there would be a discussion of the proposal as well as a second and more expansive poll to gauge the intentions of the full Department.

A total of 36 colleagues attended the meeting and joined in a robust conversation. During and following this discussion, all attendees participated in an anonymous online poll (6 additional individuals voted on an absentee basis; see Appendix 3). The overall result was as follows:

31 (74%) Yes
8 (19%) No
3 (7%) Abstain
42 (100%) Total

The two polls, both individually and in combination, express a strong intent for the proposed change of name to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences. Such a modification is not expected to result in adverse impacts to faculty, staff, or students.

Next Steps

As noted above and consistent with NJIT's procedures for shared governance, consideration of this proposal entails review by the CSLA Dean, the Provost, the Dean's Council, the Faculty Senate, and (ultimately) by the Board of Trustees' Academic Affairs & Research Committee.

The final meeting of the Faculty Senate for the Spring 2021 semester is due to be held on May 11. Working toward this deadline would enable the proposal to reach the Board of Trustees in a timely manner and, if approved, enable the Department to work with its administrative partners to implement this modification during the upcoming summer.

APPENDIX 2**Members of the Department of Humanities' Promotion & Tenure Committee**

1. Julie Ancis (Professor)
2. Maurie Cohen (Professor and Chair)
3. Chris Funkhouser (Professor)
4. Britt Holbrook (Associate Professor)
5. Carol Johnson (Associate Professor)
6. Andrew Klobucar (Associate Professor)
7. Burt Kimmelman (Distinguished Professor)
8. Bernadette Longo (Associate Professor)
9. David Rothenberg (Distinguished Professor)
10. Nancy Steffen-Fluhr (Associate Professor)

APPENDIX 3**List of Eligible Voters in Poll on Departmental Name Change**

1. Adam See (Lecturer)
2. Andrew Klobucar (Associate Professor)
3. Bernadette Longo (Associate Professor)
4. Britt Holbrook (Associate Professor)
5. Burt Kimmelman (Distinguished Professor)
6. Calista McRae (Assistant Professor)
7. Carol Johnson (Associate Professor)
8. Catherine Siemann (Lecturer, Director/Writing Center)
9. Charles Brooks (Professor of Practice)
10. Christopher Funkhouser (Professor)
11. Daniel Douress (Staff/Theater Program)
12. Daniel Estrada (Lecturer)
13. David Rothenberg (Distinguished Professor)
14. Doris Fleischer (Senior Lecturer)
15. Gareth Edel (Lecturer)
16. Heidi Young (Administrative Staff)
17. Jake Slovis (Lecturer)
18. James Lipuma (Senior Lecturer)
19. Jerome Paris (Staff/ESL)
20. Johanna Deane (Lecturer, FYWP)
21. John Egan (Senior Lecturer)
22. John Esche (Lecturer)
23. Jonathan Curley (Senior Lecturer)
24. Julie Ancis (Professor)
25. Katherine Tyrol (Lecturer)
26. Kim Chen (Lecturer, FYWP)
27. Louis Wells (Senior Lecturer)
28. Louise Castronova (Senior Lecturer)

29. Maurie Cohen (Professor and Chair)
30. Megan O'Neill (Assistant Professor)
31. Michael Kerley (Staff/Theater Program)
32. Michele Rittenhouse (Director/Theater Program)
33. Miriam Ascarelli (Senior Lecturer)
34. Nancy Steffen-Fluhr (Associate Professor)
35. Neel Khichi (Senior Lecturer)
36. Nina Pardi (Senior Lecturer)
37. Ray Gintner (Staff/Theater Program)
38. Rebekah Rutkoff (Assistant Professor)
39. Risa Gorelick (Lecturer, FYWP)
40. Rodney Reyes (Staff/Theater Program)
41. Theresa Hunt (Senior Lecturer)
42. Vanessa Phillips (Lecturer, FYWP)
43. Vanessa Velez (Administrative Staff)
44. Victoria Livingston (Staff/ESL)
45. Winifred Cummings (Administrative Staff)
46. Yelda Semizer (Assistant Professor)

APPENDIX 4**List of Attendees at April 21 Departmental Meeting**

1. Miriam Ascarelli (Senior Lecturer)
2. Charles Brooks (Professor of Practice)
3. Louise Castranova (Senior Lecturer)
4. Kim Chen (Lecturer, FYWP)
5. Maurie Cohen (Professor and Chair)
6. Jon Curley (Senior Lecturer)
7. Johanna Deane (Lecturer, FYWP)
8. Gareth Edel (Lecturer)
9. John Egan (Senior Lecturer)
10. John Esche (Lecturer)
11. Ray Gintner (Staff/Theater Program)
12. Risa Gorelick (Lecturer, FYWP)
13. Britt Holbrook (Associate Professor)
14. Theresa Hunt (Senior Lecturer)
15. Carol Johnson (Associate Professor)
16. Neel Khichi (Senior Lecturer)
17. Burt Kimmelman (Distinguished Professor)
18. Andrew Klobucar (Associate Professor)
19. James Lipuma (Senior Lecturer)
20. Victoria Livingstone (Staff/ESL)
21. Calista McRae (Assistant Professor)
22. Nina Pardi (Senior Lecturer)
23. Jerry Paris (Staff/ESL)
24. Vanessa Phillips (Lecturer, FYWP)
25. Rodney Reyes (Staff/Theater Program)
26. Michele Rittenhouse (Director/Theater Program)
27. David Rothenberg (Distinguished Professor)

28. Rebekah Rutkoff (Assistant Professor)
29. Adam See (Lecturer)
30. Yelda Semizer (Assistant Professor)
31. Catherine Siemann (Lecturer, Director/Writing Center)
32. Jake Slovis (Lecturer, FYWP)
33. Nancy Steffen-Fluhr (Associate Professor)
34. Kate Tyrol (Lecturer)
35. Vanessa Velez (Administrative Staff)
36. Heidi Young (Administrative Staff)

**6 voters participated on an absentee basis (Total = 42)*