

Approved by the Regents
July 19, 2007

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION

ACTION REQUEST: Approval to Establish an Academic Department
NAME OF DEPARTMENT: Department of Comparative Literature
EFFECTIVE DATE: September 1, 2007

The College of Literature, Science, and the Arts requests approval to reorganize its Program in Comparative Literature into a Department of Comparative Literature.

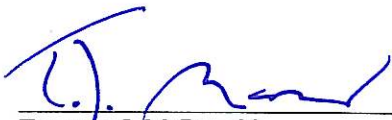
Comparative literature is a well-established discipline internationally, nationally, and at the University of Michigan. In existence since 1937, the Program in Comparative Literature has a long history that has been marked by gradual but steady expansion. Until the 1970s, the program trained Ph.D.'s and subsisted with minimal budgetary and administrative support. Following an external review in 1977, however, it sprang into new life. New theoretical approaches and critical debates within the discipline were introduced into the program under the leadership of Ross Chambers (1978-1981) and Stuart McDougal (1981-1997). According to the next external review in 1986, the program had "made its way into the top fifteen programs in the country..." An undergraduate major was launched in 1984 and in 1986 Comparative Literature was designated a "strong program" with its own faculty lines and budget. By the late 1990s, the Program in Comparative Literature, traditionally a conduit for literary and cultural theory on campus, had become a meeting ground for a wide range of disciplines attractive to diverse audiences. Under the leadership of Simon Gikandi (1997-2000), the program pursued a profile beyond European literatures and was given the right to grant tenure to its faculty.

The last and most recent expansion has come under Tobin Siebers (2000-present) who has sought to consolidate the program with strong interests in international diversity and interdisciplinary exchange. In addition to the Global Ethnic Literatures Seminar, Comparative Literature has promoted a series of team-taught and cross-listed seminars co-sponsored with other units, such as the Departments of Classical Studies, History, Anthropology, Sociology, and German, as well as the School of Music, Theatre & Dance. Graduate students have an impressive record in competing for internal and external fellowships, and they have increasing success in academic job placement. In the most recent National Research Council (NRC) and the National Arts Centre (NAC) Ranking of Graduate Research Programs (1993), Comparative Literature at Michigan was ranked fifteenth overall among degree conferring programs.

The Dean and Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts carefully reviewed the recommendations of the program's request and came to an agreement that Comparative Literature should be given departmental status. The Executive Committee approved a motion to forward this request to the Regents on March 13, 2007. We anticipate no financial costs associated with this change.

Recommended by:

Recommendation endorsed by:



Terrence J. McDonald
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor,
Professor of History, and Dean
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts



Teresa A. Sullivan, Provost and
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

July 2007