Approved by the Board of Trustees

November 17, 2022

8

Board Meeting

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# ESTABLISH THE DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE AND WORLD LITERATURE, COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES, URBANA

**Action:** Establish the Department of Comparative and World Literature, College of

Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Funding:** There is no anticipated impact on faculty resources, size, teaching loads,

course enrollments, technical resources, or facilities.

The Chancellor, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Vice President, University of Illinois with the advice of the Urbana-Champaign Senate recommends approval of a proposal from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to establish the Department of Comparative and World Literature.

Established at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 1967, the Program in Comparative and World Literature (CWL) was one of the first of its kind in the United States. CWL has been at the forefront of interdisciplinary teaching and research in the humanities since then. On March 8, 2021, CWL faculty voted unanimously to reorganize from the Program in Comparative and World Literature to the Department of Comparative and World Literature. According to the University of Illinois *Statutes*, the department is “the primary unit of education and administration within the University” and “is established for the purpose of carrying on programs of instruction, research, and public service in a particular field of knowledge” (Article IV, Section 1a). The *Statutes* state that the faculty of a department are composed of those in the tenure stream (Article II, Section 3a). This is the case with CWL, which consists exclusively of tenure-stream faculty and has been functioning in all respects like a department since 1976, with tenure-track and tenured faculty, degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and an administrative structure like those of comparable departments.

CWL is a self-governing unit that administers its own budget, evaluates faculty annually, and recommends faculty for tenure and promotion. The unit is governed by existing bylaws. In accordance with University *Statutes*, the unit executive officer functions as a department head. CWL is housed within the School of Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics (SLCL) in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; it is currently the only unit in SLCL that houses tenure-line faculty but is not a department. Although the distinction between program and department is essentially formal, existing as a program puts CWL in an anomalous position and fosters confusion about its status and function. Formal reorganization as the Department of Comparative and World Literature will make the central mission clearer to those outside the university, is in alignment with the structure of other programs in comparative literature at peer institutions and formalizes equal footing with peers within the SLCL.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes*, *The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.

The Interim Executive Vice President and Vice President for Academic Affairs concurs with this recommendation. The University Senates Conference has indicated that no further Senate jurisdiction is involved.

The President of the University of Illinois System recommends approval. This action is subject to further review by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.