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**Recommendation to Change the Name of the  
Department of African Languages and Literature to the  
Department of African Cultural Studies, College of Letters and Science.**

The faculty of the Department of African Languages and Literature requests to change the name of the department to the Department of African Cultural Studies (ACS).

For fifty years, the department has taught African languages, literature, linguistics, and oral tradition. In its strategic plan dated July 2012 that aims to look to the future, the department committed itself to embracing cultural studies as a promising organizing frame for renewal and transformation of its academic endeavors both in research and teaching. Cultural studies will make it possible for the faculty to blend disciplines in a way that will be more productive and more coherent. In turn, this new approach will allow for a conceptually and practically more holistic view of African languages, cultural productions, and practices. Cultural studies makes it possible for scholars to study in a way that is self-reflexive and interdisciplinary a variety of cultural forms and expressions beyond and including literature, language, and orality, such as the composite of new electronic media, and popular cultures of musical, visual, audiovisual, and performance arts. Moreover, cultural studies will enable us to examine the relationship between cultural creativity on the African continent and global cultural movements and exchanges, and thus open new avenues of inquiry into the culturally productive impacts—and their sponsoring social, political, and economic contexts—of African migrations, current as well as historical.

The faculty notes that this request is a formalization of the direction ALL has been moving—and very successfully—for a couple of years now, having successfully placed in good jobs doctoral students who wrote on film traditions and national and sexual politics, carnivals and cultural identity, and Arabic cartooning and nationalism, in addition to the standard fare of straightforward literary and language studies. This diversity is mirrored even more richly in the work of current students.

The long consideration of the change of name and reorientation in the last two years has focused the department's vision most productively on efforts to address the issue of the less commonly taken and low-enrollment foreign languages in the department. Over the last decade, ALL has gradually changed from its previous model of a faculty anchor for each language to a model in which a faculty specialist directs TAs in several languages. This has saved costs. It also created the potential to expand language offerings to undergraduates and graduates, not just through the formal classroom method but also through efficient linkages with other schools and directed self-study arrangements. More significantly, the new cultural studies organizing focus will allow the faculty to recreate the curriculum in a way that integrates language in its proper stimulating relational context of other "languages" of cultural and social interaction. In a conference ALL held with alumni in May 2015 to discuss the name change, one of the suggestions received was to aim for more cultural context for the languages we teach, especially at the undergraduate level. The Department of African Cultural Studies, will be positioned to create lively large and small (high-impact such as FIGS) cultural studies classes to (i) impart to students substantive knowledge of African cultural forms and practices, (ii) serve as potential recruitment venues for language study, and (iii) afford the students more and wider understanding of the cultures of the African languages they study.

This change was approved by a unanimous vote of the ALL Executive Committee on March 12, 2015. In the general Department vote, there was one abstention, by a faculty associate. On

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November 17, 2015, the L&S Academic Planning Council considered the request to change the name of an L&S department, from African Languages and Literature to African Cultural Studies. The L&S APC noted that the department has taught African languages, literature, linguistics and oral traditions for 50 years. As our colleagues celebrated a half-century of success in these fields, they reflected on the recent past and looked toward the future, crafting a new strategic plan. In the course of their discussions, and as new faculty joined the department, they recognized both the current capacity and the new opportunity to renew and transform their work, the better to pursue a more holistic view of African languages, cultural productions, and practices. Of course, language study will continue to be integral to what they do; however, linking it more explicitly to the study of culture will serve students well by more clearly showing the connections and intersections between the two. The L&S APC unanimously supported this exciting new vision for the department.

The proposal was subsequently approved unanimously by the University Academic Planning Council on December 17, 2015. This action is effective July 1, 2016.