

Language Science Advisory Board Report and Recommendations 2012

[This is based upon a spoken report presented by the advisory board at the end of the meeting in May, 2012. The text is only lightly edited from remarks presented to the group by Mabel Rice.]

Report

We're delighted to spend the time with you and to learn what you're doing. Learn more about how you're tackling the issues discussed. Learn about the fabulous resources that you have embedded here. The work you're doing on language science is certainly going to be noticed around the country.

We're particularly impressed by responsiveness to the feedback, working with mentors, guidance on how long to be serving on committees. The turnover on the committees is good, and it is important that you are carefully preparing the legacy for successors. We appreciate that this takes work and effort on your part, but it equally fosters future success. We are very impressed with how you have taken to heart some of the concerns raised at last year's meeting, particularly the rotations, and how to plan and anticipate them. We were impressed during our lunch with the students by the numerous good ideas for making things better.

[1] We encourage you to continue to document the many ways in which your rotations enhance your education. Find ways to record that information so that it's useful for those reporting back to NSF. Recapping the rotation issue: students have a better sense of knowing when the rotation is expected, how it is to be arranged, and under what circumstances. Also know how to plan and sequence it better. The idea of the research rotation can be broad enough to include forging innovative connections across departments. Also we're thinking that the guidelines for rotation experiences should be on the wiki. Students mentioned shared lunch to share experiences about these.

[2] There were hints that some students were feeling overburdened now and then. Issue of commitments to teaching as well as rotations etc. Try to stage these things so that they're not hitting at the same time. 'Seasoned' students: how to include them in the loop, how to ensure that they continue to receive feedback. 'Graduates' still aren't quite sure what's expected of them, other than continuing to fill out forms. How realistic this is as you move into the next phase of your careers? We can assure you that the faculty are also doing a lot of this. There is something disturbingly realistic about this.

It was a pleasure to advocate on your behalf. The university has noticed how strong this program is. The university is aware of the talent in the faculty that you have here. It is mindful of the needs for the future. They were not foolish enough to make any commitments during the meeting, but there's a strong sense of how important this has been. This is something to be proud of, to have a strong sense of ownership.

[3] Presentations emphasized the distribution of the IGERT beyond linguistics. It's important what the different units are getting out of being part of the program. There are arguments for the importance of sustained support for students. The question of how support plays out differently across departments is important.

[4] There's sometimes value to the combined strengths, beyond the separate. IGERT is showing value of combined effort, when many are in home departments that have other dimensions to address. Collectively you have a big impact.

[5] University administrators are extremely aware that this is the only IGERT in the university. What glues interdisciplinary faculty together is always a student in the middle. That student needs to be broadly educated.

By the way, the level of student leadership here – every one of us has spoken about how impressed we are by the ownership that the students have taken – we worry that you might be burning yourselves out; taking turns is important. This is a really impressive national model of what a program can look like.