NAME CHANGE FOR DEPARTMENT OF READING

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT THE FOLLOWING BE ADOPTED:

1. That the change becomes effective in the fall of 2014.
2. That this proposal be forwarded to President Robert J. Jones for approval.
Proposed Name Change: Department of Reading → Department of Literacy Teaching and Learning

The Department of Reading faculty members are requesting a name change for our department to: Department of Literacy Teaching and Learning. The reasons for the proposed name change include the following:

1) When the Department of Reading was first created in 1948, the faculty prepared certified teachers as Reading Teachers in grades K-12, or extended the instructional reading knowledge of classroom teachers. These MS programs continued for over fifty years, designed to comply with New York regulations and research-based practices. As a field, reading was the primary focus of instruction and research. In the last few decades, the entire field has shifted from a focus on reading to a much broader view of literacy, with a more encompassing definition of what children and young adults need to know and do. These literacies include areas such as reading, writing, viewing, speaking, listening, and representing, all situated in new technologies and social contexts. While any one component of literacy is certainly important, as a whole, the term literacy better captures the broad view. A quick review of dissertation titles from department graduates show how the term literacy or literacies started to become more prominent in the late 80’s and used almost exclusively in the last decade:
http://www.albany.edu/reading/completed_dissertations.php

2) In terms of curricula, our original MS degree was called “Reading” and led to K-12 school positions called “Reading Teachers”. In 2000, changes in the New York State regulations shifted and we completely revised our MS programs to a new “MS in Literacy”, “MS in Early Childhood and Childhood Education”, and “MS in Literacy and Special Education”. The titles of our courses reflect what we were already doing at the time – focusing on literacy rather than simply reading. In the field, the teacher certification and teaching positions shifted from Reading Teachers to Literacy Specialists and Literacy Coaches. Similarly, at the doctoral level, our domains focus on literacies: (a) Nature and Acquisition of Literacy, (b)
Literacy and Schooling, and (c) Literacy and Society. Thus, our programs, course titles, and curriculum have already made this transition from reading to literacy. The proposed name change will better represent our current practices.

3) For our colleagues across the country, most similar departments or programs have a name of *Literacy, Language, and Culture* (e.g., University of Michigan, UC-Berkeley, Indiana University). However, we recognize the University of Albany already has a CAS department with the name Languages, Literatures, and Cultures and do not want to create any confusion with a similar name. The proposed name also reflects recent shifts in our national organization and journals. For example, the *Journal of Reading Behavior* (1969-1995) transitioned to the *Journal of Literacy Research* in 1996. The *National Reading Conference* switched to the *Literacy Research Association* in 2011. Thus, a name change will make us more competitive and current with our colleagues across the country.

4) While our current name is simply the Department of Reading, in addition to changing from “reading” to “literacy”, we are seeking to add the terms teaching and learning. Too often, the simple one word name is confusing to others both within and outside of the university. We are selecting the terms “Teaching and Learning” because they are the central role of both our MS and PHD degrees. Situated in a School of Education with programs leading to teacher certification, the terms teaching and learning should provide a better context for the use of literacy/literacies. This addition would also better distinguish us from CAS departments.

This proposed name change would take effect at the beginning of the Spring 2014 semester, or upon approval by President Jones.
To: Christine Wagner, Chair  
University Senate

From: Robert Bangert-Drowns, Dean  
School of Education

Date: November 2, 2013

Subject: Name change of Department of Reading

On behalf of the Reading faculty, I forward their request to change the department’s name to the Department of Literacy Teaching and Learning. The rationale for the name change is intelligent and persuasive and accompanies this note. I fully endorse this request.

My understanding is that the University Senate is the appropriate deliberative body to review such a proposal. Please ensure that this request is properly considered by the appropriate Senate Council or Committee.

Thank you for your thoughtful attention.