University of Connecticut
Department of Linguistics
Department Head Search

Diane Lillo-Martin
Vision Statement

The Department of Linguistics at the University of Connecticut specializes in conducting research and training graduate students in theoretical and experimental areas of generative linguistics, especially in the subfields of syntax, semantics, phonology, morphology, and language acquisition. The faculty members pride ourselves for our excellent reputation in this domain. The faculty members have good standing; they are all active in scholarship; and the graduate students are among the best in the world in their fields.

Given this situation, the first priority of the department head must be to support these department members and ensure that they are able to continue their important mission. My goal will be to strengthen the departmental foundations and functioning so that the current department members can effectively work at their own highest levels of success. The current and prospective research areas of our faculty and students include interdisciplinary and ground-breaking domains that address major knowledge questions. In alignment with the CLAS Strategic Plan, Goal 2, I will provide support and motivation for current faculty members to expand their research profiles, including (where appropriate) greater infrastructure for internal and external funding.

Our graduate students are a key focus for the future of the department. We must regularly evaluate all the components of our teaching and mentoring, and work towards ways in which the student experience is enhanced and facilitated. Our students have been incredibly successful, but the academic landscape is changing dramatically, and there are new challenges and expectations that we must anticipate. There are many steps, both small and large, that we can take together to elevate our graduate training program experience.

The Linguistics department has been increasing the ways in which we serve undergraduate students through our majors and minor, the interdisciplinary programs that we participate in (e.g., Cognitive Sciences, American Sign Language Studies), and through the general education curriculum. In line with the CLAS Strategic Plan, Goal 3, we will develop new opportunities for undergraduate students to engage in experiential learning and research opportunities.

Linguistics is a field that studies a phenomenon common to all humans, and yet, most people do not really know what linguists do. It is not that what linguists are interested in has no connection to the community, but rather there is a lack of clear communication regarding the mission and value of linguistics. This motivates us to increase our engagement with communities outside of academia, to facilitate and recognize such outreach, and to publicize it in more effective ways, all activities that are recommended by the CLAS Strategic Plan, Goal 4.