The Department of Spanish and Portuguese accepts the task force’s rating of our graduate program in literature and linguistics as high quality and concurs with the indicated areas for improvement. Specifically, we agree on the need to improve our applicant pool and selectivity. In the Fall of 2009, as part of a recruitment campaign for new graduate students, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese sent 650 new posters (including information on our recent hires in literature and Spanish-language creative writing) to peer departments in the United States as well as to distinguished faculty members in the United States, Latin America, and Europe. As our graduate student pool already includes a substantial number of Latino students, we included historically black colleges in this recruitment effort to continue broadening our diversity. Regarding selectivity, we have been reviewing our admission standards and have taken steps to ensure that existing standards are rigorously applied, with particular attention to students moving from our own M.A. to our Ph.D. program.

The potential of opening a Spanish-language M.F.A. in creative writing has already generated increased interest in our graduate program and we expect approval of an M.F.A. to have a positive impact on the applicant pool to our Ph.D. program in literature. Finally, many of our younger faculty are in the process of establishing national and international reputations; this will have a long-term positive impact on our applicant pool.