Other things I have written about the PhD

* A CPE comment: WKU supports the expansion of the linguistics field however, the faculty in the WKU Modern Languages Department are concerned that there is no strong demand for PhDs in Linguistics in this economic climate with tenure-track positions on the decline and modern languages departments closing. Many of the positions cited in the proposal do not require or even recommend the successful candidate have a PhD in Linguistics and therefore don't seem to support offering this degree in Kentucky.
* My response: Thank you for sharing your concerns. We appreciate your input and share your excitement for expanding the field of linguistics with the next generation of linguists. As a Research I institution, the University of Kentucky values the mutually beneficial relationship between training graduate students and educating all students. This expansion aligns with UK's mission and builds on the strength of our existing Master's degree. We recognize the need to address the issue of talent loss to other states and the limited opportunities for students who are passionate about linguistics but who do not wish to move to east and west coast institutions and who prefer to stay in Kentucky. It is important to also consider the health of our bachelor's program; many of our current undergraduates are well positioned to continue their studies in linguistics, and we have been successful at placing them in top programs. Kentucky would benefit from offering a degree that could keep these top students in the state.

Furthermore, our modest enrollment plan for the PhD maximizes the potential of our current faculty talent and utilizes the resources that the University of Kentucky is already investing in our Master’s degree program in better ways. While we acknowledge the decline in tenure-track positions, it is crucial not to limit the field to students trained at a few institutions. PhD training serves a variety of purposes beyond securing a tenure-track job and can enhance job prospects in a shrinking job market, not just in academia. The faculty are prepared to work closely with students in determining appropriate non-academic paths and will not only encourage such paths but celebrate them equally with academic ones. By offering a PhD in Linguistics, we contribute to Kentucky's economy by providing valuable educational opportunities.

* Another CPE comment: The Gray Data shows the market demand is in the 20th to 30th percentile at the regional and state levels. Since the Gray Data is showing low demand, what job data are you providing prospective students when marketing this program?
* My response: As a field, Linguistics is relatively young (compared to disciplines like English and History), making it less recognizable as a required or requested degree for many employers. Nevertheless, students trained in this program bring a skillset that makes them comparable to other job candidates in areas like publishing, healthcare communication, computer science, and education, among many others. We recognize that the job market for PhD trained students in the region/state may not fully capture this potential, and our students will be prepared for a national search. With respect to the Gray and Associates data, without fully understanding how occupations have been collected, it is difficult to fully address the data. Linguistics training provides skills in critical thinking, research, problem solving, programming, writing, and oral communication that prepare students of a broad range of jobs. We suspect that the Gray and Associates data is a narrower set than what could be captured as potential careers for Linguistics PhDs. The faculty are fully aware of the need to prepare students to address the job market. We currently provide graduate students with an orientation to the job market – both in coursework and as standalone professional development opportunities – and we expect to continue and expand these offerings with PhD students. The materials we use for the professional development have been developed by career linguists working beyond academia, including slideshow materials, sample job ads and analysis of how linguists fit them, as well as a number of resources that are shared with students, including articles, videos, and books like Bringing Linguistics to Work and Employing Linguistics by Anna Marie Trester. Finally, we have been successful at placing students from our MA program not only into other top PhD programs and professional programs like law and speech sciences but also jobs like ESL coordinator, university administrator, computational linguist, and analytical linguist.
* Question from SAPC: The Dean’s letter does mention the need for additional funding for TA’s. Where will this money come from or who is committed to providing it and what about stipend resources?
* My response: For funding, the plan is to start with simply moving the current TA resources for our MA program to our PhD program. In conducting the Provost’s required proforma, our business office determined that more TA positions would likely be available to us (from an existing pool of college-held TA positions in the WRD department; not newly created lines) as time goes on.