



***The Graduate and Professional
Student Senate***

Program Review of
Near Eastern Languages and
Civilizations

Fall 2010

The Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS) conducts program reviews of academic departments to coincide with the Graduate School's Program Review process. GPSS reviews are a vital component of the final Graduate School Program Report. These reports are the primary source of student feedback in the review process.

For each review, the graduate students in the program in question are administered a survey requesting their feedback about their program. The survey results are analyzed into a data report. Two GPSS Senators conduct an in-house interview session with available graduate students. The Senators take their results and the survey data and compile the final report.

For more information about the GPSS Program Review Process or questions regarding this Report please contact gpsspa@u.washington.edu

Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

Educational Status

Six master's students responded to the survey. Four of the students started the program in 2010, so the majority of the students were very new to the program. The other two students began the program in 2007 and 2008. Five of the six students are going to school full-time. Half of the students felt that they would complete the program in 1-2 years and the other half thought it would take 3-4 years. For the departmental interview only two master's attended while a third arrived at the very end. All of the students who had attended the interview were beginning their third year of study. All three students are and consistently have been enrolled full-time.

Academic Program

The surveys indicated that the students thought the quality of academic standards in the program ranged from very good to excellent. The majority of students felt that the department was doing a good job of integrating current developments from the field into their education. About half of the students felt that the program space and facilities were good to very good. All of the students felt that the intellectual quality of the faculty was very good to excellent. Student's opinions of the intellectual quality of their peers ranged from very good to excellent. The majority of the students felt that the relationships between faculty and graduate students were good to excellent. Only one student described them as fair. Most of the students agreed to strongly agreed that the program activities fostered a strong intellectual community and that what they were learning in the program supported both their research and professional goals.

The students who attended the interview regarded the academic standing of the program to be very good. There was concern that there was currently no faculty employed at the university that specialized in original Islamic texts. This was the result of not having replaced professors who has recently retired. There was also concern with the diminishing availabilities of certain languages while lauding the language programs of NELC as a whole. There was also concern expressed about the availability of certain language sections, specifically Arabic, which are requirements for graduation.

Teaching experience

A student said that the department had provided teaching training and they rated it as good. This student felt that they had received enough support to teach and that their teaching experiences had increased their interest in teaching. In the interview there was clearly expressed concern about the deficit of TA positions for students in the department.

Research experience

The surveys indicated that students were split about having received adequate research training before beginning their own research. Most of the students said that they had received guidance from their faculty on formulating their research topic. In the interviews the students neither

expressed satisfaction or dismay with their research training they did however, express enthusiasm with the organization of conferences by their department and department student association.

Career Counseling and Job Search

Initial reports from an internal survey suggested that there is a lack of information regarding future job prospects as well as counseling for a career after their degree has been obtained. However, the majority of the survey respondents were very new to the program. Upon completion of the interview there seemed to be a general consensus that assistance with career counseling and job search is adequate considering the broad range of disciplines that NELC covers. There also appears to have been some confusion since there was a recent change in how students in NELC were advised, so some of the new students may have been unaware of whom they can talk to regarding their future careers. Additionally, the NELC self-study states that many masters' students who have graduated have gone on to good Ph.D. schools or obtained jobs in industry. This fact did not seem disputed by those who responded to the survey or those who attended the in-person interview.

Advising

Department regulations state that graduate students need to meet at least quarterly with their advisor as well as departmental chair. Survey results indicated that this occurred much more often with the majority of respondents receiving feedback on their work 1-3 times a month. Students seemed to feel that they had good access to information about degree requirements, that the requirements were clear, and that the faculty and staff were well informed about the requirements. Students sometimes-usually were able to have input into the design of their program of study. In general, NELC graduate students seemed satisfied to very satisfied with the level and quality of advising they were receiving from their program.

Departmental Climate

Overall, the departmental climate seems positive. Many of the students surveyed felt there was a good sense of community among students in similar fields. One of the factors that allow for such a sense of community is the NELC Student Association, which according to the students interviewed in person, seemed to bring a greater sense of community as well as allow for students studying in differing fields to interact with one-another. There was also talk about ramping up the activities of the NELC Student Association in order to try to have students present their work to each other. The NELC Student Association is also an undergraduate/graduate club, so it allows for the graduate students to interact with undergraduates.

Finances

There appears to be a clear lack of funding for many of the students. From the NELC survey many students have to take out loans, which they estimated they would have over \$30,000 worth

of debt from their graduate education. From the in-person interviews many of the students stated there was a clear lack of teaching assistant positions provided within the department and one of the students was able to obtain a TA in the past with the Jackson School. While the students seem to understand the requirements to obtain financial aid, many still felt the need more money within the department that can be allocated to students.