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November 3, 2011

To: Ana Mari Cauce, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

From: Gerald J. Baldasty, Vice Provost and Dean

James S. Antony, Associate Vice Provost and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

RE: Review of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization (2010-2011)

This memo outlines the recommendations from the review of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization (NELC). Detailed comments on the program can be found in the documents that were part of the following formal review proceedings:

- Charge meeting between review committee, department, and administrators (March 17, 2010)
- NELC self-study (October 1, 2010)
- Site visit (October 25-26, 2010)
- Review committee report (November 19, 2010)
- Graduate & Professional Student Senate Report (January 14, 2011)
- NELC response to the review committee report (February 14, 2011)

The review committee consisted of:

Christine Ingebritsen, Professor, UW Scandinavian Studies (Committee Chair)

R. Kent Guy, Professor, UW History

Peter J. Sluglett, Professor, Department of History, University of Utah

Nita Krevans, Professor, Department of Classical and Near Eastern Studies, University of Minnesota

The review documents were presented to the Graduate School Council, which recommended continuing status for the department's degree programs with the next review to be scheduled for the 2020-2021 academic year. Specific comments and recommendations regarding the department and its degree programs include the following:

### Program Strengths

- *Uniqueness and depth of curriculum.* NELC offers academically rigorous and nationally distinctive training in language and cultural studies at both the undergraduate and graduate level. The department is home to diverse instructional programs, and few departments in the United States offer the historical depth of NELC's educational programs; even fewer include its specialization in Central Asian Studies.
- *Campus-wide resource in language instruction.* NELC has many partnerships across campus and numerous units depend on NELC for language and cultural instruction in support of quality academic programs as well as in support of grants and other external funding. NELC receives some support for its language instruction from a number of these units.
- *Faculty.* NELC faculty are excellent in their fields. Under the leadership of the previous chair (through June, 2011) the varied specialties developed greater autonomy. Graduate students have very good access to faculty.
- *Undergraduate program.* Undergraduate students are of high caliber, with about 100 majors in the department. The review committee noted that this was an impressive number and a significant achievement given the size of the department and a curriculum centered on notoriously difficult languages. These students are highly competitive in securing university-wide and national honors and awards, and those who choose to go on to graduate study are offered spots leading PhD programs.
- *Student leadership.* The NELC Student Association (founded in 2007-2008) arranges annual interdisciplinary conferences that impressively integrate the varied emphases within the unit. This group, which includes both graduate and undergraduate students, has fostered a greater sense of community among students. Recently NELC's student association has begun collaborating with the Association of Central Asian Students (ACAS), a student group founded in 1978.
- *Timeliness of subject matter.* The Middle East and Central Asia are unquestionably critical areas, with competence in Arabic language being increasingly central to US competitiveness in government, business, and many other fields.

### Challenges & Risks

- *Position in Islam.* At the time of the site visit, a key faculty member had recently left NELC for another university. This faculty member was also an Islamist, a vital position in the current political climate. When added to earlier departures by two other Islamists in other UW units (History and Law), this loss created a significant hole in the department's programs.
- *High demand courses.* NELC uses funds from three Title VI centers, the Jewish Studies program, and the Dean's office to hire lecturers who teach high demand language courses, including Arabic, Modern Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish. None of these funds are permanent, nor are the current offerings sufficient to meet the university's instructional needs.
- *Beginning Arabic.* As noted in the 2004 review, NELC turns away hundreds of students every year who are seeking Arabic language instruction.
- *Shared mission.* Greater autonomy for each of the specialty areas within NELC has also resulted in challenges to a shared sense of departmental mission.
- *NELC and the Middle East Center (MEC).* NELC and the MEC are dependent upon each other but their instructional goals differ. While NELC fosters the study of ancient and

modern languages, the MEC, which is housed in Jackson School of International Studies (JSIS), meets a federal mandate to prepare students for leadership roles in the Middle East. Given these disparate goals, tensions have arisen with regard to certain areas of operational decision making.

#### Areas of Concurrence and/or Disagreement

In the main, the department concurred with the review committee report but offered some points of clarification as follows:

- *Position in Islam.* The committee noted that this position is integral to the on-going success not only of NELC but also of the myriad other units who depend upon NELC for language instruction. The department underscored that this vacated position follows the loss of two other Islamists in other units on campus.
- *Critical courses, especially Arabic.* As occurred in two previous self-studies, the department reiterated its need to have funds for permanent lecturers in key areas of demand.
- *Working collaboratively with other units.* While the review committee felt the department chair should take leadership in promoting collaboration, the department affirmed its request to have upper administrative assistance in defining its relationship with other units such as the MEC and the JSIS.
- *Thesis option for the master's program.* NELC faculty have already voted to add a thesis option to the master's program, and this option has since been implemented.
- *Foreign Language Area Scholarships (FLAS).* The committee recommended using the FLAS for recruitment. The department noted that it will need assistance from JSIS to make this change since it would impact FLAS deadlines.
- *PhD program.* The committee report stated that neither graduate students nor faculty endorsed the idea of a departmental PhD. The department responded that faculty are divided on this issue, and elaborated that the interdisciplinary Near and Middle Eastern Studies PhD program should not be moved to NELC, but also not to the JSIS.

#### Graduate School Council Recommendations

- The Graduate School Council endorses the academic integrity of the department's programs and recommends continuing status for the department, with review in 10 years (2020-2021).
- The Council recommends open dialog around the issue of communication with other units, specifically the MEC and JSIS. The goals should be to better define current relationships and to build for the future of this dynamic, vital field of study.
- The Council requests a progress report in 2 years (2012-2013) that articulates how the department has progressed on communication with its external partners.

We concur with the Council's comments and recommendations.

cc: Douglas J. Wadden, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President  
Janice M. DeCosmo, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs  
Robert Stacey, Acting Chair, Near Eastern Languages & Civilization  
Members of the Graduate School Council  
David Canfield-Budde, Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School  
GPSS President