

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

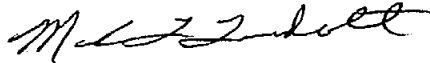
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May 16, 1999

To: Lee L. Huntsman
Provost

From: Marsha L. Landolt
Dean and Vice Provost



Re: Interdisciplinary PhD Program in Near and Middle Eastern Studies 5-year Review

Recommended Action: At its meeting of May 6, 1999, the Graduate School Council recommended that the PhD degree in Near and Middle Eastern Studies be offered on a provisional basis with a review in 5 years. Although the current program is viewed to be sound, it has not, in its short existence, graduated a PhD student. In addition, its founding Director, Jere Bacharach, will soon step down as Director. Thus, the program faces an uncertain future with respect to its leadership and has not yet established its success in educating and placing PhD students. I concur with the Council's recommendation and agree with its reasoning.

The self-study, the report of the review committee, and the Group's response to the report are attached.

Background. The Interdisciplinary PhD Program in Near and Middle Eastern Studies was approved in September, 1991 and admitted its first students in the 1993-1994 academic year. It currently has 15 students, the first two of whom should complete degree requirements within the next several months. The interdisciplinary group was formed because it was thought that no single academic unit had the resources to offer this degree. The faculty consists of social scientists and humanists from several departments and the Jackson School of International Studies. They seek to foster interdisciplinarity among the PhD students, while still requiring them to attain depth within a social science or humanist discipline. Changes in curriculum have been made and continue to be made to ensure that depth in a discipline is attained, while interdisciplinary breadth is maintained. Supervisory committees are appropriately interdisciplinary. Careers open to graduates include academia, government service, nongovernmental organizations and international businesses. Of the students expected to graduate soon neither plans on academic employment but both have secured their first choice position. The students are unusually experienced when they enter the program, and often continue with their careers while enrolled. They aspire to a variety of careers when finished with the degree. The eventual success of this program, in terms of placement of graduates, clearly should not focus on academic positions alone, as this is not necessarily the first choice of its current students, nor do the faculty seek to limit the range of possibilities.

The review committee was uniformly impressed with the caliber of the students and found them fulfilling the interdisciplinary goals of the program and making good progress towards degree completion. They commented favorably on the flexibility of the program, the changes that have been made to fine-tune it and the response of the program faculty to student suggestions for

changes in coursework. Absent the impending transition in leadership, it is likely that continuing status would have been recommended. In not making that recommendation, the committee sets an important precedent for degree programs that are not housed in a single department and that lack financial resources to ensure a transition in leadership that maintains the dedication and cohesiveness of the faculty.

Although many students remarked about the need for additional financial support, none suffered from a lack of fellowships or other such assistance. In this regard, and in general, the committee found the program to have adequate financial resources. The review committee listed the following priorities for the program:

1. Identification of a new Director.
2. Expanded opportunities for interdisciplinary interaction among students and faculty. It should be required that supervisory committees be interdisciplinary. Opportunities for informal contact would be enhanced if a common room for students were identified.
3. Academic placement of graduates should be closely monitored, particularly for those aspiring to academic positions.
4. Stipends should be more generally available in the first year.
5. Core course work should be modified as described in the review report.
6. The Core faculty should be more clearly identified to allow prospective and current students to readily know who is active.
7. Several suggestions for recruitment and early mentoring of students were included in the report.

The faculty of the program agreed with each of the suggestions made by the review committee. Both the committee and the program faculty recommended that the program remain administratively within the Graduate School. It was thought that if the program continued its present course through the change in leadership, students graduated at an appropriate pace, and a record of suitable placement of graduates was established, there should be no question of successful conversion to continuing status in 5 years. The Graduate School Council and I fully agree with this assessment. The committee complemented the program on the "positive tension" between the faculty in the social sciences and humanities. While each group has its own approach and methodology, they listen and debate in a manner that provides a creative and intellectually vibrant atmosphere. I have every hope for the continued success of this program.

c: Richard L. McCormick, President
Jere L. Bacharach, Professor and Director, Near and Middle Eastern Studies
Debra Friedman, Associate Provost for Academic Planning
John T. Slattery, Associate Dean for Academic Programs
David C. Hodge, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Michael R. Halleran, Divisional Dean, Arts and Humanities
Members of the Review Committee
Graduate School Council
Terry Duffey, Program Coordinator, Interdisciplinary Programs
Augustine McCaffery, Assistant to the Dean
Beatrice Greenwald, Assistant to the Dean
(All without attachments)