

June 8, 2016

**PROFESSOR AMELIA GLASER, Director  
Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies Program**

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review for the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies Program

Dear Professor Glaser,

The Undergraduate Council discussed the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies Program's 2016 Undergraduate Program Review. The Council supports the findings and recommendations of the review subcommittee and appreciates the thoughtful and proactive response from the Program.

The Council applauds the dedication of the faculty in the Program, and was pleased to hear that students had positive reviews. This is reflected in the high enrollment numbers in for the Program's courses. We support the Program's plans to restructure the major requirements to be better aligned with the major requirements for other area studies programs at UC San Diego. We look forward to receiving future proposals.

The Council will conduct its follow-up review of the Program in Spring Quarter 2017. At that time, our goal is to learn about the Program's progress in implementing the recommendations of the program review subcommittee and the Undergraduate Council. The Council extends its thanks to the Program for their engagement in this process and we look forward to the continued discussion.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Cook, Chair  
Undergraduate Council

cc: R. Continetti  
C. Della Coletta  
T. Javidi  
R. Rodriguez  
K. Roy  
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M. Sidney

## UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM REVIEW

Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies Program

Professor and Program Review Chair Ursula Meyer, Department of Theatre and Dance, UC San Diego

Professor Olga Stuchebrukhov Department of German and Russian, UC Davis,

Professor Mark Hanna, Department of History, UC San Diego

On May 29th, 2015, the committee met with administration, faculty, staff, a teaching assistant, and several students enrolled in REEES courses. Subsequently, the committee also received responses from current majors and minors to a survey that REEES had put out in the Fall, letters from faculty members in Political Science and History who were not able to attend, and letters from current majors and minors. We also spent extensive time looking over evaluations, course requirements, catalog descriptions, previous review information, and enrollment data related to this university and others.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT PROGRAM:

The program has made many progressive changes since the last review. It continues to expand its interdisciplinary strength by offering courses in history, language, literature, and social and political life of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia, before and after the Soviet period. Affiliated faculty in Linguistics, Cognitive science, Theatre and Dance, and Sociology work in related fields and welcome independent study students. The change in the program's name from Russian and Soviet studies to Russian, East-European, and Eurasian Studies signals a clear movement into a broader, more current, and more inclusive set of ideas and issues. The name-change has also given the program a chance to reach out and include more affiliate faculty in those areas, bridging the gap between European and East Asian Studies. Since the last review, the number of majors and minors has fluctuated, often with the rise and fall of current events. Currently there are two majors and three minors.

### STRENGTHS:

REEES incorporates the teaching of a core cadre of faculty members and graduate assistants who are intensely devoted to the major. Many of the faculty cite Amelia Glaser for her devotion and inspiration to pursue this area of study. They write in support of Amelia and the program and point to the very engaged (and large) audiences that a number of recent campus presentations on Russia and Ukraine have received. They feel that much of the credit for this needs to go to Amelia, who they feel has shown really admirable energy and vision in putting together these offerings. They also think that the turnout at these presentations is suggestive of just how important the resources of the program can be not just to students, who are obviously the primary concern of the major, but to broader campus and community audiences as well. Although the major

originated out of the Cold War, the field has evolved to incorporate a wider berth, and its significance as a field of study has continued to grow in the last few years with the invasion of Crimea, the Winter Olympics, the controversy over the 2018 World Cup, and Vladimir Putin's bellicose attempts to assert Russia's international relevance. UCSD students are clearly fascinated with the region as evidenced by the popularity of the courses offered in the major from various affiliated departments of literature, history, linguistics, sociology, communications, and political science. The student responses were extremely enthusiastic, writing that they believe this major will provide them with relevant perspectives and approaches to life and other cultures that they would not have had otherwise. They talk of the program changing them as individuals seem to put into words how much this program has changed me as an citing that the REEES program helped them in unexpected ways, giving them skills that they will use in many other seemingly unrelated fields. The student talk of advanced verbal skills and that the flexibility of the REEES major has not impacted their time to degree in any kind of negative way. four years. It was pointed out that we have a number of Chinese-American students who come from a background where Russian literature was part of their heritage as the two countries have been linked historically and geographically for many years. Although REEES is a major and not a 'center' or department, faculty members belonging to the group, as well as their graduate students, offered that it is a primary impetus for establishing an interdisciplinary community .In this way, the faculty form a " virtual " department. They also have promoted numerous events in the broader San Diego Russian community that have been extremely well attended. This core group of professors and students thrives despite the fact that the program has no university funding, meeting once a month to discuss and share their own research and recent scholarship in the field.

#### WEAKNESSES:

With strong enrollments, it is troubling , as it was in 2004, that REEES has so few majors. The committee noted that this might stem less from lack of interest and more from the intimidating number of required courses necessary to graduate from the program. Students must take three quarters of first year Russian, three quarters of second year Russian, three quarters of an advanced practicum in Russian, three quarters of a survey of Russian literature in translation, and two very specific history courses. Three people with the help of one teaching assistant teach fourteen of the required courses. Rebecca Wells, a lecturer, is tasked with teaching nine courses but is only allowed to teach eight based on her contract. One of the required history courses listed on the web site as required for graduation (HIEU 134) was not offered this year and will not be offered next year. Despite the last rebranding, the five required non-language courses focus only on Russia, even though the field has expanded to Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Two of the most supportive letters sent to the committee about the REEES program came from faculty members who work on the history of Eastern Europe .If one of these faculty members is on leave or retires it mightleave students in a precarious situation. Taking into account how incoming freshmen must navigate their college requirements that can take up to

five courses as well as meeting their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion requirement, this leaves students four elective courses to fulfill the major. These obstacles are likely even more burdensome for transfer students. Area studies programs have also been harmed by the alarming cut in language requirements across the colleges that might have inspired more students to stay in the REEES program.

Students eager to explore the culture of the region likely find they can do so by majoring in International Studies where they have more options and freedom to manage their course schedule. This type of cannibalization seems to be occurring across the campus as students opt into the more open majors. While the committee readily accepts the desire to keep the program rigorous (as it is in compatible universities), time to graduation pressures probably prevent some students from choosing the major. Amelia Glaser, director of the REEES program, admirably helps majors navigate through the program with a liberal system of student petitions. However, this can really only happen after the student chooses to opt into the major, making it still daunting for those who only visit the program website to peruse the requirements.

Guiding majors through the program is also hindered in large part to the present administrative system. REEES is part of CAESAR, a consortium of area studies that has one administrator who is tasked with advising students interested in all of the programs. While the director is in literature, the staff member is in history, forcing the staff member to send students wanting petitions or confused about how to set up their schedules to cross the whole campus. CAESAR has three staff FTE's that are monopolized by Chinese, Japanese, and Judaic Studies. As it stands, the history department administration has had to attend twelve different program reviews over the past few years.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

We recommend providing students majoring in REEES a more streamlined system that allows for more freedom to choose electives. Majors should still take two full years of Russian (6 quarters) or Slavic (if offered) but perhaps only two quarters of advanced practicum since Rebecca Wells currently only teaches two each year. All other courses should be elective, with a requirement that spreads the elective courses across disciplines. As an area studies program and not a language studies program, there is no reason why three Russian literature courses should take precedence over a history of Yugoslavia, the political science of the Cold War, or media in Eastern Europe. Expanding faculty as noted in the past review would also provide students more options. It was suggested that it would be useful to explore ways to ensure that courses for the program's students are offered frequently. And in future, it will be important to maintain faculty strength in key areas in the event of retirements or other separations.

We also recommend the addition of an academic peer advisor position who

could offer one-on-one advising with students and help them plan their academic path, ensuring they meet all the requirements needed to receive their degree. This position should work in close collaboration with the undergraduate staff assistants, as well as the faculty adviser. The advantage of this position is that, as a student, the peer advisor can better relate to other students' problems and concerns, helping them plan their course schedules; discuss topics including major interests and options, and academic progress. Peer advisors may want to visit REEES classes in the beginning of each quarter to talk to students about the program as a whole, about its major and minor requirements and about what a degree in REEES can add to one's career path. Although the program does not specifically target leadership skills, the opportunity to serve as the academic peer adviser provides an important occasion to develop those skills, benefiting the entire program in the process.

We support how REEES faculty are beginning to openly market the major and recommend they continue through talks at Triton Day and a film series. Perhaps REEES could coordinate these activities with the Russia Club that has a rather well made Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ucsd.russianclub>). We support the suggestion that they "should also explore and expand options for partnerships with other campuses that would allow students to join remotely in language courses at, for instance, UC Berkeley and UCLA, where less commonly taught languages of the region are taught. " It was reported that one of the graduate students had good results a few years back taking Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian electronically at Berkeley. Since the recession, students have been compelled to explain to their tuition paying parents that their major will eventually help them land a lucrative career. Certainly this degree can do that, but the case needs to be made more clearly, creatively, and fervently. REEES could really benefit from the university's recent support of Global Seminars where a major could take some of their required courses abroad. The program could also do better reaching out to heritage speakers. It was mentioned that many heritage speakers can pass the language exam, but would like to be able to write and read better so as to use this asset in their other work. Advisors at the various colleges could be better informed about how this major or minor could give these heritage speakers a strong advantage in their future careers. We expect that the administrative problems facing REEES will be ameliorated by the new Institute for Global Humanities recently established by the Dean of Arts and Humanities. This review truly highlights the absolute necessity for an umbrella program with its own unique and adequate physical space fully funded by the EVC's office.

#### CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the committee feels strongly that the infrastructure for the major be maintained. The REEES faculty is passionate, dedicated, and committed and they are uniformly highly respected by their students. The classes are well attended and receive extremely positive evaluations.

Maintaining the integrity of the major seems particularly important for UCSD in light of its mandate to promote interdisciplinary studies, global connections, and to reach out to diverse populations. This major and its faculty can play an important part in bridging the gap between Asia and Europe, science and the humanities, local communities and the broader world. The revamping of the name and expanding of the curriculum is fairly new, and Amelia Glaser and the other faculty have done an enormous amount with the relatively little resources that they have. If more resources are not available, it seems imperative that the university find ways to support their endeavors in streamlining the requirements, making sure required courses are offered more frequently, marketing the major, initiating peer advising, finding ways to fund conferences, events, scholarships, etc., reaching out to heritage speakers, and celebrating the importance of this field of study.