

## **Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies – Strategic Planning, AY 2006-2007**

### **History and Mission of REES**

Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies (REES) has been an interdisciplinary academic program since 1959. It has maintained the prestigious designation as a U.S. Department of Education Title VI Comprehensive National Resource Center (NRC) since 1965, and is one of only sixteen NRCs currently covering the Russian and East European world region. The REES program is important because interdisciplinary knowledge about Russia, East Europe, and Eurasia enhances cultural awareness and strengthens national security.

The primary mission of the Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies program is:

- To meet the national need for Russian, East European, and Eurasian specialists in academic, government, and private sectors by producing students with superior language training and an excellent foundation in area studies, and providing them with professional mentoring, enhancement activities, and significant opportunities for study and research abroad.
- To support students and faculty in their research and intellectual enhancement so that they can become and remain superior teachers, scholars, and mentors.
- To be a resource locally, regionally, and nationally, providing outreach, support services, and information to other KU units, K-16, media, business, government, military, and community constituencies.

### **What is REES Doing Well?**

- **Securing External Funding:** As noted above, the program has been designated an NRC by the Department of Education for decades. It retained this status in the most recent competition (for the 2006-2010 period). NRC status provides funding and prestige, identifying KU's program as one of the top sixteen in the country. REES has also received financial support from the Department of State and other public and private sources. But, federal funding for NRC programs has fallen (see below).
- **Degree Programs and Placement:** REES offers undergraduate co-major and Master's degrees that promote interdisciplinary studies and multi-lingual research efforts. The M.A. program has been particularly successful, attracting high quality students and producing successful program graduates. Since 1960, over 350 students have earned a REES MA. Program graduates have pursued careers in academia, military, government and national intelligence, as well as the private and non-profit sectors. REES graduates have served as defense attachés in several post-communist countries, the chief personnel officer for Russian Foreign Area Officers (FAOs), President of the Jamestown Foundation, International Center Coordinator at Washington State University, and in other prominent professional positions.
- **Coverage of Core Areas:** REES has traditionally maintained strong faculty and student interest in Slavic regions of Russia, East Europe, and Eurasia. Many faculty members in the humanities and social sciences research and teach about Russia and Slavic Central and Eastern Europe (in culture, language, literature, history, politics, sociology, and other disciplines). While coverage of core areas is a strength, it is also threatened by faculty departures (see below).
- **Areas of Comparative Advantage:** REES boasts special strengths that distinguish it from competitors, especially in Ukrainian studies, South Slavic languages and linguistics, and security studies.
  - KU offers Ukrainian language and cultural studies during the academic year in Lawrence, and in the summer in Lviv, Ukraine. The Center has fostered a long-term relationship with Ivan Franko National University in Ukraine that has resulted in faculty and student exchanges, and collaborative research.
  - External reviewers have praised KU's strengths in South Slavic languages and linguistics (especially Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian and Slovene).
  - The longstanding cooperation between CREES and Ft. Leavenworth has strengthened security studies. KU has graduated more U.S. Army Eurasian FAOs than any other program in the U.S., maintains a speaker series with the Foreign Military Studies Office, and has several faculty members with expertise in security issues. REES also supports Turkish language instruction offered by Slavic Languages and Literatures, and Uyghur language instruction offered by the Center for East Asian Studies.
- **Outreach:** REES provides regular, high-quality outreach programs to K-16, business, government, military, and public constituencies, including newsletters, videos, and site-visits that promote education about the region. The program also plays an integral role in sponsoring visitors from the region in cooperation with various programs (i.e., Fulbright) and in maintaining these relationships through ongoing video-Internet exchanges.

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- **Incorporating Technology:** REES continues to expand its use of technology in instruction, research, and outreach. REES maintains several websites with information about the program, collaborative ventures (i.e., Silk Road Resources with East Asian Studies), and outreach. It has added wireless Internet to the seminar room/library to enhance student and faculty research. REES has also spearheaded the incorporation of IP videoconferencing into classes, developing partnerships and conducting video exchanges with universities in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Russia, and Ukraine.

### What REES Could Improve

- **Student Funding:** REES, like other terminal MA programs, faces challenges in securing funding for graduate students. REES students are eligible to compete for FLAS fellowships and have received private and university supplemental scholarships. But, REES lacks the funding to compete for many top MA students and maintain students who commit to the two-year program of study.
- **Seminar and Faculty Mentorship:** For completion of the BA co-major and MA, students must complete a two-semester seminar that focuses on independent interdisciplinary research. Finding a tenure-track or tenured faculty member who would consistently teach the seminar, and developing mechanisms to better engage REES faculty in direct mentorship of student research, would improve the program.
- **Replacement of Retiring/Departing Faculty:** In the last decade, core REES faculty members have retired or departed from academic appointments in Art History, Geography, History, Linguistics, Political Science, and Slavic Languages and Literatures. While many vacated faculty positions have been filled with scholars pursuing comparable research and teaching, upcoming retirements in History and Slavic Languages and Literatures threaten the program's long-term success.

### Goals for the Next Five Years

- **Goal 1: Diversify Funding** – REES has been successful in securing federal funding for programmatic expenses, but monies available under the Title VI program have declined. Securing additional resources from private, university, and other sources is essential for the program to thrive.
- **Goal 2: Strengthen MA Pool** – Strengthening the MA pool is important for continued program success. While many talented students choose KU, many others choose institutions with better funding opportunities. Improving the program's competitiveness for minority students and Foreign Area Officers is also critical.
- **Goal 3: Intensify Faculty Involvement** – Direct faculty involvement in mentoring MA students and offering REES courses is essential. Increasing the number of faculty who mentor MA students, and the depth of that mentorship, will improve the quality of the graduate student experience at KU as well as post-graduation outcomes. A critical component of this effort is to have core faculty lead the REES seminar.
- **Goal 4: Enhance Interdisciplinary Research** – Area centers are uniquely positioned to create an environment encouraging interdisciplinary research among faculty and students. Through working paper series, roundtables, and other programming to foster collaboration, REES will actively encourage the research enterprise.
- **Goal 5: Better Coordinate Course Offerings** – As an interdisciplinary program, REES relies on faculty from many departments and schools to offer courses for its students. Because each department sets its instructional priorities differently, REES courses are not consistently offered in a comprehensive, organized manner, limiting opportunities and choice for students. Developing greater coordination in course offerings over the next five years will improve the quality of the program and the student experience.
- **Goal 6: Deepen/Expand Program Scope** – The program's core geographic focus has been and remains the Slavic areas of Russia, East Europe and Eurasia; maintaining strength and building capacity in this area across the disciplines is a central concern for the coming five years. In addition, continuing to develop capacity in the South Caucasus and Central Asia is critical to respond to the priorities of several constituencies (students, external funding sources, government and military partners).
- **Goal 7: Deepen/Expand Collaborative Programming** – REES maintains several collaborative ventures inside and outside of KU, including strong cooperation with KU's East Asian Studies, *Russian Review*, Ft. Leavenworth, Centers for Russian, East European and Eurasian/Central Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin and University of Texas, Ivan Franko National University in Lviv, Ukraine, and many other institutions. Strengthening existing collaborations and developing new partnerships will allow REES to improve the quality and scope of its programs, and respond to changing world conditions.