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List of units to be reorganized into the Institute for the Study of Religion and Culture:
Religious Studies Program
Division for Late Medieval and Reformation Studies
Arizona Center for Judaic Studies
Religion has been one of the fundamental elements of human experience that have influenced human actions throughout history. Religion’s impact crosses all imaginable chronological, geographical, social and ethnic boundaries. Religion is both a powerful global phenomenon and one that has nuanced localized manifestations. The University of Arizona recognizes that a non-sectarian understanding of religion and its role in culture is central to its educational mission, and this proposal provides a welcome opportunity to align this aspect of the UA mission with the pressing realities of our day. The creation of The Institute for the Study of Religion and Culture would advance the fruitful cooperation of three important campus programs: the Religious Studies Program, the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies, and the Division for Late Medieval and Reformation Studies. The Institute would serve the needs of students and faculty in many campus units, notably History, Women’s Studies, Near Eastern Studies, East Asian Studies, Latin American Studies, and others. Additionally, the Institute would provide the scholarly and professional foundation for the cooperation of 25-30 UA faculty colleagues who specialize in various aspects of religion.

Reorganization and the Arizona Strategic Plan for 2009-2013

1. Prepare Arizona’s Youth and Ensure Access and Opportunity
These three units have been committed to providing scholarship funds for students in their degree programs. Religious Studies administers the Lionel Rombach Scholarship Fund, which annually funds many undergraduate scholarships. Judaic Studies provides considerable student aid each year in the form of tuition scholarships, student awards, and travel grants. Late Medieval and Reformation Studies provides several Graduate Research Assistantships through funds provided by SBS. These funds are essential for attracting outstanding graduate students. It also has the Oberman-Reesink Fellowship and the Ora DeConcini Martin and Morris Martin Endowment, which provide additional grants and assistance for summer language study respectively. Thus, the total amount of the various forms of student financial aid provided by these three units is nearly $90,000 per year.

2. Engage and graduate students who can contribute to the state, nation and world.
At the undergraduate level, Religious Studies and Judaic Studies offer a wide range of courses in General Education for Tier I, Tier II and Foreign Language that provide students with foundational understanding of religion and religious beliefs, and the critical languages necessary for the advanced study of Judaism and Christianity. Graduates of these two programs have gone on to a vast array of positions in the public and private sectors, including businesses and community service organizations. Numerous graduates have been admitted to programs of advanced study at prestigious academic institutions such as the University of Chicago, Duke University, University of Southern California, Boston University and Princeton University.

At the graduate level, The Division for Late Medieval and Reformation Studies is an internationally recognized institute for the training of master’s and doctoral students in European religion and its expansion from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. It draws graduate students from prestigious institutions in North America, Europe, and Asia. Graduates have been placed in notable academic institutions such as the University of Missouri, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, East Carolina University and others. Moreover, Judaic Studies professors Alpert Nakhai and Wright have trained over twenty MA and more than a dozen Ph.D. students in Near Eastern Studies. These students have been placed in public and private institutions in the US and Mexico. Many lead or partner in international archaeological programs in countries throughout the Mediterranean Basin and the Middle East. The Ancient Near Eastern program in which Alpert Nakhai and Wright participated was closed several years ago, but the creation of the Institute for the Study of Religion may provide the context in which to revive the program in Ancient Israelite Religion and Culture.

3. Provide world-class research that improves the human condition in Arizona and beyond.
In spite of the relentless expansion of technology and science into many aspects of life, as well as recent popular trends attempting to sideline religion in the public square, religion remains a fundamental aspect of human experience. The religious imagination has inspired some of humanity’s greatest achievements and brought about some of its darkest failures. It is essential that students preparing for life in the globalized, interconnected world of the twenty-first century be familiar with the great variety in the human religious experience. The research and teaching of all the faculty members in the Institute address in different ways the role of religion in society from antiquity to today. The UA is fortunate to have this cadre of scholars, and the proposed realignment will enable us to expand what is already viewed as world-class research on various aspects of religion. Moreover, the reorganization will promote greater exchange and collaboration between the faculty and students of these units in several ways. For one example, with the faculty we already have (Profs. Graizbord and Nava) we could create a specialty in the religious culture of the Southwest and Mexico, especially on topics such as Jewish migrations to the New World, Religion and Border Studies, Liberation Theology, and “Conversos” (Jewish converts to Christianity and their descendants).

4. Partner with and serve the people of Arizona
These three units are successful models for linking the Academy with the community. Our faculty provide approximately 40 community lectures each year. These units have created four very successful community lecture series: Judaic Studies hosts the “Shaol Pozez Memorial Lecture Series” and the “Sekhel veLev Series,” while Late Medieval and Reformation Studies hosts the “Town and Gown Lecture” and the “Summer Lecture Series.” The lectures in these privately-funded series annually serve over 3,500 people in Tucson and Southern Arizona. Clearly, these units enjoy significant community support. This support is also apparent in the extent of private financial support that these units have been able to secure. They model the best practices in university-community partnerships.

Reorganization and Raised Ranking and Reputation
This reorganization would bring together the many and diverse talented faculty who are conducting creative research and teaching in the various academic fields of Religion. Apart from maintaining a well-established reputation of academic excellence, we expect that these colleagues will, through increased interaction, create new interdisciplinary initiatives in teaching and research. Moreover, this will present new opportunities for collaborative work that could seek external support via substantial research grants. It should be noted that the idea of integrating Judaic Studies and Religious Studies has been discussed intermittently over the past decade. Thus, the current proposal is the fruit of several years of discussion. Now, with the addition of the Division for Late Medieval and Reformation Studies, the intellectual and administrative justification for structural affiliation is even stronger. Together the stellar faculty and staff in the proposed Institute will raise the UA’s profile in the study of Religion and ancillary disciplines instantly and significantly.

Reorganization and SPBAC Criteria
1. Centrality to Mission and Priorities of the University
We live in a world where religion continues to play a pivotal role in human interactions. Our citizens must become more aware of the world’s diverse religious practices and ideals. Thus, understanding religion and its many manifestations must be a “priority” for all in the twenty-first century. The proposed Institute is designed to meet that need in terms of teaching, research, and service.

2. Quality of Research, Teaching and Service
The professors included in this proposal have received some of the world’s most competitive grants from institutions such as the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial (Karant-Nunn) and Rothschild (Wright) foundations. All of the professors involved in the new unit have had their research published by premiere publishers (e.g., Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Routledge Press, and University of Pennsylvania Press). This group of professors includes several who have won diverse teaching awards
at the UA: the Sherrill Creative Teaching Award, two 5-Star Teaching Awards, the Provost’s Teaching Award, numerous college level teaching awards in COH and SBS, and $30,000 in instructional innovation grants. Finally, the service activity of these professors is exemplary. Our faculty serve on the boards of several national and international scholarly journals, organizations and research institutes: the International Schleiermacher Association (Foley), the American Schools of Oriental Research (Alpert Nakhai), the German Society for Reformation Research (Lotz-Heumann), the Reformation 500th Anniversary Planning Committee (Karant-Nunn), and the W.F. Albright Institute for Archaeological Research (Wright).

3. Productivity in Educational Offerings and Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities
Due to limitations on space, it need only be reiterated here that the faculty of the Institute are prolific scholars who enjoy international acclaim in their fields. Apart from a vibrant curriculum at the undergraduate level and the internationally acclaimed graduate program in Late Medieval and Reformation Studies, it should be noted that the proposed Institute would host the world’s largest Modern Hebrew program at a public institution outside of Israel. Thus, the faculty who will form the core of the Institute are by any measure extremely productive in teaching, research and outreach.

4. Efficiency of Unit’s Operation
The proposed reorganization allows the UA to capitalize on each unit’s individual strengths, while at the same time using their interdependence to consolidate their shared interests and activities. The new unit would bring together some of the University’s most successful and hence exceptional departmental fundraisers, creating an even more effective team focused on raising private funds to support the three units within the Institute. Beyond mere efficiency, we are exploring opportunities to decrease the budgetary amounts now covered by state funding by expanding our existing donor relations in the near future.

5. Demand for the Research, Services and Graduates from the Unit
The courses for these units are fully and often oversubscribed virtually every semester. Our faculty present the fruits of their research at the leading academic conferences in their respective fields. They sit on the boards of the major academic presses, journals, organizations and institutions in their fields. They are constantly sought as public speakers.

Consultation Process
The three units involved in this proposal have undertaken extensive consultations while crafting this proposal. First, the faculty and staff members of the three units have met to discuss the proposal. Second, each of these units has an active Advisory Board, and most of those board members, with the exception of the Board for Late Medieval and Reformation Studies, have been informed of the general direction of our discussions. Third, the heads of the three units have had direct conversations with the deans of COH and SBS. Finally, to forestall any unnecessary anxiety on the part of students, especially the graduate students, we thought it prudent to delay involving students until a clearer picture of the future prospects and process emerges.
Budget Page
While the possibility exists of achieving efficiencies, it should be noted that each of the units described here has operated with the uttermost efficiency, indeed with chronic under-financing, throughout its existence. Judaic Studies raises private funds to pay its staff and cover other operational expenses. Late Medieval and Reformation Studies also raises money from private sources for ordinary operational services and supplies. Religious Studies has only recently become independent from Classics, and it is already involved in fundraising to meet its operational expenses. This situation, to be sure, is highly undesirable. Ideally, fund-raising efforts ought to be reserved for larger educational and scholarly projects, such as would enhance both our units and the University. Nonetheless, the units are committed to doing whatever is necessary to increase success in raising funds from private sources, foundations, etc. Perhaps the key financial point of this proposal is to stress that all three units, small as they are, have had exceptional success in raising funds to support their efforts to fulfill their own and the UA’s mission.

Efficiencies
By combining forces, these three units can achieve financial efficiencies in the ways described below. We believe that these efficiencies can be achieved while at the same time expanding the curricular, scholarly, and outreach successes of the three units within the new Institute for the Study of Religion and Culture.

Staff
The total state commitment for staff in these three units is approximately $220,000. Due to the inability of SBS to cover Judaic Studies’ staff salaries, JUS is already in the process of moving its staff salaries from state to private funds, resulting in 50% savings to the university. It should be stressed that all these staff members are absolutely essential to the fundraising activities of their units. Each staff person works closely with our donors, people who also are some of the UA’s most significant supporters. Each unit within the Institute is committed to seeking additional means to cover administrative expenses moving forward.

Faculty
On the faculty side, both LMRS and JUS have faculty positions supported by outside funds. Prof. Shlomo Aronson is Judaic Studies’ Schusterman Visiting Professor, and $75,000 of his $100,000 salary is paid by private funds. Judaic Studies also has secured private commitments to support a faculty hire in Israel Studies. That position is currently waiting approval for 2009-10. Most notable, however, is Late Medieval and Reformation Studies’ success in raising the funds to create the Heiko Oberman Endowed Chair. To date $1.6 million has been raised; and through a current matching gift, the target of $2 million will hopefully be reached in 2009. Thus, these two units within the Institute are already carrying a heavy load in private fundraising to support faculty positions.

Lecture Series
All three units have endowments or receive annual gifts to support academic lectures and lecture series. The cost for these is approximately $32,000. These many and varied events reach over 3,500 people annually.

Student Aid
As noted above, these three units provide approximately $90,000 in various forms of financial aid.

Finally, each unit raises on average $15,000 from private sources annually to support programmatic operations. Beyond that, Judaic Studies has a $1,000,000 endowment to support operations, faculty teaching and research, and community outreach. Religious Studies and Late Medieval and Reformation Studies are both working to secure similar operational endowments. Each unit also has been informed that they have been written into the estates of some of their supporters. The total of these funds is unknown at this point.