Near Eastern and Middle East Studies

& Streamlining Marshall Building 4th Floor Administration

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The University of Arizona is home to a world renowned program in Middle Eastern Studies. Its reputation is built upon the foundational and academic excellence of its Department of Near Eastern Studies and, through the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, upon an exceptional record of interdisciplinary activities and public outreach. NES maintains dynamic connections with a number of units and in this White Paper we will suggest how some of those connections could be strengthened and streamlined to create an even greater capacity and efficiency.

The University of Arizona’s mission is to discover, educate, serve and inspire. As the state's land-grant university, our research and resources enrich communities around the state and around the world. The Middle East as a region and as a set of problems lies at the epicenter of many our nation’s most pressing concerns: water, oil, security, religion, history and culture. The Middle Eastern program of the University of Arizona contributes in fundamental ways to our nation’s ability to grapple with these issues. It exemplifies the University’s mission in preparing our students and the citizens of the state of Arizona for living in the twenty-first century.

The Department of Near Eastern Studies (NES) provides the area studies and language programs that have made it possible for the Center for Middle East Studies to win Department of Education Title VI funding continuously for 33 years. This long unbroken record is matched by only six universities (Columbia, Harvard, University of California, Berkeley, UCLA, University of Washington, and Ohio State). In 2007 NES was ranked 2nd (after Harvard) among Near and Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures departments by the Chronicle of Higher Education’s “Top Research Universities Faculty Scholarly Productivity Index.”

NES has highly motivated undergraduate majors: even though Middle Eastern languages are difficult to learn, among 65 majors at least two dozen are double or even triple majors, with many being honors students. Several Flinn Foundation scholars over the years have either majored or minored in Middle East Studies (or Arabic – including Serena Hoy, the last Rhodes Scholar from the University of Arizona, who went to Oxford for Middle East Studies). Two winners of University Freedom Medals at last spring’s graduation minored in Arabic. Also last spring, the SBS Outstanding Senior award went to one of our majors. The NES graduate program is an extremely vibrant one, presently with 49 graduate students. The M.A. program includes a professional track, which has produced students who have gone into government service – including various intelligence agencies, fulfilling a critical national need. Many students from the nation’s military services come for further language training and for the comprehensive area studies knowledge provided by the program. NES has established a dual M.A. in International Journalism with the Department of Journalism, a dual M.A. with the School of Information Resources and Library Science (SIRLS), and a dual Ph.D. with Anthropology (the first such dual degree in the country). NES has served as a minor for a number of Ph.D. students in History, Anthropology, Geography, or SLAT and many NES courses are cross-listed for both undergraduate and graduate students in the previously mentioned departments as well as Political Science, Judaic Studies, Women’s Studies, and Linguistics. Language training in Middle Eastern languages has served not only our own majors but also it has been critical for many Ph.D. students in other departments who conduct their field work on or in the Middle East.
Funding from CMES has helped support the teaching of our Middle Eastern languages, whose enrollments are comparable or larger than most other programs at our Peer institutions. Arabic, Persian, and Turkish are taught in NES through advanced (third-year) levels, with even higher level courses and dialect courses in Arabic (and this year, Ottoman Turkish being added to the Turkish classes). Hebrew, taught in the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies, is another option for our undergraduate and graduate students. NES’s record of teaching a broad array of Arabic dialects, is almost unmatched in the US. NES presently has a $300,000 endowment from the Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute for graduate fellowships in Persian and Iranian Studies.

At the heart of Near Eastern studies programs are language studies, literatures, religion, history and culture. Currently, the department is considering a name change, to the Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies to more accurately reflect the range of our interests. The new name would complement those units with which we propose some collaboration: Arizona Center for Judaic Studies, Religious Studies Program, and Late Medieval and Reformation Studies (and which are being proposed to be an Institute for the Study of Religion and Culture).

The Center for Middle East Studies (CMES) is the only area studies Title VI National Resource Center at the University of Arizona, whereas almost all our peer institutions have more of these centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education. CMES, established in 1975, is recognized as one of the most active and effective centers in the nation. Its mandate is to provide an umbrella that supports Middle East Studies throughout the campus, the community, and the state of Arizona, providing seed money for positions in various departments, outreach to K-12 teachers with workshops and study abroad programs, stimulating and timely lectures and conferences for the campus and community to promote the understanding of the Middle East, and major funding for graduate students (in many departments) for studying Middle Eastern languages at the University of Arizona during the academic year and abroad in the Middle East in summers. CMES is not a degree granting unit and its programs and mandate should not be confused with any specific department – indeed, its existence is predicated upon that independence.

Specific Proposals:

1) NES and CMES support the foundation of a College or School of International, Area and Language Studies which is being proposed in another White Paper, and advocates that our units fit well into the scope and mission of that College or School.

2) The Department of Near Eastern Studies (NES) will discuss changing its name to the Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies to better reflect its content and mission and to facilitate fund raising opportunities from the Middle East and North Africa, and especially the Arab Gulf.

3) NES supports the proposed establishment of the Institute for the Study of Religion and Culture. Having the Religious Studies Program, Arizona Center for Judaic Studies and Late Medieval and Reformation Studies as part of one institute (while maintaining their own identities) will lead to greater academic and research cooperation between NES and this Institute. One NES faculty
member has a joint appointment with Judaic Studies (Esther Fuchs) and two NES faculty (Scott Lucas & Aomar Boum) have joint appointments with Religious Studies. We propose helping in relocating the remaining five faculty members of Religious Studies to Marshall Building 4th floor, the present location of both NES and Judaic Studies (and CMES). We are working out ways to find sufficient office space among all our units on this same floor. The presence of Religious Studies, Judaic Studies and Near Eastern Studies on one floor of Marshall Building will certainly create the synergy for greater interaction and cooperation for both research and teaching.

4) We propose **streamlining the office operations of the units of Marshall Building 4th floor**, which entails greater sharing of resources and ways to cut costs in these difficult budgetary times. The merging of the five small units into one larger administrative entity (but not academic unity) could provide substantial savings in staff salaries (see budget).

5) Similar to the strong leadership of President Shelton and Provost Hay, we believe there also must be **robust leadership for individual units**. It is that leadership, along with their faculty, who have the connections for fund raising and who provide various incentives and ideas for the viability of their programs. Certainly different individuals over time will be taking on those leadership roles – and the incentives and rewards for such leadership can be changed. But to advocate that leaderless units can exist spaced around central office complexes can only lead to mediocrity. We propose that the Marshall Building 4th floor units continue to have Heads and Directors.
Budget

The newly configured administrative unit of Marshall Building 4th Floor would require only one or two business managers, whereas currently there are three that are either entirely or at least partially state-funded (Near Eastern Studies, Judaic Studies, and Center for Middle Eastern Studies). The potential savings could be as much as $92,000. There could also be reconfigurations of other staff positions, which currently include a senior program coordinator in Late Medieval and Reformation Studies ($55,000 in state funds) and Administrative Assistant ($31,000 in state funds); an administrative assistant in Religious Studies ($36,000 in state funds); a program coordinator senior in Judaic Studies ($26,000 in state funds); an administrative assistant in Near Eastern Studies ($16,000 in state funds); and a program coordinator in Near Eastern Studies ($16,000 in state funds). One could easily envision the staffing needs of a larger administrative unit to include a business manager, a graduate coordinator, and a departmental administrative assistant. Units that now partially fund positions using grant monies could use those monies to meet their unique staffing needs. For example, The Arizona Center for Judaic Studies now has its two staff on partial state money and is planning to move them to total outside funds hopefully by summer 2009-2010. Ultimately, we believe there is real opportunity to reduce the burden on state funds in these areas. It should be mentioned that such sharing has already been instituted between units, such as the use of one copy machine between CMES and Judaic Studies. Bulk purchasing of paper and other office supplies is being shared by several units.