To: Janice Reiff, Chair, UCLA Academic Senate
Fr: Christina Palmer, Chair, College Faculty Executive Committee
Date: March 11, 2014
Re: Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures Proposal (submitted February 19, 2014); Effective term: Fall 2014

Final Approval terminates with the Academic Senate

On March 7, 2014, the College FEC discussed a proposal from the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures requesting to change the graduate programs (M.A. and Ph.D.) as well as the department name to the Department of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Languages and Cultures. The committee’s discussion was aided by Professor Roman Koropeckyj. We understand the department’s reasons for adopting a name that better reflects the scope of scholarship of its faculty as well as the interests of its graduate students. The request was deemed noncontroversial and unanimously approved by our members (11 approve, 0 oppose, 0 abstain).

As the Senate considers this request, please do not hesitate to contact me at cpalmer@mednet.ucla.edu with questions. Kyle Stewart McJunkin, Academic Administrator, is also available to assist you and he can be reached at (310) 825-3223 or kmcjunkin@college.ucla.edu.

cc: Kim Alexander, Articulation Officer, Undergraduate Admissions and Relations with Schools
Lucy Blackmar, Assistant Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education Initiatives
Kathleen Copenhaver, Associate Registrar, Registrar's Office
Corey Hollis, Director, College Academic Counseling
Robert Kilgore, Manager, Degree Audit System, Registrar’s Office
Lisa Lee, Student Affairs Officer, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
Ronald Vroon, Chair, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

Attachment: Proposal
To: Professor Christina Palmer, Chair  
Faculty Executive Committee

From: Ronald Vroon, Chair, Dept. of Slavic Languages & Literatures

Re: Department name change

Date: February 19, 2014

The Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures is proposing to change its name to the Department of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Languages and Cultures (SEEELC) as early as possible but no later than 1 July 2014. We describe here the reason for the change and the processes guiding our decision. We discuss the position of our department and its relationship to other departments in the Humanities Division as well as the potential impact of the name change on educational programs of the department.

The change in our department name will communicate more accurately its composition as it currently exists, the current state of the field, and, what is perhaps most important, the future direction of the department. Ever since its recognition as a separate discipline in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century, but particularly as it effloresced in the decades following World War II, the field of Slavic Studies, as its name would indicate, has been organized according to the philological model out of which it originally emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century. Informing as it did the study of some dozen linguistically related peoples of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, this model focused above all on the study of textual and ethnographic artefacts of the Slavic peoples. In this sense, departments of Slavic languages and literatures in the United States were, and for the most part continue to be, organized around the same philological principle as, say, departments of Germanic or Romance languages and literatures. Indeed, since its inception in 1948, the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at UCLA might be said to have been an exemplar in this respect, housing at one time or another specialists in linguistics and literature, whose interests embraced practically all Slavic cultures (Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian, Czech, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian) from earliest times to the present. Over the course of the last twenty years, however, the department has become the permanent home to two non-Slavic East European cultures, Romanian and Hungarian, and on occasion Baltic cultures (Lithuanian), while some of its members have engaged in the study of non-Slavic peoples of Eurasia (e.g., Central Asia and Siberia) that were once part of the Russian Empire and then its Soviet successor state. At the same time, in addition to language and literature, film as well as such artefacts of popular culture as television and music has drawn the scholarly attention
of several members of the faculty. All of this has consequently been reflected in the department’s course offerings. Moreover, several of our recent graduate students have set the study of Central Asian cultures (Tatar, Uzbek, Azeri, Kazak, Kyrgyz) at the center of their scholarly interests, with one having just completed a PhD dissertation devoted to an examination of Russophone literature in Central Asia. Yet another recent graduate submitted a dissertation exploring the depiction of the Holocaust in the USSR in Yiddish as well as Russian literature.

It was recognition of these "facts on the ground," as well as a desire to adumbrate the future direction of the department, that prompted our faculty in 2010 to begin considering a name change. Further impetus to the process was provided in the Senate's Eight-Year Review of our program in 2013, which, among other recommendations, suggested that "the department should consider changing its name to 'Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures,' to better reflect a broader, more interdisciplinary curriculum." In the course of several meetings, a number of different combinations were proposed and discussed, including "Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures," "East European Languages and Cultures," "Russian and East European Languages and Cultures," and "Russian and East European Studies." In the process, several issues came to the fore. First, it was argued that for the public at large (including an increasing number of undergraduates), the very word "Slavic" is unfamiliar and should therefore be replaced in the new name by "East European" and/or "Russian." Since the Russian field constitutes the primary area of specialization as well as draw of the department, it was initially agreed that it should be featured prominently in the new name. Second, because of cultural sensitivities, there was a discussion concerning the term "East European" and whether it would be more appropriate to include "Central European" in the name as well, hence "Central and East European" or "Central/East European." Third, in view of the interests of some of the faculty and graduate students as well as the department's course offerings, but also with a view toward the future, it was agreed that "Eurasian" should be added to the mix. Finally, the question of defining subject matter arose, to wit, whether the profile of the department merited the name "Studies" or "Languages and Cultures." Although it was argued that the former might be misleading, connoting as it does a range of disciplines beyond the (broadly) philological (i.e., the social sciences), the latter option appeared at first to be too unwieldy, as would, in fact, the inclusion of "Central European." An initial consensus was therefore reached on "The Department of Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies" (REES), mirroring somewhat UCLA's Center for European and Eurasian Studies (where the term "Eurasian" encompasses the lands of the current Russian Federation as well as the Central Asian lands that had once been part of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union). Upon further reflection, however, it became obvious that were this to be the new name, the default shorthand would surely be "The Russian Department," an outcome none of us found desirable; indeed, all of our peer institutions (e.g., Princeton, Yale, Harvard, Columbia, Pennsylvania, Northwestern, Chicago, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, UC Berkeley, Stanford, Virginia) refer to themselves by some nomenclature that includes "Slavic" but does not single out "Russian." The term "Studies" too was reassessed, particularly in light of the existence at UCLA of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and the Departments of Asian Languages and Cultures, that is, conglomerates that represent geographical and, to some extent, political, but not narrowly ethnic or philological, entities. On 10 September 2013 the department finally agreed unanimously (5 to 0) that the name that best describes its purview as well as future direction should be "Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Languages and Cultures," that is, all Slavic cultures (including, of course, Russian), the non-Slavic cultures of Eastern Europe (Yiddish, Hungarian, Romanian, Baltic), as well as the non-Slavic Eurasian
cultures of the former Russian Empire / Soviet Union (i.e., Tatar, Azeri, Kazak, Kyrgyz, Uzbek as well as the cultures of Siberia).

In the course of preparing a draft of this proposal Humanities Division Dean David Schaberg suggested that we consult with the Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures concerning a potential overlap between the proposed purview of our department implied by "Eurasian" and that of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures. We raised this matter with Bill Schniedewind, the current chair of NELC, who writes in a letter of 7 February 2014: "NELC supports the name change. We don't think there's much of an overlap with NELC in the new name. I think our departments certainly have a mutual interest in Central Asian languages, but I believe that we can continue to work together where appropriate in teaching Central Asian languages" (see appended correspondence). We share these sentiments completely.

Currently, the department offers three majors (Russian Language and Literature; Russian Studies; Central and East European Languages & Cultures) and four minors (Russian Language; Russian Literature; Russian Studies; Central and East European Studies) that are aimed at appealing to what we have identified as the primary interests of undergraduates wishing to either major or minor in the department. At the moment, there are no plans to change the names of these majors/minors, although as the department regains strength, this may come under review, depending on the scholarly interests of future hires. In this connection, while current course listing codes (e.g., RUSSIAN, SLAVIC, CEE STD, POLISH, ROMAN etc.) will remain unchanged, new course codes may be added in the future, again depending on the interests of future hires. The name of the MA as well as PhD degrees will change accordingly from Slavic Languages and Literatures to Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Languages and Cultures. Of course department letterhead and web pages will have to be updated accordingly.

To conclude, we believe that the new name reflects more accurately the true nature of the department as it now exists and at the same time charts new directions for its future without, however, effacing its connections to the past and, hence, to a tradition of outstanding scholarship and teaching that has made the department one of the very best in the field. The name change guarantees that it will continue to be regarded as such for decades to come.

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1 From Fall 2010 to Summer 2013, the Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures awarded a total of 38 major degrees and 56 minor degrees. Of the 38 total major degrees awarded, 12 were in Russian Studies; 3 in Central & East European Languages & Cultures; 22 in Russian Language & Literature; and 1 in Slavic Languages & Literatures. Of the 56 minor degrees awarded, 13 were in Central & East European Studies; 8 in Russian Literature; 24 in Russian Language; and 11 in Russian Studies.
From: Schniedewind, William  
Sent: Friday, February 07, 2014 4:38 PM  
To: Vroon, Ronald  
Subject: Re: Slavic Department name change

Dear Ron,

NELC supports the name change. We don’t think there’s much of an overlap with NELC in the new name. I think our departments certainly have a mutual interest in Central Asian languages, but I believe that we can continue to work together where appropriate in teaching Central Asian languages.

Sincerely,
Bill Schniedewind  
Chair, NELC dept

On Feb 7, 2014, at 2:06 PM, "Vroon, Ronald" <vroon@humnet.ucla.edu> wrote:

Dear Bill,

Our Department underwent its regular eight-year Senate Review last year, and one of the recommendations they made is that we change our name to better reflect what we currently do (which is a lot broader than just “Slavic”). We discussed the matter at length and eventually decided on “Department of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Languages and Cultures” because it reflects our broader non-Slavic East European scope (Romanian, Hungarian, sometimes one or more of the Baltic languages), and also some work (so far just lit. and culture, no languages) of Siberia and the former Soviet Central Asian republics (I’ve attached a preliminary draft of our proposal for you to look over). In that connection our liaison with FEC, Kyle McJunkin, noticed that there might be a potential for overlap with NELC and that we should get a letter of support from you for our name change. We have no desire to claim languages that have traditionally been taught in NELC like Azeri or Uzbek, if you want to retain title to them: our main interest is to open the door for studies in the broader Siberian and Central Asian areas in the future, as they become more important. I’d be grateful for a brief letter of support for our name change, and if you think it would be wise to establish some sort of protocol for determining where future languages should find their departmental home, maybe we could meeting next week sometime to discuss this.

All best,
Ron

<App for Name Change--Dean.doc>
February 25, 2014

Christina Palmer, Chair
College Faculty Executive Committee
A-265 Murphy Hall
Mailcode 157101

Dear Christina:

I am writing to confirm my support for the proposal by the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures to change its name to the Department of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Languages and Cultures. The name change will more accurately reflect the areas of expertise that are present within the department. The new name also aligns well with the articulated goal of a broader and more interdisciplinary curriculum.

Sincerely,

David Schaberg
Dean of Humanities