

EPAG Minutes  
Thursday, October 6, 2011  
11:30-1:00  
Campus Center 214

Holly Barcus, Kendrick Brown, Janet Folina, Kate Hamilton, James Heyman, Ann Minnick, Yeukai Mudzi, Kathy Murray, Jayne Niemi, Sonita Sarker, Patrick Schmidt (chair), Chad Topaz, Chris Willcox

Guests: Jim von Geldern, Gitta Hammarberg, David Martyn

1. We welcomed our guests. Patrick began the discussion by reviewing where we are in the review: We are at the beginning of the process, no systematic review has begun, but in preparation for today's meeting the committee did review the first ten letters that we have received from students and alumni.
2. Jim von Geldern began the discussion by addressing the questions we had sent prior to this meeting, and Gitta Hammarberg and David Martyn later also contributed.

Topics addressed included:

- The nature of interdisciplinary work in Russian Studies and the extent to which subjects of history, culture, politics, and literature can be meaningful separated from the study of language without losing the depth of appreciation of those subjects
- Changes in the levels of preparation of students coming to Mac, with attention given the apparent stability in high school Russian programs after a period of struggle in the 1990s
- The long-term prospects for Russian Studies against a backdrop of changing international dynamics and the continuing importance of Russia as a major political and economic force
- The nature and approach of Macalester's Russian Studies curriculum, and how it has covered the field and the language with its allocation of faculty resources
- Larger trends in enrollments in languages other than English
- What is required to mount a (successful) Russian major, and by what measures success should be assessed, including the role of depth
- The ways in which students learn and come to understand subjects when language is included in the field of study

- The geographical region covered by the umbrella of “Russian” and places where the Russian language is commonly spoken
- The role of History and Economics faculty as contributors to Russian Studies
- Ways of assessing the academic strength of Russian, including the trajectories of alumni, the connectedness of the language instruction to the program, and the intensity of interest of students who study that language
- The study away patterns among Russian Studies students
- Past curricular conversations about what languages to teach

Guests depart.

3. Following the departure of our guests, we gave ourselves space for reaction, thoughts, and appreciation of what our guests offered by way of insight and direction. Notions included:
  - How languages play a role in forming a complete understanding of a culture/history/society
  - How students specializing in a language, even if relatively few in number, enrich other portions of the curriculum
  - The tension between offering depth in a language (making it richer but reaching fewer students) and offering more courses taught/read in English (making it more approachable but filling a different role in the curriculum)
  - Understanding the ebb and flow of “popularity” in the choice of language and area specialization, with other examples mentioned of Greek, Latin, and Arabic, and what kind of moment we have now as context for this review of Russian Studies
4. Patrick also reported on the meeting that he and Jim had with current Russian Studies students, and that the EPAG MoodleGroup would be used to collect all of the documents and data as things started to come in.
5. Faculty meeting on Tuesday: Patrick sought input for his report at the faculty meeting. He will add a bit about our work on writing.
6. Approval of the minutes: Done.

7. The question was raised and we gave brief discussion to: What is the question before the committee that the discontinuance procedure puts to EPAG and is there latitude to recommend something else besides mere continuance or discontinuance?

Adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jayne Niemi, Registrar