

State of the Department: January 2015

Germanic Languages and Literatures continues to be a strong department in the College of Arts and Sciences at Ohio State. There are many positive signs about our programs and their importance for the campus, and indications we are acquiring a greater profile nationally and internationally. I wanted to briefly review some of the things that have been happening as we move into the second half of academic year 2014-2015.

Most encouraging has been the success of our graduate program. This past year we attracted an outstanding class of high quality graduate students, a larger cohort than we have had in any year for the past two decades. We are making every effort to solidify these gains for 2015-2016 with another strong year of recruiting, and preliminary indications are positive. We have adjusted the new graduate program, which offers great flexibility for students to pursue various directions in their studies, to include additional introductory courses at the 6000 level. We undertook these changes with the input of current graduate students. These new courses are designed to provide a solid basis for graduate students as they proceed into seminars at the 8000 level and move toward their Masters Degree and topics for their doctorate. Improvements in the graduate program and increased efforts at retention will continue to be pursued as we move into the next calendar year.

Our undergraduate program in German is sound; our enrollments are solid; and we are developing a better and larger pipeline to the major and minor. This fall we saw a larger enrollment in our three-semester elementary language sequence than we've had since the beginning of the semester system. Indeed, compared to other departments in the Arts and Humanities, GLL has the highest projected increase in enrollment for the Spring 2015 term, and is one of only two departments to evidence growth in both head count and student credit hours. We are making special efforts to coax students into a German major or minor, contacting incoming students who have officially expressed an interest in our program, and having GTAs and the chair give in-class presentations to students on the advantages of adding a credential in German. To keep our program vibrant and relevant, the Undergraduate Committee is working on an upper-division language course, desired by students to enhance their communicative skills. And we have reactivated our lapsed membership in Delta Phi Alpha, the national German honors society, and will begin inducting students this spring.

The programs in Yiddish and Ashkenazic Studies, and in Scandinavian are both holding their own. It is no secret that both programs have suffered losses in recent years and are badly in need of replacements to continue to survive and thrive. To this end the Department convened an ad hoc committee on YASP, which recommended the appointment of an official advisory committee consisting of members internal and external to the Department. The report was sent to the Dean, and he agreed that appointing such a committee would help promote interdisciplinarity in the program and be beneficial in connecting it with other units. Dovid has embraced this initiative, and we are all hopeful that it proves fruitful for YASP's future.

Merrill has staunchly kept the spirit of Scandinavian alive on the campus. She has arranged for Ohio State to connect with an online Finnish course and helped bring speakers to campus to embellish the program. In the spring she is organizing the annual meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies, which will occur in Columbus from May 6 - May 9.

The Department sponsored a number of talks and co-sponsored several other events around the campus that pertain to Germanic Languages. We also organized the first Ohio German Studies Workshop, which took place in October. German Studies faculty from around the state met, shared their research, and discussed issues of teaching and institutional challenges. The success of this meeting, held on October 11, led us to schedule the second workshop for November 14, 2015. We hope that the OGSW will become an annual event.

At our last meeting this fall we discussed and passed recommendation from the special ad hoc committee on “ideas.” This committee made five recommendations for improvement of our Department and its profile: (1) Expanding undergraduate recruitment; (2) focusing our invited lectures to provide more intellectual stimulation; (3) connecting with local schools as an outreach activity; (4) exploring joint ventures with other units (business and engineering) on campus; and (5) holding a one-day workshop in connection with our Kade visitor.

There were a number of other notable happenings during the past few months:

- Natascha Miller was awarded the “Above and Beyond Buckeye Prize” for her outstanding work in helping with the organization of the OGSW.
- The seminar room/library project neared completion: we have a new, state-of-the-art conference table and video set-up, new and comfortable chairs, new shelving, new carpeting, and a new paint job. We have also purchased several editions to make our library more relevant for the graduate students.
- We have enhanced our web site to include more information about faculty members and graduate students. We hope that the web site in its present form will assist in our continuing recruiting efforts.
- We passed new documents pertaining to our “Pattern of Administration” and “Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure.”
- Our EAP programs appear to be very healthy and successful this year. We have kept the costs low and anticipate very good enrollments. Included in our offerings is a Maymester course in Berlin, taught by Carmen and May.
- Brenda Hosey retired after many years of service to GLL and, in recent times, to the departments on the fourth floor of Hagerty.
- Together with Comparative Studies and Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures, we hired a new human resources and financial staff member, Catherine Kotol, who began work at the end of December.

Although we were not granted any new faculty searches this year to replace the various colleagues lost in recent years, and although the operational budget continues to be precarious for our unit (and all other units in the College), we have done exceedingly well with the resources we have had at our disposal.

Efforts like the ones listed above could not come to fruition without the contributions of many individuals in GLL. As Chair, I would therefore like to thank everyone in the Department – faculty members, graduate students, and staff – for their contributions to departmental excellence and departmental *esprit de corps*. For me it has been a genuine pleasure working with such an outstanding group of dedicated and professional colleagues.