

**Recommendation to Merge the Departments of
German, Scandinavian Studies, and
Slavic Languages and Literature to become the
Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic (GNS).**

Upon the request of the Dean and Associate Dean, the Departments of German, Scandinavian Studies, and Slavic propose to combine into one unit, to be called the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic (GNS). By combining these three units, administrative efficiencies will be increased and there will be benefit from the collective insights and experience of a joint Executive Committee and other major committees. Moreover, the fields taught and studied have geographical, historical, cultural, and linguistic points of intersection – a shared history.

After considerable deliberations with the respective departments and in consultation with other units over two years, each department held a separate vote on the permission to plan, submitted in December 2014. All votes were favorable. Subsequently, each department held a vote on an earlier version of the planning document, which was most recently revised (11/11/2015) after feedback from L&S: German (vote held 11/5/2015): unanimously positive (16 faculty present; 2 faculty and one academic staff member absent); Scandinavian Studies (vote held 11/6/2015): one abstention, all other votes positive (8, including faculty, academic staff, and one university staff member), with one absence; Slavic Languages & Literature (vote held 11/10/2015): two abstentions, all other votes positive (11, including faculty, administrative staff, and one university staff member), with one absence.

The Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic (GNS) represents a merger of the Department of German (established in 1890), the Department of Scandinavian Studies (established in 1875, the oldest in the United States), and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature (established in 1936 as the Department of Polish and renamed in 1942). GNS supports the University of Wisconsin mission “to provide a learning environment in which faculty, staff, and students can discover, examine critically, preserve, and transmit the knowledge, wisdom, and values that will help ensure the survival of this and future generations and improve the quality of life for all” and “to help students to develop an understanding and appreciation for the complex cultural and physical worlds in which they live and to realize their highest potential of intellectual, physical, and human development.” GNS fosters innovative teaching and research in Slavic, Nordic, Continental West Germanic, and Central Eurasian languages, literatures, linguistics, and cultural studies. It is a major priority of the Department to maintain vibrant programs in all of these academic areas at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

To fulfill its mission, GNS offers language courses; offers a curriculum that features courses in critical theory, cultural history and area studies, language pedagogy, linguistics, and literature at both undergraduate and graduate levels in order to prepare students for advanced study in the respective programs; strengthens cultural understanding by providing opportunities, in cooperation with the Office of International Academic Programs, for students to study abroad; maintains teaching excellence; generates new knowledge through scholarly research; achieves national and international leadership in the discipline; serves various communities through outreach in accordance with the Wisconsin Idea; and embodies, through its policies and programs, respect for and commitment to the ideals of a diverse and open academic community and pluralistic democratic society.

GNS faculty and academic staff conduct research in a wide variety of fields including folklore studies, foreign language pedagogy, linguistics, literary and cultural history, literary and critical theory, the relationship between literature and the performing arts, national and transnational identity, world literature, print- and digital cultural history, migration studies, and translation studies. Some faculty and academic staff members are also translators, creative writers, and authors of textbooks and other published pedagogical materials. Academic fields of GNS faculty and staff overlap in many ways under these general categories. Within the department, however, are housed separate graduate and undergraduate academic programs whose activities will continue, and whose research missions are outlined below.

Over the long term, the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic sees opportunities to offer joint graduate courses in literary and critical theory and foreign language pedagogy. Promising avenues of collaboration include a course that introduces graduate students (Teaching Assistants) to foreign language pedagogy, and a graduate-level proseminar which would introduce our newly admitted students, as well as any other students who would benefit from such a proseminar, to aspects of professionalization common to GNS. The faculty intends over the coming years to explore other domains where GNS faculty and academic staff can combine efforts to team-teach, alternate in teaching, or offer interdisciplinary/inter-program courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels on cultural studies, literature (Romanticism, Modernism, literature of exile, literature on the Holocaust, etc.), folklore, linguistics, pedagogy, theater studies, and translation studies.

At present German, Scandinavian Studies, and Slavic Languages & Literature each offer a BA/BS, MA, and PhD, and both German and Scandinavian Studies offer a certificate. (Slavic is in the process of applying for a certificate in East Central European Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, and will also apply for a separate certificate in Russian.) In addition to the combined efforts outlined above, the faculty intends to continue offering the separate undergraduate majors and graduate programs, as they reflect their separate disciplines and prepare graduate students to teach in these separate fields.

The new department will assume responsibility for all academic programs and subject listings currently administered by the Departments of German, Scandinavian Studies, and Slavic. At this time, no substantial revisions are planned for these programs, which will retain their distinct characters. Responsibility for academic oversight of these programs will continue to reside with the faculty in these areas, who will continue to teach and mentor students through these programs.

The department will have a single Curriculum and Planning Committee led by the Associate Chair for Academic Programs. Though each sub-program may have its own committee, the C&P Committee will be responsible for program review, assessment, and evaluation of GNS programs; review of proposals to add, change, or discontinue courses in the subject listings administered by the department; and coordination of the schedule of courses offered by the department. In addition, the faculty and staff in the combined department will continue to offer courses in the shared subject listing, Literature in Translation (551)

Budget cuts implemented in the 2015 cycle of cuts to each department will remain allocated to the three respective units (German, Nordic, Slavic), and future hires will reflect these allocations.

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Foundation and Trust Fund accounts will remain separate and in their current form and will continue to serve the purposes for which they were given. In addition, the department anticipates opening a separate UW Foundation account for GNS.

The faculty and academic staff of the three departments (German, Scandinavian, Slavic) will be combined into one unit. The combined unit will need to vote to accept a possible transfer of a faculty and academic staff member from Languages and Cultures of Asia. Other than these changes, no further changes in teaching commitments and assignments are anticipated in the near future.

Concerning staff, position descriptions for four full-time university staff positions have been drafted: Academic Department Manager, Financial Specialist, Senior Student Status Examiner/Graduate Coordinator, and an Undergraduate Coordinator (University Staff title TBD). This configuration of staff will allow for a streamlining of departmental work, since staff will be able to specialize and cross-train in certain areas, such as finances, payroll, undergraduate and graduate record-keeping, timetable, and general office duties.

German, Scandinavian Studies, and Slavic Languages & Literature have been engaged in discussion about this merger for two years, both as individual units and jointly, including joint GNS meetings in March and November 2015. The faculty believes the creation of the GNS department will enhance administrative efficiency of the academic programs, research endeavors, and outreach efforts. The unit will be cost-effective in the sense that the number of chairs will be reduced from three to one, although we anticipate being able to offer a course reduction to each of the two associate chairs, in addition to a two-course reduction and one-ninth salary to the chair.

The combined Executive Committee and committee structure outlined in the attached document will provide a broader platform for consultation on tenure and promotion cases, future hiring decisions, faculty and graduate student award nominations, and other policies affecting faculty, academic staff, university staff, and graduate students.

The proposal was approved unanimously by the Letters & Science Academic Planning Council on November 17, 2015, and the University Academic Planning Council on December 17, 2015. This action is effective July 1, 2016.