

NOTE: The original version of this report contained protected student information; that information has been redacted, in compliance with FERPA guidelines.

- Elaine M. Klein

Department of Slavic Languages and Literature
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Assessment Report
Spring 2008

BA/BS in Russian
BA/BS in Polish
MA/PhD in Slavic

Prepared and Submitted by

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1. Undergraduate Major in Russian

Abstract: In accordance with the plan for the assessment of the undergraduate major in Russian language and literature submitted to and approved by the College of Letters and Sciences of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the language program coordinator collected data on a number of different instruments in order to assess learner outcomes in the Russian-language program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. As of 2002 we began to alternate the assessment of listening and reading comprehension. In 2006 we assessed listening comprehension; in 2007 we assessed reading comprehension; in 2008 we assessed listening comprehension again. Language assessments, enrollment patterns, national prizes and surveys indicate that the Slavic Department's Russian language program is functioning very well, providing students with the opportunity to excel in Russian language studies. Independent verification of our success comes from the comparative performance of our students against the performance of students from other post-secondary institutions in the selection process for the study abroad program sponsored by the American Council of Teachers of Russian, the National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest, and by the success of our students in the US Department of State Critical Language Program.

I. Enrollment Patterns / Number of Majors

In 2004 we introduced a new section to our assessment report, focusing on enrollment patterns and the number of majors.

Table 1. Russian Majors

	Total Russian Majors	Russian Lang & Lit Majors	Russian Lang & Civ Majors	Russian Native Speaker Majors
May 2004	54	19	30	5
Graduating May and Dec 2004	13	5	7	1
May 2005	51	20	26	5
Graduating May and Dec 2005	13	5	6	2
May 2006	58	25	28	5
Graduating May and Dec 2006	16	5	8	3
May 2007	50	25	24	1
Graduating May and Dec 2007	15	9	6	0
May 2008	55	25	27	3
Graduating May and Dec 2008	14	5	9	0

The increase in the number of Russian majors is consistent with higher enrollments in first-year Russian. We hope to continue to attract solid numbers of students to the Russian major by participating in campus-wide events such as World Languages Day and Majors Fair.

This year the Slavic Department is facing new challenges in student recruiting as we are no longer allowed to make presentations to incoming freshmen and transfer students at SOAR this summer. We are working on developing new ways of spreading the information about the Russian program and publicizing the Russian major.

As this report goes to press, enrollments in Russian-language classes for the fall 2008 semester are strong:

2nd semester Russian – Spring 2007 enrollment: 45 (Slavic 102)
Fall 2008 enrollment in 3rd semester Russian: 42 (Slavic 203)

Excluding students taking Russian in the summer, this is a 93% retention rate (compared to 77% last year).

4th semester Russian – Spring 2007 enrollment: 34 (Slavic 204)
Fall 2007 enrollment in 5th semester Russian: 19 (Slavic 275)

May 2008

Excluding students taking Russian in the summer or going on study abroad, this is a 56% retention rate (compared to 78% last year). It is premature to conclude that there will be a significant decrease in 5th semester Russian enrollments as we expect more students, especially heritage speakers of Russian, to enroll in that course after they complete placement tests in August.

6th semester Russian – Spring 2007 enrollment: 14 (Slavic 276)
Fall 2008 enrollment in 7th semester Russian: 20 (Slavic 321)

Excluding students taking Russian in the summer or going on study abroad, this is a 142% retention rate (compared to 94% last year). This surplus in retention reflects the trend that we have been experiencing for the last several years: increasing number of heritage speakers of Russian are interested in taking advanced Russian courses. 7th and 8th semester Russian attracts students who had completed at least a portion of their secondary education in a Russian-speaking country and whose proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing is at the advanced level.

Table 2. Enrollment Chart as of 30 May

	Slavic 101	Slavic 203	Slavic 275	Slavic 321
2002	48	34	12	17
2003	65	39	24	11
2004	52	53	26	16
2005	57	37	25	17
2006	38	41	19	17
2007	48	35	22	16
2008	40	42	19	20

Numbers above do not reflect enrollments in study abroad (students planning on summer study have enrolled in the next higher course level for the fall 2007 semester and those enrollments are reflected in the chart above.) The decrease in the number of students in first-year Russian from the 2005-2006 academic year to the 2006-2007 academic year can be explained by the elimination of the evening section of Russian 101. The evening section attracted many nontraditional and continuing education students who are often unable to attend class during daytime hours. We will not be able to offer the evening section in the fall of 2008, thus enrollment in first-semester Russian is still lower than in 2005 when the evening section was offered last. In addition, we were informed that this coming fall's entering first-year class is expected to be quite a bit smaller than last year's, hence enrollments in Russian 101 which attracts mostly freshmen will also be lower. Considering these circumstances, enrollments in 1st-semester Russian are strong and are comparable to the fall of 2006 (the enrollments reported here do not reflect SOAR enrollments). We are also encouraged by very strong retention rates demonstrated at all levels this year. These numbers reflect the strength of our program and its potential for continuing growth.

II. Communicative Competence: Oral Proficiency Interviews

The language program coordinator is certified by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to conduct oral proficiency interviews, a standardized means of assessing an individual's command of a spoken language recognized throughout North America as a valid assessment instrument. The language program coordinator conducted oral proficiency interviews with students currently taking first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year Russian (Slavic 102 – 2nd Semester Russian, Slavic 204 – 4th Semester Russian, Slavic 276 – 6th Semester Russian, and Slavic 322 – 8th Semester Russian, respectively). These interviews were not double rated by a second certified interviewer and are thus not official ACTFL oral proficiency interviews, but may, nonetheless, be used as an indicator of the level of oral proficiency attained by students in Russian-language courses at these levels. Students with whom the language program coordinator conducted these interviews volunteered; the only incentive they were provided was the possibility of practice using their Russian.

Table 3 Results of Oral Proficiency Interviews

	2 nd Semester	4 th Semester	6 th Semester	8 th Semester
Student One	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High	Advanced Mid
Student Two	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High	Advanced Low

Students selected for interviews represent the best learning outcomes in our program.

The ratings of 6th semester students are especially impressive as neither of these students have had an opportunity to study abroad in Russia yet.

Both fourth-year students who received advanced level rating spent a year (Fall 2006-Spring 2007) on study abroad in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

We are very proud of the achievements of our students in the fourth-year course, as we believe that this demonstrates the quality of our preparation for study abroad and the importance of study abroad in the foreign language curriculum. We are grateful to our partners in the Study Abroad Office and at the American Council of Teachers of Russian, who help administer our study abroad programs in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Vladimir.

It is important to remember when interpreting these results that the difficulty of moving from novice level proficiency to intermediate level proficiency is not comparable with the difficulty of moving from intermediate level proficiency to advanced level proficiency, and so forth. The "distance" between each major level on the proficiency scale (novice, intermediate, advanced, superior) is not equal; the effort and time required to move from

one major level to the next increases geometrically at each higher level. In other words, the scale is *not* linear, but rather *geometric* in nature.

The results of this year's oral proficiency testing are comparable with previous assessment reports from our department and with published research on oral proficiency attained by students in various stages of language instruction in foreign languages in general (for instance, Carroll, 1967 and Magnan, 1986) and in Russian (Thompson, 1996; Rifkin, 2005). In general these data confirm for us once again that all our students should go on the study abroad program in Russia for at least a semester if not a year.

While the Slavic Department would like to see higher levels of oral proficiency attained by undergraduates studying Russian who complete the entire four year sequence, it is unlikely that higher levels of oral proficiency can be attained by students who take the regular sequence of courses in Russian without studying abroad, as suggested by Brecht, Davidson and Ginsberg (1993). The Slavic Department encourages all students to participate in study abroad programs, especially during the junior year; the University of Wisconsin-Madison has entered into an agreement with the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) regarding study abroad programs sponsored by ACTR in Moscow and St. Petersburg that would be available for UW-Madison students for residency credit. For more information about the study abroad programs, see the web page of ACTR at www.actr.org or the web page of the UW-Madison Office of International Studies and Programs (OISP) at www.wisc.edu/studyabroad.

We must recognize that while we strongly recommend study abroad for all students, many cannot afford it or are unable to participate for other reasons. Therefore, it is our responsibility to make the learning experience on campus as productive as possible for all students Russian, but especially for third-year students. This level is crucial for the developments of advanced level communicative competence and requires extensive training and personal attention to each. While we strive to provide the students with excellent instruction that targets all four modalities of language (writing, reading, listening, and speaking), large class sizes often hinder our efforts, especially in regard to developing speaking proficiency. It is very difficult to provide students with adequate opportunities to practice their language skills in the classroom with over twenty students. We believe that smaller class sizes -- particularly at the third-year level -- could help us make strong improvements in language instruction and increase our students' competitiveness for admission into various academic programs and on the job market.

III. Grammatical Competence

As part of the undergraduate language assessment for Russian, the language program director worked with instructors in second-, third- and fourth-year Russian (Slavic 204, Slavic 276, and Slavic 322) to administer a test of Russian grammar to all students in these two courses. These computer-mediated tests were administered in mid-April 2008; the same test was used in each class. This test consists of an extended text in Russian with English cues for 70 blanks. Students are instructed to fill in each blank based on the

context and the English cue provided. Each student's test was scored as the sum of correct responses (out of a possible 70 correct responses.)

The test we administered this year is a new assessment instrument developed by the language program coordinator, Anna Tumarkin, and Slavic Department graduate student, Kat Scollins, with assistance from L&S Learning Support Services. The funding for developing the test was provided by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Assessment Grant. The test was designed in accordance with ACTFL foreign language proficiency guidelines as a tool of evaluating student progress and proficiency growth at different levels of Russian language instruction.

The scores of second-year students were significantly lower than last year. This outcome was caused by serious technical difficulties we experienced on the day of testing. Due to server problems most students were unable to login into the test for 15-20 minutes and for that reason did not have enough time to complete the entire test within the class period. I would like to point out, however, that several second year students scored very high demonstrating proficiency at the third or even fourth-year level (scores of 50, 41, 40, and 30).

Third- and fourth-year students scored slightly higher than last year.

Table 4 Results of Grammar Tests

	2 nd -Year Section 1	2 nd -Year Section 2	3 rd -Year	4 th -Year
Mean Score '08	17		31	39
Mean Score '07	24		30	37.5
Mean Score '06	N/a		37.75	51.4
Mean Score '05	39.48		38.59	N/a
Mean Score '04	21.6		25.7	40.9
Mean Score '03	29.5		N/a	44.5
Mean Score '02	25		37.3	47.54
Mean Score '01	20		40.5	49.25
Mean Score '00	22.58	20.5	38.75	30.17
Mean Score '99	27.83	25.5	34.27	35.13
Mean Score '98	25.6	27.73	43.71	52.67

The highest grammar score this year was earned by a student in fourth-year Russian: 70%. This is a very strong result for a non-heritage learner. Only one of our graduate students who took the same test achieved a higher score.

IV. Lexical Competence

In addition to the tests described above, the language program administered a vocabulary test to measure the lexical competence of students in the first three years of Russian

language instruction. The vocabulary test was created on the basis of Patrick Waddington's *A Russian Vocabulary* (Bristol Books), which includes a list of 850 of the most commonly used words in Russian. Every tenth word from this list was selected for the vocabulary test; students were asked to provide the English equivalent of the given 85 Russian words. The purpose of this test is to measure the degree to which students will be able to read for meaning in Russian without having to resort frequently to a dictionary. Mean scores reported in the table below reflect a maximum possible score of 85 (equivalent to 100% correct).

Table 5 Lexical Competence Results 2002 – Present

	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4 th Year
Spring'08	53	67	79	N/A
Spring '07	39.5	56.3	66.6	72.5
Spring '06	37.02	52.4	67.4	74.9
Spring '05	46.5	58.6	66.4	78.1
Spring '04	38	53.5	74.3	79.7
Spring '03	43.1	55.1	77.15	74.8
Spring '02	42.4	59.41	71.65	77.88

As of the spring of 2002 we stopped recording results per section for first- and second-year Russian due to the variation in the number of sections offered. Instead, we report those results here as a cumulative average of all students in all sections at the given level.

Scores of students at most levels in the spring 2008 assessment program were significantly higher than what they have been in the past.

Especially encouraging are the results from 2nd year Russian which manifest the biggest improvement. We attribute this success to the introduction of the new textbook into our 2nd year Russian curriculum, *V Puti* by Kagan, Miller and Kudyma. This textbook places a strong emphasis on lexical development allowing for faster rates of vocabulary acquisition and better techniques of vocabulary retention. This may lead to even better learning outcomes in grammar for students enrolled in 2nd year in the coming academic year.

The instructor of the 4th year Russian course was unable to conduct lexical assessment this year, thus results are not available for that level.

V. Listening and Reading Skills

In the spring 2006 assessment we focused only on listening skills, in the spring of 2007, we assessed reading skills. This year we assessed listening skills again (we will alternate back to reading skills for the spring 2009 assessment.)

Test results indicate that students in the second semester class typically achieve novice mid listening comprehension, but the average level of listening comprehension does not increase much from year to year, with the average listening comprehension result at the 4th year level only at intermediate mid. However, the range of listening comprehension results at each level is indicative of growth, since the high scores at each level of instruction are successively higher:

Course	Listening Mean/ Rating 2008	Listening Mean/ Rating 2006	Listening Mean / Rating 2004	Listening Mean / Rating 2002
Slavic 102	1.19/ IL	0.73/ NM	Not tested	0.52 / NM
Slavic 204	1.53/IM	0.89/ NH	0.92/ NH	0.77 / NM - NH
Slavic 276	1.73/IM-IH	1.2/ IL	0.99/IL	0.85 / NM - NH
Slavic 322	2.17/Adv	1.67/ IM	1.53/ IM	1.0 / IL

Typically test results indicate that students in the second semester class achieve intermediate low reading comprehension, but the average level of reading comprehension does not increase much from year to year, with the average reading comprehension result at the 4th year level at intermediate high. However, the range of reading comprehension results at each level is indicative of growth, since the high scores at each level of instruction are successively higher.

This year results are very encouraging because for the first time in over 8 years students the majority of students in the 3rd year course reached intermediate high level and the majority of students in the 4th year course reached advanced level of reading proficiency. 2nd year score is also strong indicating yet again the success of implementing the new textbook.

VI. Ongoing Curricular Improvements

The textbook used in first-year Russian, *Russian Stage One: Live from Moscow*, continues to enjoy popularity among the students and instructors of that course. We are very pleased with our new second-year textbook, *V Puti*, by Kagan, Miller and Kudyma. This year, as in the past, we have supplemented the second year textbook with additional grammar and reading materials as well as contemporary Russian cartoons and films. Next Our third-year textbook, *Grammatika v kontekste*, is an adequate choice for that course

level. This year it was used in combination with *The Golden Age: Readings in Russian Literature of the Nineteenth Century* by Rosengrant, Lifsschitz.

First Year

Russian Stage One: Live from Moscow (textbook with video program and CD-ROM), Davidson, Gor and Lekic (1996)

START: An Introduction to the Sound and Writing Systems of Russian (with CD-ROM), Rifkin (2005)

Second Year

V Puti (textbook and workbook), Kagan, Miller, Kudyma (2000)

Russian's World, Gerhart (2001)

Third Year

Grammatika v kontekste (textbook and workbook), Rifkin (1996)

The Golden Age: Readings in Russian Literature of the Nineteenth Century, Rosengrant, Lifschitz (1996)

Fourth Year

Readings selected by the instructor

VIII. Awards and Citations

Our Russian-language curriculum is working well. Indeed, out of five UW-Madison students applying for admission to the ACTR study abroad program in Russia all five were all admitted for summer 2008, fall 2008 semester or 2007-2008 academic year. Students from UW-Madison applying for study at Middlebury College Russian School and Beloit College Intensive Russian Program were also all admitted placed into the next level of study. We are proudest, however, of our second year student, Alec Luhn, who won a highly competitive national Critical Language scholarship to fund his studying Russia in the coming summer year. Third-year students Cecilia Leugers and Jan Van Tol were awarded ACTR scholarship to study in Russian in the fall of 2008.

Twelve UW-Madison students participated in the ACTR National Post-Secondary National Russian Essay Contest and four won awards. We are very proud of Matt Regner and Edward Chien, who won second and third place respectively. Tyler Henderson and Cecilia Leugers earned Honorable Mentions. These accomplishments are impressive because this contest is very competitive with over 700 students participating from more than 50 institutions.

Four UW-Madison students became members of Dobro Slovo, The National Slavic Honor Society.

The Russian program at Madison is also thriving as a community as evidenced by the success of our fall welcome (back) party, our spring majors party, the Russian table and other extra-curricular events such as lectures and concerts. In February, the Slavic Department collaborated with CREECA in organizing a visit from a critically acclaimed Russian folk group, Zolotoy Plyos. In addition to giving a concert on campus, the group performed at Elvehjem elementary school in Madison, earning the highest complements from both the kids and the teaching staff.

IX. Plans for Future Curricular Improvements

The results of our on-going assessment program are evidence that our language program is working well. While not all of our students achieve great success in their Russian-language study, many students do achieve great success when their skills are measured against the ACTFL proficiency guidelines or when their performance is compared to those of students at other institutions applying to the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) for study abroad. Given published research data on feasible learning outcomes in a four-year language curriculum (e.g., Brecht, Davidson and Ginsberg, 1993; Thompson, 1996), our successful learners' Russian-language skills, upon graduation, are in a high performance range. We are proud of this achievement and look forward to continuing to lead students toward this success.

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2. Undergraduate Major in Polish

Introduction

Instruction in Slavic languages and literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison traces its roots back to 1935, when state legislators and leaders of the Polish-American community demanded that the University begin to offer Polish. They managed to get funds for a department added to the state budget as a separate item from the regular University budget, and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature was born in 1936 as the Department of Polish. Instruction in Polish began in the fall of 1936 and continues to this day.

Enrollment

Enrollments are stronger compared to previous years. Twenty-three students have already registered for First Semester Polish in the Fall of 2008 (Polish 111). If more than 5 new incoming students choose Polish, we will open an additional section.

We also observe a stronger retention rate -- Fourth Semester Polish had 12 students, most of them started studying Polish as beginners.

More students take advanced Polish –15 students have already signed up for advanced classes in Fall 2008. This is a result of stronger retention, and more interest in the Polish Major.

We currently have 5 continuing majors. Three students graduated with a Polish major in May 2008. .

Assessment Tools for Fourth Semester Polish (Polish 208)

This course is the last one before the advanced level. Students continue to work extensively on grammar, but they are required to read more challenging texts. The readings are selected by the instructor, and include short stories, poems and articles from the press. An important component of the final grade is written work. Students create new dialogues, but also write journals, summaries, and movie critiques. Work on listening skills is based on the new Polish method “Hurra!!! Po polsku” which includes recordings made by native speakers.

Final grades are based on students’ participation, homework and exams. Last semester most of the students received “A” and “AB”

Assessment Tools for Advanced Polish Language (Slavic 278/331)

SL227/331, required for the Polish major, is largely based on contemporary Polish prose and poetry, and also includes texts from newspapers and a continuing review of grammar. Since Polish 277/331 is an “intensive writing” class, students are expected to write four essays during the semester as well as numerous short compositions. Students’ assessment was based on their participation in class, written exams and essays. Since students start

this advanced class with considerably different levels of language proficiency, the main factor in grading is their individual effort. Final grades were mostly “A” and “AB”. The main challenge for the instructor is the combination of two levels (third and fourth year of Polish language) in one class. The fact that students come with very different linguistic skills (some cannot write well but speak fluently, others do not understand the basic grammatical concepts, few are native speakers) makes this class the most difficult yet a very rewarding teaching experience. The semester ends with analyzing a contemporary Polish novel.

Awards and Citations:

Two Polish Major students were awarded the Lapinski Scholarship: Magdalena Bojda and Tomasz Samek. The Edmund I. Zawacki Award for outstanding achievement in the study of the Polish language, literature and culture went to Yolanda Stypula and Magdalena Bojda.

Four students who are not majoring in Polish received certifications for their outstanding progress in the language.

Future Plans:

The fact that more students register for First Semester Polish is very encouraging. We hope we can open an additional section of Polish 111 in the Fall of 2008.

In order to improve our curriculum we will introduce a new method to our Polish classes: “Hurra!!!Po polsku”. The book comes with interesting recordings, the texts are related to issues of contemporary Polish society.

We will continue to strongly encourage our students to study abroad. All participants of our program in Warsaw express their satisfaction with their experience in Poland. As always, the cost remains their main obstacle for studying abroad.

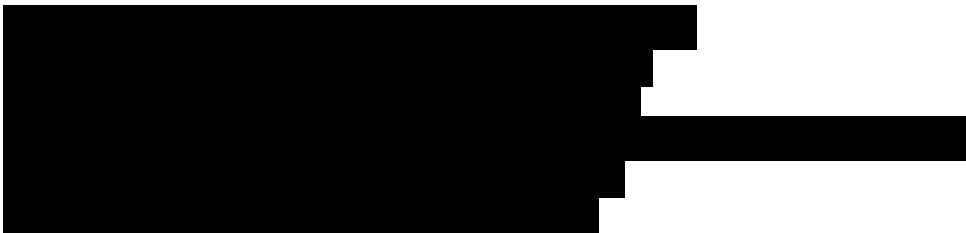
3. Graduate Program in Slavic

Introduction

The Department of Slavic Languages and Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison granted its first MA in 1950 and its first PhD in 1961. We have since become one of the nation's leading doctoral programs in Russian literature, with our graduates filling positions in undergraduate and graduate programs throughout the country and the world. Students who are making satisfactory progress and who have fulfilled the necessary requirements will have the MA degree conferred on request and can be admitted to the PhD program after approval by the faculty. The program leading to the PhD in Slavic Languages and Literature with Russian concentration requires 54 graduate-level credits including 27 credits earned for the MA. We currently do not recruit students for a terminal MA, nor for the concentration in Linguistics. Students are encouraged to complete their minor in Polish or Serbo-Croatian, and all PhD candidates must complete a preliminary examination in Polish, Serbo-Croatian, or Czech literature.

Enrollment and Degree Patterns

We were delighted to welcome six new graduate students in Fall 2007:



We are pleased to report that we were able to fund them fully. Of these students, Karpukhin and Rampton received an Academic Year University, Polglaze the Michael & Emily Lapinski Scholarship, Kapp a FLAS, and van Velsen and Ivashniova Paships.

We had several graduate students complete degrees or become dissertators:

Brian R Johnson: PhD

David Houston, MA

Sergei Karpukhin MA

Vika Kononova, MA

Melissa Miller, MA

Betsy Mulet. MA

Naomi Olson, MA

Stephanie Richards, MA

Lisa Woodson MA

Matt McGarry, passed Prelims, Spring 2008
Molly Thomasy, passed Prelims, Spring 2008

Our entering class for 2008-09 is somewhat smaller than in recent years but no less promising.. We had 12 applicants, offered 9 admissions, and will be welcoming the following three students:

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[REDACTED]

Awards

Jesse Stavis was awarded a WARF fellowship. (Unfortunately our other successful fellowship candidate chose not to take up our offer of a place.) Our continuing graduate students have been extremely active. Kat Scollins won a University Dissertator Fellowship for 08-09. She also received, for the second time, the J. Thomas Shaw AATSEEL-Wisconsin Prize for the best paper at the AATSEEL-Wisconsin Conference in October 2008. Darya Ivashniova won the Lapinski Graduate Fellowship. Vika Kononova won a Edmund I. Zawacki Award for outstanding achievement in the study of the Polish language, literature, and culture, and also a Lapinski Summer Fellowship for study in Poland. FLAS academic year fellowships were awarded to Stephanie Richards and Odette van Velsen. Ellen Polglaze received a FLAS for the summer to study Russian at Middlebury College. Emily Shaw was selected as an alternate for the L&S Teaching Fellow Award.

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Future Plans

In Fall 2008 we are delighted that we shall be joined by a new faculty member in Russian Literature, one of the leading young Slavists in the field, Irina Shevelenko. Over the coming years, we will need to further strengthen our resources in Russian Literature and Language and rebuild in Czech and Serbo-Croatian in order to return our program to its full strength as one of the leading Slavic graduate programs in the country.

