In its “Report of the Committee to Review the Departments of German, Scandinavian Studies, and Slavic Languages & Literature” dated January 6, 2016, the College of Letters & Science-appointed committee of Stefania Buccini (French and Italian), Barbara “Suzy” Buenger (Art History, affiliate of German), Suzanne Desan (History), Adam L. Kern (East Asian Languages & Literature) and Fernando Tejedo (Spanish & Portuguese) made a number of specific recommendations regarding each of our three then-independent departments. In a memo dated July 27, 2016, Dean Karl Scholz asked the as-yet-unmerged departments to submit a follow-up report by September 30, 2018. This report responds to that request. In it, we refer to the recommendations made in the January 6, 2016 report (referred to below as the “outside committee report”) and outline briefly the steps we have taken to address identified issues and make progress as part of the merger process. We hope you agree that GNS has made excellent progress thus far, although lots of work remains to be done in order to ensure the ongoing health—and further enhancement—of our undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as our emerging identity as a dynamic and forward-looking hybrid department.

Recommendations as Listed in the Report (pp. 3 ff.)

1. **Recommendation to Merge.** While summarizing some of the concerns of each of the departments, the outside committee report strongly endorsed our merger, and the faculty and staff of the three former departments have worked diligently and with great collective goodwill to build a workable and effective merged department. Change is never easy, and all three departments went into the merger with concerns to ensure the quality of their programs in the future. Many of the negative effects some of us feared or anticipated have failed to materialize and on the whole, GNS possesses a growing spirit of robustness and confidence in its new configuration. Each of the formerly independent units has been able to maintain or even enhance its leadership role within its discipline while also beginning to explore the kinds of “new intellectual frissons … best practices … and courses of mutual benefit” called for by the committee, some of which are discussed below. Our success in this merger is in part due to the proactive and helpful advice, encouragement and assistance GNS has received from Associate Dean Sue Zaeske. Without her level of eager and encouraging assistance, our project might not have proved so successful thus far.

2. **Relocate German.** The review committee noted the challenges of creating a common identity when separated on different floors. We are still spread out over three floors in Van Hise Hall (8, 13, 14), which has impeded inter-unit communication and integration, and especially communication among administrative staff. In order to ensure that people on floors 13 and 14 feel served by staff, while the administrative hub and chair’s office of the new department is located on floor 8, we have chosen to locate at least one administrative staff member on each of the three floors. Of course, this situation is not ideal, but the department staff and faculty are working with the situation. A plan for relocation is a responsibility that of course rests with L&S administration and we would urge you to explore ways of addressing this
situation in the near future. We would love to achieve a configuration that affords easy communication among all our staff, faculty, and students. In the meantime, some of us are keeping fit by using the stairs between our floors when going to meetings.

3. **Address Concerns of Academic and Classified Staff.** During the review process, staff members expressed concerns regarding evenness of workload and treatment in the coming merged department, division of work responsibilities, questions of mechanisms for staff review, size of staff, and responsibilities in crisis moments ("pinch hitting"). The leaders of the merger process were careful to address each of these issues in planning the merger, and the resulting staffing configuration is both functional and effective. Each floor has an academic staff member, the chair has weekly meetings with the academic staff, work responsibilities are transparent and well-articulated, and staff reviews are clear and consistent. A measure of the quality of the leadership of the faculty who formed the transition team is the evident high quality of our resulting staff. So far, we have had to mount a retention offer to retain our talented chief of staff Nicole Senter, and we have lost one talented staff member, Katja Mohaupt-Hedden, to a competitive offer from another unit. Katja has been replaced by another very talented professional, Rebecca Forbes Wank. Ensuring a good work environment for all of our department staff is a recognized priority in the department, one which the department executive committee approaches with seriousness and resolve.

4. **Launch New Large Enrollment Service Courses to Benefit the Department.** The review took place during a time in which humanities enrollments were in steep decline throughout the country and in which an ever-stronger emphasis on STEM disciplines threatened to push the humanities out of existence entirely. Since the merger, GNS has worked to address issues of declining enrollment in creative and effective ways. An Eastern European fiction course has been created and was taught first in spring 2017. The popular Vampire and Vikings courses have been turned into online courses that can (also) be taught during the summer. Plans are to create a GNS large enrollment folklore course that will focus on the cultures of Central, Northern, and Eastern Europe. Newly hired faculty have been encouraged and guided to create new popular courses that will appeal to new audiences, such as planned Slavic course in Putin’s Russia and a planned GNS course in sustainability.

We also note in this connection that the synergies afforded by the merger have begun to result in new jointly offered courses. The recommended GNS pedagogy course for graduate students in all three units has been implemented since the fall 2016. In spring 2019, the professional development course for graduate students (once a course exclusively taught in Scandinavian) will be first taught under the newly created GNS subject heading. A GNS Banned Books course is being discussed, as is a common graduate course on literary theory. The faculty continue to explore ways that the new department may make use of the Cluster Hire program to develop pan-GNS expertise and courses. The aim of our development of all such courses is to diversify our popular course offerings so that we no longer rely on just a handful of
very popular courses (e.g., Hans Christian Andersen, Vampires). This strategy ensures against issues created by faculty departures or retirements and also aims to create more evenness in the numbers of students taught by various faculty and staff members.

5. **Level Up Enrollments & Credits-Per-Instructor and Even Out Course Releases.** The outside committee report pointed out imbalances in the credits-per-instructor rates of the three merging units and questions of enrollment caps and course releases. As a department, we are working deliberately and intentionally on enrollments and credits per instructor. Since fall 2016, we have 6 new faculty members, each of whom is charged with developing and teaching a large enrollment course. GNS offers coursework related to 17 languages, many of which are “less commonly taught” and have by necessity low enrollments. On the flip side, several of those (including Turkish and Kazakh) are funded through Title VI funds, and the Russian Flagship program makes it possible to offer multiple sections of Russian language. German unit-specific course releases have either been eliminated or covered by units outside of GNS (e.g., the *Monatshefte* course release is now self-funded; course releases due to directing and international center are now partially bought out by the International Division). The GNS Chair gets two course releases per year, the Associate Chairs each one. As signaled in the outside committee report, we regard it as crucial to make all such changes in ways that ensure the continued quality and leadership status of our units in their respective disciplines and not to impose changes that end up weakening our status in any area. This involves careful deliberation and listening in which the department leadership team works to monitor and respect the concerns of all three units.

6. **Level Up Cost Per Credit.** The outside committee noted disparities between the cost-per-credit statistics for the three departments and urged policies that would bring about a more balanced situation in the new department. As with Recommendation 5 above, this is an area that the department is working on. As the report noted, part of the issue with the cost-per-credit statistics of the various units in previous years had to do with a reliance on a few highly popular courses as breadwinners. When, for instance, Slavic offered Vampire in a given year, its annual cost-per-credit statistics were excellent. If, however, it did not offer the course in a given year, its statistics suffered. By diversifying our range of popular courses, as described above, and ensuring that a good selection of popular courses be offered by each of our units each year, we believe we will be able to better achieve a more balanced and more viable cost-per-credit system for the overall department. Our newly hired faculty are rising to this challenge, and senior faculty and staff are working hard to contribute to the solution and offer guidance for the future.

7. **Level Up and Even Out TA Salaries.** As the outside report clearly and accurately noted, “unevenness of TA salaries across the three units poses a serious challenge.” The sense of precariousness of our graduate students and the low-percentage appointment levels particularly in German and Scandinavian made recruitment of quality graduate students difficult, while the prospect of students in a single
department doing similar work for different amounts of pay due to the differing percentages of their appointments threatened to create serious issues of morale and equity among our talented graduate students. The GNS leadership team addressed these challenges by developing a consistent and universal policy of 50% TA appointments with five-year guarantees. We achieved this goal in the spring of 2018 through a unanimous vote of our executive committee and are implementing the new system in the current semester (fall 2018). Our graduate students are now equitably and transparently compensated, and our department has proven that adjusting to the Graduate School’s recommended 50% appointment system can work for humanities departments. We are immensely proud of this achievement. At the same time, we point out that we reached this goal while continuing to respect the differences in TA mentoring and employment that were central to each of the three graduate programs. Such achievements can only happen through careful and open processes of deliberation, as we were able to ensure last spring, again with valuable input from South Hall during the process.

8. **Level Out Time to Degree.** The outside committee pointed out disparities in time-to-degree statistics, with a Slavic average of 10.5, as compared with German and Scandinavian, which each has an average of 8.3. In the short time since the merger, the Slavic graduate program has reduced its time-to-degree average to 7-8 years. The only exceptions to this healthy and effective rate for all GNS units have to do with returning graduate students. All GNS graduate students now receive formal notification in their seventh year that they will no longer be funded after that year. They are off guarantee by year 5. One also has to consider, however, that Slavic languages and Finnish are Category IV languages according to the Foreign Service Institute Languages Difficulty Rankings as opposed to Danish, German, Norwegian, and Swedish, which are Category II and I languages. (Source: [https://www.atlasandboots.com/foreign-service-institute-language-difficulty](https://www.atlasandboots.com/foreign-service-institute-language-difficulty).) The development of real proficiency in a Category IV language takes much longer than the same development in a Category II or I language, particularly if the learner has no natal or childhood familiarity with the language. As a department, we seek to take these points into consideration as we appraise the progress of each of our graduate students.

9. **Clarify and Disseminate Grievance Policies, Graduate Policies, Assessment Plan, and Student Learning Outcomes.** The outside committee report exhorted the new department to “adopt the best assessment practices of each of the three departments.” This is an area in which the merger has definitely been of great value, as we have indeed generalized specific best practices and come up with a greater degree of consistency and transparency with regard to grievances, graduate policies, assessment and student learning outcomes. Our new department has benefitted from greater clarity and guidance from campus and the College regarding assessment procedures and student learning outcomes, for which we are very grateful. The GNS leadership team has charged the Curriculum Committee with beginning the work of harmonizing at least some of these assessment procedures to some degree, so that we can generate consistent data and take advantage of
effective strategies that have been developed in each of the three formerly independent units. This is an area of ongoing work, as indeed, it should be: assessment and learning outcomes should not be things done once and then left untouched, but should be constantly revisited and retooled as part of quality control and development.

With the launch of the “Guide” the policies and requirements, assessment, and student learning outcomes are online. They are also available on the GNS website that was created in the fall of 2016 and is managed by our Department administrator. The department’s grievance procedures and reporting misconduct and crime can also be found on the GNS website with the Graduate Program information. The three programs are working on a supplementary handbook with more program specific details that will be posted on the Guide and the website before the end of the year.

10. **Consider New Faculty Lines Wish List.** As the outside committee report noted, each of the three departments had different understandings and needs regarding future faculty hires in their units. These existed because the disciplines in which GNS faculty operate are very diverse and differ in many respects. Our GNS policy has been to seek to maintain and enhance the quality of each of our units, ensuring that we remain leaders in our respective fields. We have been able to do so through careful listening to each other, but also by maintaining three “shadow BSR” reports instead of a single merged BSR that could potentially disguise processes of unintentional siphoning of funds from one unit to another that would create or worsen imbalances. We are grateful to the guidance of Sue Zaeske here, and also Mary Beth Roberts, that have helped us use the BSR in the ways it was intended, i.e., to maximize transparency and facilitate strategic decision making over time.

Currently, each of the three units has new hires of staff and professors that ensure good growth and development of the units. We are very appreciative of South Hall’s generosity regarding faculty hire authorizations for our department, that have allowed us to develop some very promising and exciting new areas of expertise in each of our units.

11. **Hold a Faculty and Staff Retreat.** The outside committee recommended that the three units organize a faculty and staff retreat, possibly facilitated by members of the Office of Quality Improvement. We are planning this for spring 2019, on the occasion of the third anniversary of our merged department. In the meantime, regularly held meetings of our various committees and regularly scheduled occasions for socializing, such as our fall potluck picnic, have helped the various department members get to know each other and develop relations of camaraderie and trust. The positive effects of these events are evident particularly among our junior faculty, who appreciate having colleagues in a similar cohort and enjoy the novelty and dynamism of the new hybrid department. As we move forward with plans for retreats, etc., the leadership team will seek to learn about best practices in other large units in the College, e.g., English and History. Many of our units’ tried-
and-true practices before were effective in very small units, such as German, Scandinavian, and Slavic were before the merger. As we envision work in the future, we need to learn how effective decision-making happens in larger units, where, for instance, the consensus-building long conversations that were part of the governance systems in each of the prior units might not prove as effective once the number of participants in the conversation exceeds ten.

12. **Shape Departmental Governance Based on Parity.** The outside committee provided valuable suggestions for how the new department might be configured in terms of leadership. Particularly important was the committee’s emphasis on a joint governance system that would allow for the leadership contributions of all three formerly independent units while also creating a system that would be workable and not overly burdensome to the smallest of the three units. An overall chair, joined by two associate chairs, allows for balanced input. The current chair, Manon van de Water, has worked hard to consult carefully and proactively with her associate chairs, forming a leadership team that has gathered and respected the concerns of all department members. The regular rotation of the overall chair between each of the three units will ensure attention to issues of balance and equity. The GNS executive committee has developed bylaws that have clear rules and voting principles that have been tested so that the largest unit cannot override the votes of the smaller units. A GNS Graduate Admissions and Funding Committee has been created, as the outside committee report recommended, but the individual needs of graduate programs and funding resources differ considerably across the three units, and our executive committee is unanimous that that is why we need to maintain separate Directors of Graduate Studies and conduct separate processes of graduate recruitment when dealing with our potential student clientele as well as the College and the Graduate School. In our estimation, a single admissions process is not possible or prudent for a department committed to maintaining real excellence and leadership in three such diverse disciplines. At the same time, our joint committees allow for frequent consultation among our graduate programs and have served as a source for best practices. Over time, we foresee our graduate programs harmonizing to a greater degree, but only insofar as such would not weaken what are internationally recognized as stellar and strikingly successful graduate programs.

13. **Other: Diversity Efforts**

From the start, GNS has made concerted efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in the department. At the start of fall 2016 the Chair invited the LGBTQ Campus Center to give two workshops on preferred pronouns, one to all GNS TAs and one at the first department meeting to faculty and staff. Over the past three years GNS has invited other guests to our department meetings, including Brian Bubenzer and Luis Piñero. Recommendations on inclusive excellence in job searches have been carefully monitored and followed. We have a GNS diversity liaison in place (Moedersheim) and representatives attended university-wide teaching workshops addressing diversity and inclusivity and reported back to the department (Gross). Regarding classroom climate, a formal Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion was developed by a GNS ad hoc committee and adopted as joint GNS policy.
statement to be included on department syllabi and featured prominently on our department website. Department representative Jeanne Schueller attended a session on inclusive language learning at a national conference and worked to implement changes in GNS language courses, including through TA training, and in the pedagogy course she teaches in fall semesters for TAs. Graduate students in the department led a three-day workshop/roundtable on Addressing White Nationalism in GNS courses, which focused on post-Charlottesville concerns. Graduate students also took concrete steps to make their classrooms more welcoming and to include reflection on diversity issues as part of class assignments and discussions, in everything from questions of pronoun choice to homework assignments and in-class activities. Regarding our curriculum, several faculty and staff (Eldridge, Krouk, Moedersheim, Mani, and others) have updated courses to include more diverse array of authors and subjects. They also developed new courses that compare GNS situations with counterparts in the USA (e.g., Mani, DuBois, Cederström). Service on broader committees and initiatives increased. GNS was represented on the L&S Climate Committee (Schueller) and the university-wide Committee on Hostile and Intimidating Behavior (Louden); two colleagues are campus liaisons for Hostile and Intimidating Behavior (Louden, Mellor), another is a campus Diversity Liaison (Eldridge), and still others participated in the Annual Diversity Forum (Gross) and the LGBT Campus Center (Wilson [graduate student]). Diversity efforts were also expressed in public outreach: to Indigenous communities at Lac du Flambeau reservation and Menominee reservation (DuBois, Cederström); to the Wisconsin Sikh community (Mani); and to the state’s Amish community (Louden). These efforts are tied to specific topics or situations that intersect with our department’s curriculum and areas of research interest. For the fall 2018 semester we received permission to use our summer revenue to hire a PA to aid us in enhancing diversity in our undergraduate and graduate programs by serving as a liaison between graduate students, faculty, and staff. The department has also identified a Target of Opportunity hire to pursue and is currently at work on a proposal for the college to pursue this hire.

Respectfully submitted,

Manon van de Water, Chair
Mark Louden, Associate Chair for Advancement and Outreach
Tom Dubois, Associate Chair for Academic Programs
May 24, 2017

Manon van de Water, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair, Department of German, Nordic and Slavic
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Sent Electronically

Dear Professor van de Water,

An important part of the University’s continuing commitment to academic excellence is review of graduate programs by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC). When the College of Letters and Science assembled a review committee to conduct a decadal assessment of the graduate programs in the German, Nordic, and Slavic Department (which include the German M.A./Ph.D./Doctoral Minor, the Scandinavian Studies M.A./Ph.D./Doctoral Minor, and the Slavic Languages and Literature M.A./Ph.D./Doctoral Minor and Doctoral Minor in Russian), Professor Fernando Tejedo-Herrero served as the GFEC representative. Professor Tejedo-Herrero led a discussion of the review at the GFEC meeting on May 12, 2017, and in this letter, I summarize the committee’s discussion.

The GFEC learned of the many strengths of the three graduate programs, including connected faculty with exceptional reputations in their fields, editorial roles in leading journals in German, the successful Russian Flagship program, good assessment practices in Slavic and a positive climate with strong support for graduate students that produces award-winning teaching assistants.

The many strengths of the programs notwithstanding, the review revealed areas for further consideration:

- The GFEC expressed concern that the median time to degree and 10-year doctoral completion rates were generally lower than peers, most notably in Slavic Languages & Literature. The committee strongly recommends that the programs look critically at their practices for assessing progress to degree to understand what may be impacting student completion percentages, using that information to develop a plan to reduce time to degree and increase Ph.D. completion.

- The GFEC learned that the programs do not have an online graduate student handbook. Handbooks are required by our accrediting body and the Graduate School to ensure that students have access to all requirements and policies needed to make satisfactory progress toward their degree. Handbooks also connect students with university resources and processes and help answer questions should a grievance arise. A template is available to ensure all necessary sections are included. The committee requests that this handbook be completed before December 15, 2017, in time for the upcoming campus accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission.
• The recent movement of these programs to a new department provides a number of opportunities to share and adopt successful practices. The GFEC recommends strengthening assessment practices and learning outcomes in German and Scandinavian to standardize them across all three programs, along with leveling teaching assistant workload and salaries across the department.

• The GFEC agreed with the review committee’s suggestions to find ways to build connections for graduate students between programs, including developing a shared language pedagogy course in the graduate curriculum in Scandinavian Studies, and to consider a department pro-seminar on professional development.

• Finally, improving diversity in the graduate student body should be a goal for all three programs.

The committee acknowledges the review report was prepared almost a year ago, and the department may have addressed some of these issues. The GFEC would, therefore, appreciate a copy of the follow-up report due to the College of Letters and Science by September 30, 2018, in which the above concerns are addressed by substantive changes and planning. The GFEC commends the programs on their strengths and thanks you for your commitment to graduate education.

Sincerely,

William J. Karpus
Dean of the Graduate School
Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

Cc: John Karl Scholz, College of Letters and Science
    Susan Zaeske, College of Letters and Science
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    Susan Brantly, Department of German, Nordic and Slavic
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    Emily Reynolds, Graduate School